Critical Issues Forum
2013-2014

Concept paper

Nuclear Nonproliferation:
Global Opportunities and Regional Challenges

Introduction:

More than sixty years after their development and their first and the only use in war, nuclear weapons continue to be the core of a number of states' national security policies. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)[1] prohibits its non-nuclear weapon state (NNWS) parties from developing nuclear weapons. The treaty, however, exempts five *de jure* nuclear weapon states (NWS)[2] (France, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom, and the United States) from this ban. These five states had tested nuclear weapons before the treaty was negotiated in 1968. This historical situation created two categories of states in the world: nuclear "haves" and "have nots." Therefore, the NPT is often criticized because of its discriminatory nature.

This discriminatory nature is, however, challenged by a legal obligation in Article VI of the treaty for the five nuclear weapon states to eventually disarm. Three other nuclear armed states—India, Israel, and Pakistan—have not joined the NPT, but are commonly considered *de facto* nuclear weapon states. North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003, and tested nuclear devices in 2006, 2009 and 2013. Iran's opaque intentions, further fueled by its refusal to comply fully with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and United Nations Security Council resolutions, have led many to speculate that Iran may be pursuing an option to produce nuclear weapons.[3] Moreover, A.Q. Khan's nuclear black market network has revealed actual threats that a terrorist group or a so-called rogue state may be able to acquire nuclear weapons materials to develop improvised explosive devices or dirty bombs. Nuclear weapons proliferation, whether by state or non-state actors, poses one of the greatest threats to international security today. These threats are both regional and global.

Background:

Two decades after the Cold War, approximately 17,300 nuclear warheads remain in the arsenals of the NWS, of which approximately 4,200 are actively deployed. A large amount of fissile

[1] http://www.nti.org/glossary/#nonproliferation-treaty
[2] http://www.nti.org/glossary/#nuclear-weapon-states-nws
[3] As of this writing, Iran and the six negotiating countries have reached an interim agreement on the control of its nuclear program.

material, including directly weapons-useable, highly enriched uranium and separated plutonium, still exists in the world today.

While the threat of global nuclear war between the two superpowers—the United States and Russia—has significantly been reduced, the threat of nuclear proliferation to other countries and non-state actors continues to be one of the most serious international security threats.

Additionally, despite the Fukushima disaster in Japan, demand for nuclear energy is still high, given volatile energy costs and concern over global warming caused by fossil fuels. It is expected that more developing countries are moving in the direction of nuclear energy. Therefore, transfer of sensitive technology continues to be a proliferation concern.

Progress on nonproliferation and disarmament is difficult to gauge. Quantitatively the number of nuclear weapons has been reduced significantly since the end of the Cold War. On the other hand, qualitatively, the roles of nuclear weapons in the nuclear weapons states' security policies remain significant.

There is an extensive precedent for bilateral U.S.-USSR/Russia arms control. Since 1969, the United States and Russia have been limiting/reducing their strategic nuclear arsenals through bilateral treaties. The United States and Russia negotiated the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) in 2002. SORT provided for a significant reduction of deployed strategic nuclear warheads in each arsenal to 1,700 - 2,200. However, SORT was often criticized for having a weak verification regime that relied on the START I regime. Fears that this treaty and the START agreement would expire without anything to fill the void were allayed with the signing of the New START Treaty in April 2010, and its subsequent entry into force in February 2011. New START limits the United States and Russia to no more than 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 launchers by 2018.

Nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament regimes gained international momentum following President Obama's powerful speech in Prague in April 2009, in which he reaffirmed America's commitment to seeking a world without nuclear weapons. In June 2013, four years after the groundbreaking Prague speech, President Barack Obama again presented his administration's plan for a world free of nuclear weapons in Berlin, calling for further negotiated nuclear reductions to move beyond Cold War nuclear postures. He stated that his administration would pursue "up to a one-third reduction" in deployed strategic warheads permitted under the New START treaty, reducing those stockpiles to about 1,000 warheads. Russia has expressed unwillingness to pursue further bilateral nuclear cuts with the United States until other nuclear powers join negotiations.

On a multilateral nuclear nonproliferation front, the 2010 NPT Review Conference is widely considered a success with the final outcome document included a 64-item action plan covering the NPT's three pillars and a commitment to implement the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East. While the review conference indicated that clear divergences continue to exist between the priorities of the NWS and the NNWS, state parties were able to compromise and generate the political will necessary to produce a successful outcome.

However, regional conflicts and disputes over nuclear weapons programs in Northeast Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East continue to complicate global efforts to control the spread of nuclear weapons. At the 2010 Review conference, States Parties agreed to convene the conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMD in the Middle East by the end of 2012. However, due to disagreement among relevant countries, this conference has not yet happened. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries, especially the League of Arab states, reacted to this postponement very negatively.

Furthermore, attempts to negotiate legally binding multilateral nuclear disarmament treaties have proved challenging. Seventeen years after it opened for signature, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) banning nuclear explosions has yet to enter into force. Furthermore, the Conference on Disarmament (CD) has been locked in perpetual stalemate over Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) negotiations since 1996.

Russia and China consider U.S. missile defense to be a factor that could destabilize strategic stability – China is believed to be modernizing nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The threat of terrorist groups acquiring nuclear and radiological materials is still real.

Against this backdrop, the 2015 Review Conference will be held at a very important time in the NPT's history. The NPT 2015 Review Conference will be a historical meeting, as it coincides with the 70th anniversary of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing anniversary. Achieving the goals of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation requires concurrent efforts to address the underlying political tensions that drive regional conflicts. Regional security is intricately connected to whether or not the states parties enable a successful outcome at the 2015 Review Conference.

This year's CIF academic year 2013-2014 falls in the run-up to the final session of the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) for the 2015 NPT Review Conference. Also, the spring CIF student conference will be held immediately before the final session of the PrepCom.

This year, the CIF program will challenge participants to study how regional security and international multilateral issues in which WMD play a significant role will impact the drive to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and/or realize a world free of nuclear weapons. Students will identify challenges in nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, evaluate what progress has been made, and envisage what must be done to make progress in nonproliferation, disarmament or both. Participants will examine this topic in CIF's four content domains: scientific/environmental, social/cultural, economic, and political /geopolitical.