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Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP)
The Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction:
Prospects and Challenges
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VERIFICATION

WHERE TO START? HOW TO START?

WHAT DOES ONE WANT TO VERIFY?

- ✗ **What will be the scope of a ME disarmament treaty?**
  - ✛ Limited to state-run weapon programmes?
  - ✛ Include non-state threats?
    - ✗ Terrorists & criminals
    - ✗ Proxy fighting forces
  - ✛ Only weapon elimination or also prevention of future armament?

- ✗ **What will be the object of verification?**
  - ✛ The weapon (system)?
  - ✛ Installations related to the development, production, testing, storage and maintenance of such weapon (systems)?
    - ✗ State establishments?
    - ✗ Private entities?
  - ✛ Underlying technologies?
  - ✛ Potential misuse of science and technology?
  - ✛ National implementation measures?

WHAT EXPECTATIONS FROM VERIFICATION?

- **'Treaties are unverifiable'**
  - Standard mantra, but why?
- **Cold war understandings of disarmament and verification**
  - Difficulties in dealing with dual-use characteristics of (underlying) technologies
  - No verification substitutes (e.g., visible & countable delivery systems)
    - e.g, chemical warfare agents, pathogens, fissile materials vs. their delivery sytems
  - Unease with roles of multiple stakeholders in the process
    - State is often more protective of stakeholder interests (e.g., industry) than the stakeholders
    - How to impose a security imperative on civilian industry
- **Shift away from focus on weapon as a problem (disarmament) to focus on possessor of enabling technologies (non-proliferation)**
  - Rogue state discourse (no trust) + emphasis on regime change
  - Focus on *motive* of presumed possessor rather than *purpose* of technology
  - Addressing terrorism challenges
- **Shift away from parity in military arsenals (*adequacy*) to utility of weapons and hence capability to address challenges & threats (*effectiveness*)**

DEFINING THE WEAPONS TO VERIFY

- **What is a 'Weapon of Mass Destruction' (WMD)?**
    - No formal legal definition
    - Semantic scope has varied considerably over time, and still shifts
- **Can we functionally define a WMD in terms of existing treaties?**
    - No formal definition of a nuclear weapon
    - BTWC and CWC define BW, TW and CW
        - Definitions, however, serve the objectives and (verification) tools of the respective treaties
        - Scope differs: e.g., BTWC covers anti-plant agents; CWC does not
    - Treaty-based WMD range:
        - Tear gas; ricin ⇔ Tsar Bomba (58 megaton detonation in 1961)?
        - How useful for a ME treaty?
- **How to structure the definition of an arms category?**
    - BTWC and CWC definitions based on 'general purpose criterion' (GPC)
        - Not technologies as such, but purposes to which they may be applied are banned
        - Definitions cover agents, dissemination devices, and directly associated technologies
        - GPC covers past, present and future technologies & tackles potential dual-use ambiguities
    - No GPC available for nuclear weapons ⇒ major challenge for disarmament verification
        - How to define legitimate purposes for underlying technologies with dual-use potential?
        - How to determine legitimate levels of enrichment percentages or numbers of centrifuges?

