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Zero Nuclear Weapons and the International Nuclear Nonproliferation Regime

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Soon after the end of World War II, as a central symptom of the Cold War, a vast nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union came into being. The United States conducted its first atomic weapon test in July, 1945 and a few weeks later used nuclear weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Soviet Union carried out its first nuclear test in 1949. The bomb used against Hiroshima had an explosive yield of 12.5 kilotons, the equivalent of 12,500 tons of TNT. This weapon completely devastated the city of Hiroshima, killing some 200,000 people out of a total population of approximately 330,000. But with the first thermonuclear weapon tests by the United States and the Soviet Union just a few years later in the early 1950's, nuclear test explosions were in the megaton range- one million tons or more TNT equivalent- roughly 1000 times more powerful than the bomb that destroyed Hiroshima.

During the Cold War and thereafter, the United States built some 70,000 nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union around 55,000, and at the peak the United States had 32,500 weapons in its stockpile, the Soviet Union some 45,000. And there was a perceived risk that these weapons might simply spread all over the world. During the Kennedy Administration there were predictions that there could be in the range of two dozen nuclear weapon states, with nuclear weapons integrated into their national arsenals by the

end of the 1970's. President Kennedy in response to a reporter's question in March of 1963 said "...personally I am haunted by the feeling that by 1970...there may be 10 nuclear powers instead of 4, and by 1975, 15 or 20... I regard that as the greatest possible danger and hazard."

If such anticipated proliferation had in fact happened, there could indeed be significantly more than two dozen nuclear weapon states in the world today perhaps more than 40, the number of nuclear capable states that exists today. Mohamed El Baradei, the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), expressed this concern in 2004 when in a speech in Washington DC, he said, "The danger is so imminent...not only with regard to countries acquiring nuclear weapons but also terrorists getting their hands on some of these nuclear materials- uranium or plutonium." Thus, under such circumstances, potentially every conflict could have brought with it the risk of going nuclear, and it might have become extremely difficult to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorist organizations, they would have become so widespread.

When President Kennedy was so concerned about nuclear weapon proliferation, the United States had 22,229 nuclear weapons in its arsenal, the Soviet Union 2,450 and the United Kingdom 50. The total is a smaller number of nuclear weapons than exist in the world today. While from the earliest of days in the nuclear era it had been clear that it was necessary to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, early attempts to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons did not succeed. A watershed was in 1961 when the United Nations General Assembly unanimously passed a resolution, introduced by

Ireland, which called on all states to conclude an international agreement prohibiting the transfer or acquisition of nuclear weapons.

It was hoped that this resolution would pave the way for rapid agreement on a treaty constraining further nuclear proliferation. However, this was not to be the case. Nothing was done for four years. However, in 1965 the UN General Assembly took up the subject again. A new resolution was passed which over the next few years proved to be the blue print of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the NPT. The NPT was signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, and came to be recognized as the principal reason- along with the parallel extended deterrence policies of the United States and the Soviet Union- that President Kennedy's darkest fears have not thus far been realized and only form states, beyond the original five, Israel, India, Pakistan, and perhaps North Korea have issued the nuclear threshold. But now with the general weakening of the NPT regime, the failure of the nuclear weapon to pursue their NPT mandated nuclear disarmament obligations, the pursuit of nuclear weapons by Iran and the threat of the bomb in the hands of North Korea, a general deterioration of the international treaty system, a widespread decline in world order, the rise of international terrorism and a worldwide spreading of technology, statesmen for the first time are wondering whether the world has not become so dangerous that perhaps the NPT regime cannot be saved and that a way somehow must be found to proceed directly toward the elimination of nuclear weapons in the interest of the safety of our children and grandchildren.

Paul Nitze was the archetypical Cold Warrior and nuclear weapon strategist. As the author of NSC-68 commissioned by President Truman in 1950 he helped set the ground rules for the Cold War and the thermonuclear confrontation. In this Report he

wrote in 1950: "In the absence of effective arms control it would appear that we had no alternative but to increase our atomic armaments as rapidly as other considerations make appropriate." But in addition to being an outstanding national leader Paul Nitze was someone who could recognize change and respond to it. In the last op-ed that he wrote at the age of 92 in 1999 entitled "A Threat Mostly To Ourselves" he said:

"I know that the simplest and most direct answer to the problem of nuclear weapons has always been their complete elimination. My 'walk in the woods' in 1982 with the Soviet arms negotiator Yuli Kvitsinsky at least addressed this problem on a bilateral basis. Destruction of the arms did not prove feasible then but there is no good reason why it should not be carried out now."

