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Nuclear Non-Proliferation and National Security: New Approaches to Arms Control

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September 22, 1999

Introduction

I would like to thank the National Defense University for inviting me to present my views on the future of arms control. In discussing this issue, one should remember that arms control and non-proliferation were not products of the Cold War. Out of recognition of the destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons and the potential for other nations to acquire them, Manhattan Project scientists began thinking of ways to control the spread of nuclear weapons even before the first bomb was completed. Nevertheless, over the years the Cold War and arms control became synonymous to many. With the fall of the Berlin Wall nearly a decade ago and the collapse of the Soviet Union soon thereafter, many hoped that improvements in superpower relations would make preventing the spread of nuclear weapons and reducing existing arsenals easier. Instead, the post-Cold War era has been filled with new challenges and dangers. In many respects, the danger of a city being destroyed by a nuclear weapon is greater today than at any point during the Cold War, except perhaps the during Cuban Missile Crisis. For this reason, I believe today's question—is there a need for a new arms control model—is fundamentally important to the future of international security.

Indeed, the conceptual framework for national and international security has shifted dramatically since the Cold War. The end of bipolar alignment has produced a new, less understood world filled with shifting strategic interests, new and more diffuse threats, and uncertainty about the proper means of confronting them, which has produced a new, still evolving model for arms control. The role of the United States and that of negotiated U.S.-Russian strategic reductions, remain central to the process, and are likely to for the foreseeable future, but new actors are playing increasingly vital roles. Cooperation with responsible non-governmental organizations, so-called "middle power" states, and multilateral institutions are becoming necessary components of U.S. policymaking. How well the United States adjusts to these changes will determine the effectiveness of its arms control and non-proliferation policies.

I would like to begin by sharing an anecdote that was shared with me by a French diplomat who believes that we are entering a most dangerous period indeed. He said that during a private meeting among himself and British and German diplomats in the fall of 1995, the German representative noted that the indefinite extension of the NPT was a great gift, like a desert, but that gift was comparable to an ice cream cone. If the nuclear-weapon states fail to meet their disarmament obligations, the ice cream will melt. He believes that the ice cream has just about melted and, it seems to me that unless steps are taken by the nuclear-weapon states to reduce the political value of nuclear weapons and reduce their arsenals, we will soon be left with a sticky mess.

The most serious threat to international security in the new century will continue to be the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, most importantly nuclear weapons. Chemical and biological weapons are of course very dangerous, but are banned by treaties and lack the instant destructive capabilities of nuclear weapons. While many argue that nuclear weapons helped

maintain stability and prevented direct superpower conflict during the Cold War, there is no greater risk to national and international security today than that of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of unstable regimes, regional rivals, or non-state actors such as terrorists, fanatical religious organizations or militia groups. If the world is to be more secure and stable in the next century, then nuclear proliferation must be prevented.

The cornerstone of international efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons is and must remain the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. For more than thirty years the NPT regime has successfully prevented earlier predictions of a world inhabited by 25 or 30 nations with nuclear weapons integrated into their arsenals from becoming reality. The Treaty represents a bargain between 181 non-nuclear-weapon states which have committed to never acquire nuclear weapons and five nuclear-weapon states which agreed in Article VI to eventually eliminate their nuclear arsenals. This core bargain, the crucial element of nuclear non-proliferation efforts, must be observed if these efforts are to succeed. While the new enhanced IAEA safeguards, if universally accepted among the NPT membership, would help to ensure compliance with non-proliferation standards, efforts to keep nuclear weapons-related materials, technology and expertise away from nations will undoubtedly fail unless they are complimented by efforts to remove the demand for nuclear weapons.

The New Arms Control Model

Arms control has changed dramatically since the end of the Cold War, when the emphasis was on superpower relations and verification. While these remain important, the new arms control model is one of cooperation between governments, multilateral institutions, and non-governmental actors. Last year at the United Nations, for example, all but one non-nuclear-weapon state member of NATO abstained on a General Assembly resolution sponsored by

Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa and Sweden calling for a new international agenda to achieve a nuclear weapons free world, demonstrating that so-called "middle power" states have begun assert themselves to urge greater progress on disarmament.