SETTING UP A PROCESS TOWARDS VERIFICATION

- × Initiation of thought processes before formal negotiations
  - + Concrete ideas and identification of their implications can prevent blockage up front (e.g., political arguments not to join a particular treaty)
  - + Solutions outside of existing treaties can be explored and possibly implemented
    - × E.g., nuclear weapons: issues relating to Israel (elimination of presumed stockpile) and Iran (legitimate uses of nuclear technology) are different
- × Establish non-governmental expert working group to frame definitions
  - + Will help to identify which weapon types are viewed as most threatening in ME
  - + Will help discussion partners to understand respective perceptions of security threats
  - + Will enable identification of alternative, legitimate means of addressing those security threats
  - + Will create understanding of needs for transparency and confidence ⇒ foundation for verification machinery
  - + Will help to set up a balanced system covering all arms categories (equity obligations and rights)
- × Getting hands dirty with field testing of verification ideas
  - + Helps to determine what can be verified: calibration of intrusiveness of the process needed to achieve a relevant level of deterrence against cheating
  - + May lead to discovery of enabling platforms, allowing for ideas hitherto unimaginable
  - + Helps to build a layered system of procedures to address compliance concerns at the lowest possible level of confrontation, but with the necessary teeth to establish the facts of non-compliance and to compel the transgressor to restore the integrity of the regional disarmament treaty
  - + Process in itself builds confidence, not just among negotiating parties, but also in verification procedures and institutions to be created
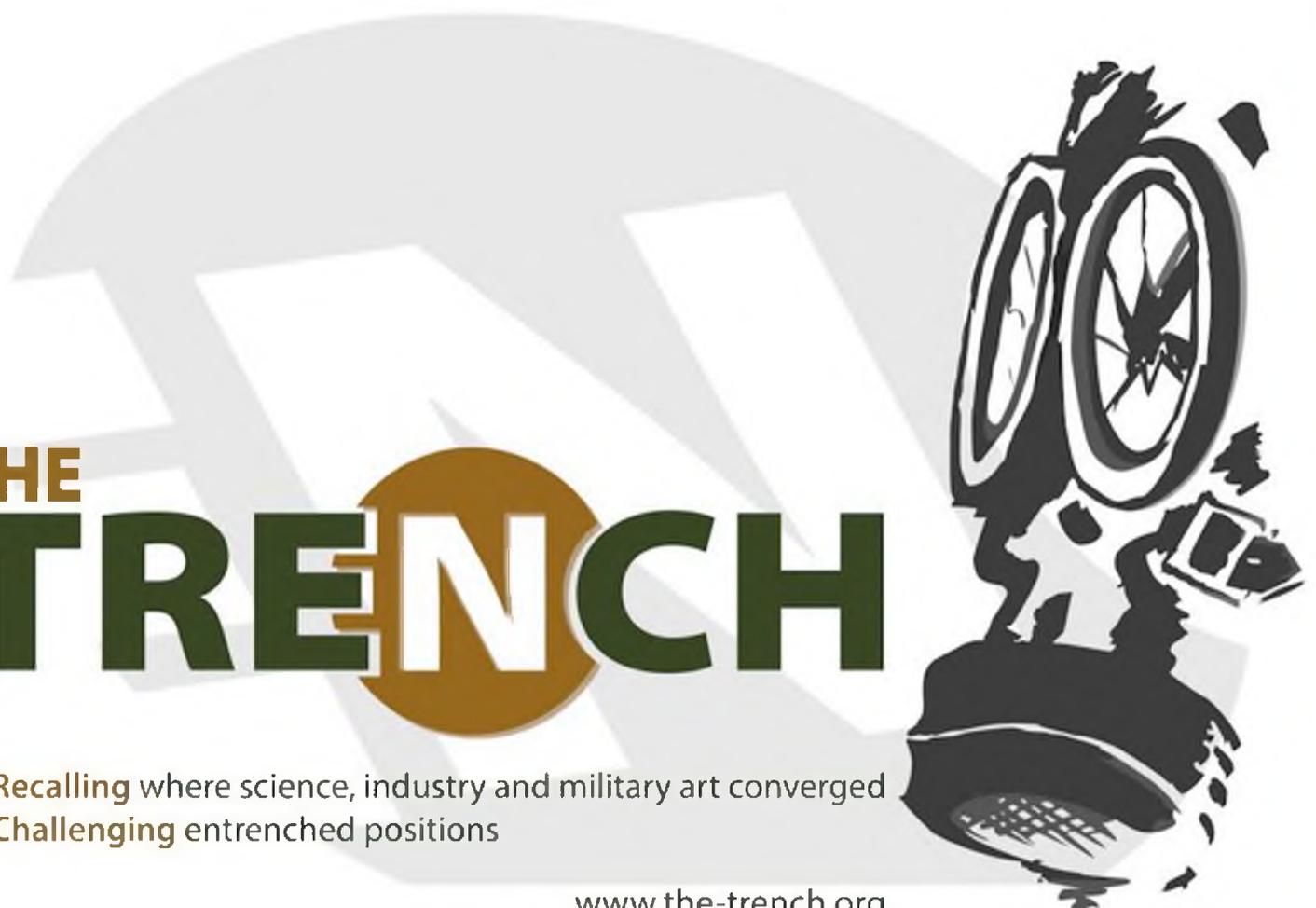
THE TRENCH

Recalling where science, industry and military art converged
Challenging entrenched positions

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