On January 4th, 2007, in an op-ed article published in the *Wall Street Journal* by George Schultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger and Sam Nunn (and signed on to by a number of other former senior officials in the Reagan, first Bush and Clinton administrations) the authors contended that reliance on nuclear weapons for deterrence "is becoming increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective" and that "unless new actions are taken, the U.S. soon will be compelled to enter a new nuclear era that will be more precarious, psychologically disorienting, and economically even more costly than was Cold War deterrence." Noting that President Ronald Reagan had called for the abolishment of "all nuclear weapons" which he considered to be "totally irrational, totally inhumane, good for nothing but killing, possibly destructive of life on earth and civilization," and that President Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev shared this vision, the four authors called for "reassertion of the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and practical measures toward achieving that goal...." This op-ed article is

most significant in that it represents the national security establishment, far beyond the four distinguished authors, coming to the realization, as did Ambassador Nitze eight years previously, that the world has in fact become so dangerous that nuclear weapons are a threat even to their possessors. This group met at Stanford in October, 2007 for the second time. At this meeting, the four authors and a number of others recommitted themselves to pursue the vision of President Reagan, along with a list of practical steps toward saving the NPT in the interim and eventually achieving this objective; most importantly bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which has languished in the U.S. Senate for 10 years, into force.

Nancy Reagan in a letter to George Schultz upon the convening of this second Conference said in part: “Thank you for letting me know of the new effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons. It was always Ronnie’s dream that the world would one day be free of nuclear arms. He felt that as long as such weapons were around, sooner or later they would be used. The result would be catastrophic.”

When Ambassador Max Kampelman, President Reagan’s arms control negotiator, began this effort nearly four years ago, he invited me to lunch and while we were discussing the state of the world he said in effect: “Tom, I have lived through World War II and the Cold War, but I have never feared as much for the future safety and security of my grandchildren as I do right now. With the world as dangerous as it is at this time, with failing states and international terrorism, we must, we simply must, find a way to completely eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the earth.” Max drew others into this effort and through his long association with former Secretary of State George Schultz, he persuaded him to take the lead. The first meeting at Stanford in 2006 led to

the January, 2007 op-ed article. There is full agreement that the vision of a nuclear weapon free world and the associated practical steps to strengthen the NPT, such as the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, must be pursued simultaneously for either to be viable.

The second op-ed by the four authors was published in the Wall Street Journal on January 15, 2008. The list of cosigners was expanded and in addition a number of former Secretaries of State and Defense and National Security Advisors such as James Baker, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Warren Christopher, Melvin Laird, Anthony Lake, Robert McNamara, and Colin Powell expressed their general support. Former Soviet President Gorbachev's January, 2007, letter to the four authors was referred to in which he said "It is becoming clearer that nuclear weapons are no longer a means of achieving security; in fact, with every passing year they make our security more precarious." Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger said in his address to this second Conference "Mistakes are made in every other human endeavor. Why should nuclear weapons be exempt?" The former UK Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett was quoted, "What we need is both a vision—a scenario for a world free of nuclear weapons—and action—progressive steps to reduce warhead numbers and to limit the role of nuclear weapons in security policy."

And more was said about the practical steps which included: "Extend key provisions of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991" which is scheduled to expire on December 5, 2009; "Start a dialogue, including within NATO and with Russia, on consolidating the nuclear weapons designed for forward deployment to enhance their security and as a first step toward careful accounting for them and their eventual elimination"; and "Adopt a process for bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

(CTBT) into effect, which would strengthen the NPT and aid international monitoring of nuclear activities.”

The authors concluded by saying “In some respects, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is like the top of a very tall mountain. . . . We must chart a course to higher ground where the mountaintop becomes more visible.”

The Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, NPT, is the centerpiece of world security and its survival is essential to us and world security. But its relative success to date is no accident. The Treaty is rooted in a carefully crafted central bargain. In exchange for a commitment from the non-nuclear weapon states (today more than 180 nations, most of the world) not to acquire nuclear weapons and to submit to international safeguards to verify compliance with this commitment, the NPT nuclear weapon states (the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China, the original five) pledged unfettered access to peaceful nuclear technologies and undertook to engage in nuclear disarmament negotiations aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals. It is this basic bargain that for the last three decades has formed the central underpinnings of the international nonproliferation regime.