Similarly, due largely to the efforts of Canada and Germany, NATO agreed at its April Summit meeting to conduct a review of its nuclear doctrine that could result in the consideration by the Alliance of the adoption of a no first use policy. In addition, more than 110 non-nuclear-weapon states have signed treaties establishing nuclear weapons free zones in Latin America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. Similar arrangements are at varying levels of negotiation in regions such as Central Asia, Northeast Asia, Central Europe, and the Middle East. Export control regimes such as the Missile Technology Control Regime, the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Wassenaar Arrangement include nuclear- and non-nuclear-weapon members. It is increasingly clear that the responsibility for keeping the ice cream frozen, for preventing nuclear proliferation, is one shared by all nations of the international community.

Multilateral institutions are also growing in importance. Forums such as the UN First Committee provide arenas for nations to exchange views on a variety of issues and air disputes among members. The IAEA, which includes 126 nations among its membership, plays an important role in verifying compliance with the non-proliferation commitments, and the UN Security Council has played a greater enforcement role in recent years. Similarly, the agreement to extend the NPT resulted in a revised review process in which review conferences are held every five years with preparatory committee meetings held annually. The enhanced review process institutionalizes a mechanism through which non-nuclear-weapon states can voice concerns regarding the implementation of the Treaty and the effectiveness of the regime.

The new post-Cold War arms control model also includes an expanding role for responsible non-governmental organizations. In this age of reduced secrecy and enhanced access to information, NGOs can do more to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, and sometimes can do things that governments cannot. By conducting, organizing, and sponsoring informal exchanges between governments or non-government entities, such as Track II efforts, for example, NGOs can help break down barriers between governments. Track II exchanges provide participants with avenues for exchanging or discussing ideas in an informal forum that lacks the baggage of government-to-government negotiations. NGOs play vital roles in urging governments to review policies regarding nuclear weapons and in promoting transparency, and participate in a variety of multilateral forums, including the NPT review conferences, the Conference on Disarmament, and the UN First Committee. It is now common for these and other forums to schedule sessions in which NGO representatives can address the delegates, and NGOs often arrange delegate briefings on the margins of meetings. When I headed the U.S. campaign to indefinitely extend the NPT in 1995, our efforts benefited greatly from the work of various NGOs. The creation and conduct of, as well as influence over, non-proliferation and disarmament policy is becoming increasingly shared and multilateralized.

Preventing Proliferation

Another important component of the new arms control model is the orientation of those policies. During the Cold War, the central component of arms control, for a variety of reasons, was formal U.S.-Soviet treaty negotiations, and the pace of arms control was dictated by the capacity of the superpowers to verify each others compliance with those agreements. Today, verification is still vitally important, but is no longer sufficient to assure non-proliferation. Recent challenges—nuclear and missile proliferation in South Asia, missile tests by North

Korea, and continued Iraqi recalcitrance—demonstrate two key realities: the political value of nuclear weapons is a primary driver of nuclear and missile proliferation and remains too high, and coercion and stronger verification mechanisms alone cannot prevent proliferation.

Instead, the crucial factor is whether or not the non-proliferation regime and the nuclear-weapon states can effectively remove the demand for nuclear weapons among would-be proliferators, which is linked to reaffirming the central bargain of the NPT and reducing the political value of these weapons. An important element of this is the security assurances given to NPT non-nuclear-weapon states. These commitments, referred to as negative security assurances or NSAs, are formal pledges by the nuclear-weapon states not to use nuclear weapon against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT. Policies that reserve the right to introduce nuclear weapons into future conflicts are damaging to the NPT regime because they are potentially inconsistent with these commitments. During negotiations to indefinitely extend the NPT in 1995, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 984, which acknowledged commitments made by the nuclear-weapon states to refrain from using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states parties to the NPT unless such a state were to attack in alliance with another nuclear-weapon state. These security commitments, which have been implied by the World Court to be legally binding, are important to maintaining non-nuclear-weapon state confidence in the regime.

