

# Will We Ever See a Nuclear Weapon-Free World?

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## DISARMAMENT RATHER THAN COMPLETE ABOLISHMENT

In April 2009, when President Obama talked in Prague about a nuclear weapon-free world, he also said that the goal of total nuclear disarmament would not be achieved quickly—"perhaps not in my lifetime." Is total nuclear disarmament a realistic goal? And is it a desirable goal? Nuclear disarmament efforts should proceed with deep cuts in arsenals. However, I take the stand that complete nuclear abolishment is unrealistic and not desirable either. Nuclear disarmament is one thing, and complete abolishment is another.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has practically ended the nuclear rivalry between the United States and Russia. The famous article contributed by four American nuclear specialists in the *Wall Street Journal* in January 2008 was a testimony to this. Several international groups, such as the Global Zero Commission and the Evans-Kawaguchi Commission, formally known as the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND), have since advanced the total elimination of nuclear threats. President Obama's Prague speech built official momentum toward nuclear disarmament. It was followed by the UN Security Council summit in September 2009 and the UN General Assembly's resolution on total disarmament in late October, a resolution that both the United States and Russia joined.

The United States and Russia are also working on mutual reduction of nuclear arsenals to succeed the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which is to expire on December 5, 2010. It is desirable for the success of

the NPT Review Conference in May 2010 to see the new US-Russia treaty signed by then. The two countries will probably send their agreement on the new treaty soon. It is speculated that their arsenals will come down to about 1,675 respectively, from the 2,200 each called for by 2012 in the Treaty of Moscow on Strategic Offensive Reductions.

A skeptical prospect may be that although the United States and Russia may continue their negotiations for deeper cuts, they will consider that they should maintain “a safe, secure, and effective arsenal,” to use the expression of President Obama’s Prague speech. As the balance of conventional forces tips further to the United States with its superior high technology, Russia will feel a greater urge to maintain nuclear forces than the United States. Moscow furthermore sees the merit of employing tactical nuclear weapons against conventional attacks in the region such as those staged by the Georgians against the South Ossetians and Russians in the summer of 2008.

Then, their bilateral talks for reduction of nuclear weapons, at some point, will have to involve China’s nuclear arsenals. China takes the position that it will participate in nuclear disarmament talks when the United States and Russia substantially reduce their possession. China’s nuclear arsenals lack in transparency, but it is estimated to have about 200 strategic warheads, although the government refuses to provide any official data on them. Thus, the trilateral talks would have to presume China’s disclosure of the size of its nuclear forces. The trilateral talks would be more complex than the bilateral talks.

In late October 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to promote complete elimination of nuclear weapons, as was mentioned earlier. It was supported by 170 nations, the largest number of member nations in UN disarmament history. The United States and Russia voted for the resolution. However, China abstained, while North Korea and India voted against it. As long as India keeps nuclear weapons, Pakistan will not give up its weapons. Under these circumstances, it will be impossible to realize the complete abolishment of nuclear arsenals.

Nuclear disarmament should refer to both strategic and tactical (non-strategic) weapons. Negotiations on tactical nuclear weapons would be as complex as those on strategic weapons.

## MORE EFFECTIVE NONPROLIFERATION MEASURES IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE

The international community should take several immediate measures to advance nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament. Any progress will help support the NPT Review Conference to be held in May 2010. These measures include the following:

1) The CTBT should be ratified and made effective. President Obama has called for his country to ratify it. A skeptical view of the success of the ratification by the Senate is persistent. Even if the United States should ratify the treaty, it must be ratified by 10 more countries before it becomes effective with the support of the required 44 nations. Those 10 countries include China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Israel, and Iran. Even if the CTBT should be ratified, the United States can continue to conduct nuclear tests in a laboratory. Although this may be legal, such conduct would go against the spirit of the CTBT.

2) Negotiations on the proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which started in 1995 when deliberations on the CTBT were finished, also should be concluded as soon as possible as an effective means to contain nuclear proliferation. Four NPT nuclear weapon states have banned the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons. China has not, nor have North Korea, India, and Pakistan, all non-NPT states. It will be a difficult process to conclude the negotiations on the proposed treaty.

3) The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)'s function should be strengthened in terms of budget, staffing, and prerogatives for inspection, so that the NPT regime will become stronger. The report by the Zedillo Commission on the "Role of the IAEA to 2020 and Beyond" should be implemented at an early stage. The IAEA should be able to inspect any suspicious spot on site and without prior notification.

4) The PSI serves as an effective means to intercept the clandestine cross-border transfer of nuclear materials and technology, especially if critical nations such as China and India join the efforts. It is implemented by a group of the willing, but it can be done on a bilateral basis as well as on a multilateral basis.

5) Tightening nuclear security is another effective way to prevent nuclear bombs and know-how from falling into the hands of rogue states and terrorists. President Obama has proposed hosting an international summit meeting on nuclear security in March 2010. Assured protection of nuclear energy not only reduces proliferation risks but also serves as a key to peaceful use of nuclear energy. Concrete steps should follow the meeting.

## WHAT DOES A NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE WORLD LOOK LIKE?

A nuclear weapon-free world is impossible to imagine. However, supposing we have such a world, what would it look like? In such a nuclear weapon-free world, we must assume that no nations or groups will be tempted to have nuclear weapons, both strategic and tactical. Political leaders must think that any interstate conflicts can be resolved by conventional arms only and that conventional wars will not develop into large-scale wars like the two world wars in the last century.