However, one of the principal problems with all this has been that the nuclear weapon states have never fully delivered on the disarmament part of this bargain and in recent years it appears to have been largely abandoned. The essence of the disarmament commitment in 1968 and thereafter was that pending the eventual elimination of nuclear weapon arsenals the nuclear weapon states would: agree to a treaty prohibiting all nuclear weapon tests, that is a comprehensive nuclear test ban, a CTBT; negotiate an agreement prohibiting the further production of nuclear bomb explosive material;

undertake obligations to drastically reduce their nuclear arsenals; and give legally binding commitments that they would never use nuclear weapons against NPT non-nuclear weapon states. None of this has been actually accomplished over 35 years later. The CTBT was negotiated and signed in 1996 but the U.S. Senate rejected it in 1999. While there were nuclear weapon reductions set forth in treaties negotiated in the past, there have been no negotiated real reductions of nuclear weapons since 1994; there has never been any progress toward an agreement prohibiting the further production of nuclear explosive material, or fissile material, for weapons and even though political commitments were made by the NPT nuclear weapon states in 1995 in effect not to use nuclear weapons against their NPT non-nuclear weapon treaty partners, the national policies of the United States, Britain, France and Russia are the opposite--holding open this option.

And now the other side of the bargain has begun to fall apart. India and Pakistan eroded the NPT from the outside by each conducting a series of nuclear weapon tests in 1998 and declaring themselves to be nuclear weapon states. India, Pakistan and Israel continue to maintain sizable unregulated nuclear weapon arsenals outside the NPT. North Korea withdrew from the NPT in 2003, may have built up to eight to ten nuclear weapons and has conducted a nuclear weapon test. The DPRK has agreed in principle to return to the NPT and to negotiate an end to its nuclear weapon program and significant progress has been made toward this objective, but probably the elimination of their weapons is years away. And now North Korea has at least temporarily terminated their participation in disarmament discussions. The A. Q. Khan secret illegal nuclear weapon technology transferring ring based in Pakistan has been exposed but who can be sure that

we have seen more than the tip of the iceberg? Iran is suspected of having a nuclear weapon program and admitted in late 2003 that contrary to its IAEA safeguards agreement it failed to report its acquisition of uranium enrichment technology.

And why might Iran want the nuclear fuel cycle and the attendant option to construct nuclear weapons? The nuclear program is very popular in Iran. It appears that some countries believe that ultimately the only way that they can gain respect in this world, as President Lula of Brazil declared during his first election campaign, is to acquire nuclear weapons. During the Cold War, nuclear weapons distinguished Great Powers from other countries. The permanent members of the Security Council are the five NPT recognized nuclear weapon states. Forty years ago Great Britain and France both asserted that status was the real reason that they were building nuclear weapons. India declared in 1998 that it was now a big country; it had nuclear weapons. This high political value of nuclear weapons, which was the goal of the NPT to end, has not changed since the Cold War. To quote again President Kennedy this is "...the greatest possible danger and hazard."

But how could nuclear weapons actually be eliminated as advocated by the Schultz Group? A possible course of action could be for the United States to first work quietly with Russia to try to reach an understanding. Then if successful the French, British, and Chinese could be brought in. Eventually the Indians, Pakistanis and Israelis, the three NPT holdouts, could be included. If a general coincidence of view could be achieved among these eight states--over probably a number of years--then the project could be brought to the United Nations. Probably before this could happen the NPT must be significantly strengthened to hold the line pending process toward zero, by entry into

force of the CTBT, extension of the START I Treaty and progress toward a treaty halting the production of nuclear explosive material for weapons (highly enriched uranium and plutonium). The President of the United States and others of the leaders of the eight states then could request an extraordinary session of the United Nations General Assembly and ask to address the Assembly. In their speeches the leaders could call for the world-wide elimination of nuclear weapons and request that the Security Council be charged to carry out this task. The Security Council could then call for the negotiation of a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons. The five Permanent Members of the Council with right of veto would already be committed. Such a treaty would require world-wide intrusive on-site inspection and probably security guarantees for a number of states such as Israel, Iran, Pakistan and North Korea on the edge of conflicts and where nuclear programs are or may be present. North Korea would return to the NPT as a verifiable non-nuclear weapon state. There would need to be an agreement by all states to apply economic and, if necessary, military pressure to any state that did not comply with this program or that subsequently violated the negotiated arrangements. In a first stage to be negotiated the five NPT nuclear weapon states (as said the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia and China) and the three other longtime holdouts from the NPT (India, Pakistan and Israel) would over a period of a few years take all of their nuclear weapons off operational status. Then in a second stage, these eight states would be required to eliminate almost all of their arsenals down to very low levels over a number of years, perhaps 300 each for the U.S. and Russia, 50-75 each for the UK, France and China, and 15 each for India, Pakistan and Israel. A third and later stage would require the complete elimination of weapons but these eight states would be allowed to keep a relatively

limited amount of fissile material which could be converted into a small number of weapons as a hedge against failure of the regime. This could amount to roughly enough material for five weapons each for India, Pakistan, and Israel, fifteen weapons each for Britain, France, and China and thirty weapons each for the United States and Russia. The material would be maintained under very high levels of national security protection at designated depositories and also be under international safeguards implemented by IAEA inspectors. Under various programs all other nuclear explosive material would be eliminated throughout the world. Nuclear submarines would no longer use highly enriched uranium fuel. Missile defense systems could be developed by the world's leading powers on a cooperative basis as a further hedge against failure of the regime.