These commitments do not include exceptions that would allow the use of nuclear weapons against NPT non-nuclear-weapon states in response to an attack with chemical or biological weapons. Assigning such new roles to nuclear weapons increases the political value of nuclear weapons. After India conducted its nuclear tests in May 1998, its Prime Minister declared that India was a big country now that it had nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons are of

limited realistic military use, but statements such as this reflect the political attractiveness of nuclear weapons. The nuclear-weapon states should adopt policies that state that they would under no circumstances introduce nuclear weapons into a conflict. Such a policy, often referred to as a no first use policy, would emphasize their commitment to the NPT-related negative security assurances and would send a firm message to would-be proliferators that acquiring nuclear weapons does not enhance the greatness of a state.

It is for this reason that a National Academy of Sciences report in 1997 said that U.S. national security would best be enhanced by reducing the role of nuclear weapons to the core deterrence function of deterring their use by others. Limiting the role of nuclear weapons to core deterrence would make it more likely that the nuclear weapon states would enter a process to drastically reduce nuclear arsenals. The 1995 Statement of Principles and Objectives, intimately related to the indefinite extension of the NPT, re-committed the nuclear weapons states to vigorously pursue nuclear weapon reductions with the ultimate objective of zero. In the short term, the United States and Russia should reduce their nuclear arsenals to levels far lower than those proposed for START III, perhaps to as low as 1500 or 1000 deployed strategic warheads as has been suggested by Russia in the context of recent bilateral discussions of national missile defenses and strategic reductions. The next step would be for the United States and Russia to reach agreement on limits on tactical nuclear weapons, which would then make possible a second phase limiting each side to 1000 total nuclear weapons.

The door would then be open to begin the all important five-power negotiations aimed at reaching residual levels of nuclear weapons in the low hundreds for the United States and Russia, even lower for China, France and the United Kingdom, and zero for India, Pakistan, and Israel, but with their fissile material kept on their territory under IAEA safeguards so as to permit

reconstitution should the agreement break down. As an essential part of this, the non-nuclear weapon states would all pledge again their non-nuclear weapon status and agree to joint action against any state that should violate this obligation. This would be the end point until the world changes sufficiently to allow negotiation of a complete prohibition on nuclear arms. If successful, this process would represent the most dramatic and important development regarding implementation of Article VI ever accomplished and would enormously strengthen the NPT regime. This is the direction in which the arms control process must head in my opinion if the NPT regime is to survive for the long term and peace and stability are to be achieved in the 21st century.

Current efforts in the United States to protect against the increasing risk of ballistic missile attack from rogue states by deploying national missile defenses deserve special attention as they are intimately linked to the this process. It is important that any U.S. NMD deployment does not derail the arms reduction process, but the Russians, Chinese, and French have already indicated that such a deployment, if done unilaterally, could cause them to enhance their nuclear capabilities, which would be a serious blow against the NPT regime. If the regime is to be preserved, then some compromise must be found. A United States decision to seek Russian agreement to incremental modification of the ABM Treaty to permit a defense against rogue states in exchange for reductions in U.S. and Russian strategic nuclear arsenals to 1500 or even 1000 deployed warheads may be that middle ground.

Recent reports indicate that the Administration is proposing maintaining the current ABM Treaty-permitted level of 100 interceptors at one site and moving that site from Grand Forks to Alaska. Offering to conduct future NMD development cooperatively with Russia could also provide defenses against rogue states without undercutting strategic reductions by helping to

alleviate suspicions in Russia regarding the intended target of a unilateral U.S. NMD deployment and promoting transparency. Strategic reductions, coupled with the development of an extensive and intrusive transparency and inspection regime on warheads, fissile material and ballistic missiles, would lay the groundwork for limits on tactical nuclear weapons as well, which as I mentioned earlier could lead to a second phase U.S.-Russian agreement of 1000 total warheads and create the conditions for the establishment of a five-power forum..

Conclusion

The international community is at a crucial fork in the road. One path leads toward a world plagued by widespread proliferation, which we could try to manage but with peace and stability likely beyond the reach of all nations, and the other toward reducing the political salience of nuclear weapons, drastically cutting nuclear arsenals, and preserving a viable and effective NPT regime for the long term future as a buttress of international peace and stability. The choice is clear to me. Once again, thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for your attention.