Even if all nations and nonstate groups cease to have nuclear weapons, we cannot eliminate the people, including terrorists, who know how to make nuclear bombs. We cannot quarantine them either. A nuclear weapon-free world should have very strong international and national organs that can impose effective bans on nuclear activities. Can we really build an effective IAEA that can operate worldwide on a much more extensive and intensive scale than now?

Even supposing that all nuclear powers agree to abandon their nuclear arms, we would still face serious challenges. What should be the procedure to verify full abolishment? If a nuclear-armed nation that is about to abandon its nuclear arms should suspect that another nuclear-armed nation may secretly possess nuclear arms, it will not agree to a full elimination. It may even distrust the IAEA. Can the IAEA become a highly competent organization that can gain full confidence in terms of safeguards and compliance? Can the IAEA contain covert operations like Abdul Qadeer Khan's, that is, operations by a secret group that develop and spread nuclear programs with the covert instruction of a nuclear-armed state? An additional serious challenge will be nonstate actors such as terrorists who may clandestinely develop nuclear programs. Can the IAEA or other alternative organizations handle these covert activities?

If a country should lose confidence in the IAEA or simply suspect its adversary's intentions, it may secretly start making nuclear weapons. And then, how do we prevent such country from making nuclear bombs? Who will deal with such an "offender"? By using conventional arms? Those countries that can deal with the offender may be scared to face its nuclear retaliation. This will cause other countries to go nuclear too.

Nuclear weapons are special weapons. They are weapons of mass destruction. It is morally wrong to depend upon such weapons for national security. From this standpoint, we should do away with nuclear weapons altogether. However, this moralistic argument may be missing a point:

nuclear weapons have functioned to prevent major wars among nuclear-armed states from occurring. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 developed neither into a nuclear war nor a large-scale conventional war. India and Pakistan have restrained themselves from escalating their Kashmir conflicts into a major war. Nuclear weapons have played a unique positive role in stabilizing international relations.

Nuclear weapons also have functioned as measure of national prestige and intimidation rather than as a means to national survival. If the factors of prestige and intimidation continue to find an important place in diplomacy, some nuclear-armed states will not dismantle their arms.

The nuclear weapon-free world assumes that all nations and nonstate groups are morally conscious of the immoral nature of nuclear weapons. However, in reality many leaders still seem to give an overriding importance to the merit of nuclear weapons as a key component to national security and survival, despite the immoral nature of such weapons.

The move toward a nuclear weapon-free world is likely to create a more unstable world with stronger mutual suspicions than today.

## NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND STRATEGIC STABILITY

A realistic road will be to seek substantial reduction of nuclear forces with a sense of strategic stability. President Obama said in Prague, “Make no mistake: as long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure, and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies...” The core of the United States’ nuclear doctrine lies in its deterrence strategy. Deterrence works in two ways: the United States wants to discourage a potential nuclear or non-nuclear state adversary from waging an armed attack on itself or its allies by warning that its nuclear reprisal will be devastating. It also wants to discourage such a state from waging an armed attack by warning that it may conduct a preemptive nuclear attack. Both the retaliatory use and the “first use” of nuclear force have been a core of US nuclear doctrine.

The American allies such as NATO members and Japan rely on the US nuclear deterrence capability for their national security. The nuclear disarmament process should be based on this. Japan, for example, is faced with three nuclear-armed countries—Russia, China, and North Korea. Although North Korea’s nuclear arms are yet to be deployed, its No-dong missiles, which can reach the Japanese islands, present themselves as a serious security concern for Japan. Japan sees the benefit of US deterrence

by its first use of nuclear force (the United States may actually preempt North Korean nuclear attack by the first use of conventional force or may retaliate against North Korea using conventional force, but the US nuclear posture is important psychologically for the Japanese). This will apply to South Korea as well.

Then the issue is: how far down can the United States and Russia come between themselves without worrying about the disadvantage that such disarmament may inflict upon their national security? There is a minimum level of strategic nuclear arsenals. In June 2009, the Global Zero Commission issued an action plan in which it proposed that the United States and Russia reduce to 1,000 warheads each to be implemented by 2018, to 500 each in a multilateral framework by 2021, and to zero along with all nuclear-armed states by 2030. The ICNND proposes in its report to be released in December 2009 that the world will have no more than 1,000 warheads in total by 2025 and zero by 2030.

I would propose 500 for Russia and 700 for the United States by 2030. This is because the United States may have to face 200 Chinese warheads. If the United States and Russia want to go down beyond this level, they would consider having China's participation, and eventually other nuclear countries'. This would help maintain strategic stability in international relations.

In the longer run, we should encourage world leaders to change their mentality on nuclear deterrence, so that strategic stability will not be determined by nuclear deterrence but by conventional deterrence. The United States and Russia, being members of the G8, have developed a sufficient sense of partnership so that they no longer see the possibility of nuclear confrontation. In the 1980s, the leaders of the United States and Russia departed from their mentality supporting the strategic doctrine of mutual assured destruction. Eventually they can reach a bilateral agreement denouncing the first use of nuclear forces. After all, nuclear disarmament will best be achieved under the atmosphere of trust and partnership, and on the basis of strategic stability.

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