Nuclear power production would be reconfigured so as to make no more plutonium by the use of non-proliferative fuels and eventually advanced non-proliferative reactors. The plutonium in existing spent nuclear fuel around the world would have to be eliminated as well. Such an arrangement as described here would take a very long time to negotiate and even longer to implement but we must try for the hour is late. A final stage, years in the future, could be the verifiable elimination of the fissile material retained by the eight nuclear states, once the issue of "missing" fissile material, a feature of the nuclear weapon inventories in several of the nuclear weapon possessing states, has been effectively addressed.

But in order to achieve President's Reagan's dream--the world-wide elimination of nuclear weapons and to establish a peaceful and secure world community in the 21st century, the United States and the world community must cooperate; there is no alternative. But how can this happen? How can the United States, working with its allies

and friends, return to its historic destiny of keeping the peace and fostering the development of the community of nations, democracies, free market economies, the international rule of law, international institutions, and treaty arrangements? The United States in recent years has been reviled and feared in many quarters of the world. A poll of 26,000 people in 25 countries conducted in recent years showed a sharp deterioration in the world's view of the United States. Nearly three quarters of the respondents disapproved of the United States policies in Iraq and nearly half of those surveyed said that the United States is playing a predominantly negative role in the world. Senator John McCain recognized this disturbing trend when he said several years ago that "America's position is at an all-time low." Ahmed Rashid, an astute observer of Central Asia, said in his brilliant new book, "Descent into Chaos" that, "the U.S. led war on terrorism has left in its wake a far more unstable world than existed... in 2001." We have a new president now, the world community is hopeful, we perhaps may be given a second chance, but as former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski said in his book "Second Chance," in fact we may be given a second chance to return to our historic role of world leadership in accordance with traditions, but we won't be given a third. We have to get it right.

Among other things we all should recognize that in the wake of the Cold War the world has fundamentally changed, the nation state system that has dominated international life for the last 350 years is rapidly deteriorating. Perhaps some 50 to 70 nations around the world are inexorably slipping into the category of failed states. No one state can go it alone. Since the end of the Cold War there has been roughly one major nation building intervention every two years. Poverty, disease, cultural

misunderstandings and machine-gun societies around the world are central national security threats; these are the principal causes of international terrorism and the primary weapons in the battle against terror and declining world order are economic, political, social, cultural and diplomatic, and only rarely military. Reconstruction in failed states is one thing; it is relatively well understood but in many cases development, of necessity involving institution building, is essential to return failed states to a level where they can function. But to quote the well-known historian Francis Fukayama “any honest appraisal of where the ‘state of the art’ lies in development today would have to conclude that although institutions may be important we know relatively little about how to create them.” But one thing that we do know Dr. Fukayama says is that “Coalitions, in the form of support from a wide range of other countries and international organizations . . . are important for a number of reasons.”

And it should be noted that for over fifty years the United States pursued a world order built on rules and international treaties that permitted the expansion of democracy and the enlargement of international security. Over three years ago in a speech before the American Society of International Law the former Secretary of State asserted that when the United States respects its “international legal obligations and supports an international system based on the rule of law, we do the work of making this world a better place, but also a safe and more secure place for America.”

Last week the President of the United States said, “as for our common defense, we reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals. Our founding fathers, faced with perils that we can scarcely imagine, drafted a charter to assure the rule of law

and the rights of man, a charter expanded by the blood of generations. Those ideals still light the world, and we will not give them up for expedience's sake.”

The United States should join its allies and friends and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, join the Ottawa Land Mine Convention, become a part of the International Criminal Court and establish itself once again as a leading advocate of the international rule of law.

In this way the United States and the world community together can take the urgent practical steps toward restoring the NPT and move in the direction of the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons advocated by Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev and now pursued by Messrs. Schultz, Perry, Nunn and Kissinger, and many others, and provide for the safety of us all in a just, stable and secure Twenty-first Century.