

## **Nuclear Non-Proliferation & Disarmament: Scope for India-U.S. Cooperation**

V. R. Raghavan and Nidhi Narain

### **Revival of Nuclear Disarmament**

The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century saw the defining events of 9/11 and other dramatic terrorist attacks across the globe. The new security environment of more states coming into possession of nuclear weapons, and possibilities of international terrorist groups attempting to acquire them, created a new perspective on nuclear weapons. In less than a decade after the Cold War, nuclear weapons had moved from being guarantors of security to becoming the source of unpredictable and catastrophic threats to states. Relying on the severely strained nuclear non-proliferation regime no longer seems possible in the wake of a deteriorating nuclear order. This has in turn led to strident calls for global nuclear disarmament “implying that support is growing for the notion that the only permanent solution to nuclear dangers is an agreement that would eliminate all nuclear weapons, verifiable, from all nations”<sup>1</sup>.

The period 2007-2009 is already a milestone in the journey towards eliminating nuclear weapons. The emphatic call for leadership in nuclear disarmament from US and Russia made in 2007 and 2008 by the Schultz-Kissinger-Perry-Nunn quartet, and taken up by similar calls by Mr. Gorbachev and number of former Defence Ministers and Generals captured global attention. This has been followed by influential non governmental groups being formed to build global opinion and provide momentum to nuclear disarmament. The arrival of President Obama on the global scene, his Prague speech of 2009 followed

---

<sup>1</sup> Barry Blechman, “Why we need to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons-And How to do it”, in Barry Blechman and Alex Bollfrass (Ed.), **Elements of a Nuclear Disarmament Treaty**, Stimson Center, 2010. [[http://www.stimson.org/nuke/pdf/Chap\\_1\\_Blechman\\_Formatted.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/nuke/pdf/Chap_1_Blechman_Formatted.pdf)]

by the US Quadrennial Defense review and Nuclear Posture Review, has further energized the discourse.

The re-start and signing of the START arms control agreement between the US and Russia to further lower nuclear weapon levels is viewed as a landmark sign of a new phase in nuclear disarmament. Before it, this period also witnessed the culmination of the US-India agreement on supply of nuclear energy technologies and fuel. The acceptance of India as responsible nuclear state which can be trusted with advanced technologies and which is willing to be a partner in enhancing nuclear safety and security, is a new and meaningful development. It establishes new norms and disciplines which would influence the nuclear energy and proliferation paths in future.

This cascade of nuclear disarmament proposals has emerged from different sources. The Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission led by Hans Blix had produced a report with a set of pragmatic recommendations. It is now followed by the International Commission on Nuclear Non Proliferation & Disarmament brought into being by the Australian and Japanese governments. In 2008, the European Union had outlined an Eight Point initiative to the UN Secretary General. The same year, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon delivered a major and meaningful address on Nuclear disarmament. It was the first ever such address by a UN Secretary General, exclusively on nuclear disarmament. These initiatives take the nuclear disarmament discourse well beyond the earlier attempts of the 1990s. The '13 Practical Steps' on the implementing Article VI of the NPT, resolutions offered by Japan, Myanmar, the New Agenda Coalition form part disarmament proposals before the turn of the Century. The cumulative impact of these disarmament ideas, proposals and exhortations has been to throw up fresh questions on the relevance of nuclear deterrence and utility of nuclear weapons to the new types of threats faced by states today.

India, even when it was not in possession of nuclear weapons, was at the forefront of the movement to eliminate nuclear weapons. In some good measure this was reiterated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, at an International Conference in New Delhi in

June 2008. In his Inaugural Address the Prime Minister said, “India is fully committed to nuclear disarmament that is global and non discriminatory in nature. The pursuit of this goal will enhance not only our security but the security of all other countries.” In keeping with this approach, India has submitted Working Papers to the UN General Assembly, and made regular submissions at the sessions of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. All of this notwithstanding, “a fundamental change in perspective, amounting to the delegitimising of nuclear weapons and a fresh look at the NPT is required to change the mind-set of the nuclear powers”<sup>2</sup>.

A nuclear tipping point<sup>3</sup> has taken centre stage in the international debate on revival for nuclear disarmament. This is amidst fears and real dangers of non-state actors acquiring nuclear weapons, clandestine horizontal proliferation by states and revisiting the concept of deterrence as a national security doctrine. In April 2009 in Prague, President Obama pledged to address the international threat posed by nuclear weapons and nuclear materials by taking three steps: 1) reducing and eventually eliminating nuclear arsenals; 2) shoring up the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons; and 3) barring terrorists from acquiring nuclear materials. President Obama and his administration believe that nuclear terrorism is the “most immediate and extreme threat to global security”<sup>4</sup>. To address this threat, President Obama hosted a Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, DC in April 2010 in an effort to secure dangerous nuclear materials and to stop trade and transit of nuclear materials within four years. The Prague speech draws upon the fact that “in a strange turn of history the threat of global nuclear war has gone down but the threat of a nuclear attack has gone up. More nations have acquired these weapons and testing has continued.” Although the diagnosis is perfect, the treatment envisaged is far too inadequate to address the emergency. A fundamental change in perspective, amounting to the delegitimation of nuclear weapons

---

<sup>2</sup> T.P. Sreenivasan, “Bringing India’s Dream to Fruition”, *The Washington Quarterly*, April 2010

<sup>3</sup> See George P. Schultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, “Toward a Nuclear Free World”, *Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008. [[http://online.wsj.com/public/article\\_print/SB120036422673589947.html](http://online.wsj.com/public/article_print/SB120036422673589947.html)]

<sup>4</sup> Remarks by President Obama, Hradcany Square, Prague, Czech Republic, 5 April 2009. [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>]

and the abandonment of the outdated NPT is required to change the strategic mindset of the nuclear powers.<sup>5</sup>

As far back as September 2009, the Obama administration had sought to reinforce the importance of the Nuclear Security Summit when the President presided over the UN Security Council meeting that adopted Resolution 1887 on nuclear nonproliferation and nuclear disarmament. Two key goals of this initiative are to secure nuclear materials and minimize the civil use of highly enriched uranium (HEU) in order to mitigate the risk that terrorists will acquire and build a nuclear bomb or radiological device<sup>6</sup>. However, there have been several on-going initiatives by international organizations and NPT treaty members to control illicit trade in nuclear materials like the Cooperative Threat Reduction program initiated by Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material, amongst others.

## **India, U.S. and Nuclear Disarmament**

### ***Indian Initiatives***

The Indian response can be best explained through the statement “that in the long term, it is only through the universal applicable non-discriminatory and fully transparent procedures putting place that can prevent and deny nuclear materials from falling into dangerous hands”<sup>7</sup>. India’s perceptions are influenced by the current state and the history of developments in its neighbourhood and the larger theatre of the Asia-Pacific as they pertain to nuclear issues. The nexus between clandestine nuclear proliferation and the danger of these weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors are the clear and present dangers<sup>8</sup>. In the West, and especially among advocates of the arms control and non-proliferation approach, India is often criticized for focusing too much on the

---

<sup>5</sup> T.P. Sreenivasan.

<sup>6</sup> Sarah Diehl and Paula Humphrey, *In Focus: Nuclear Security Summit, April 12-13, 2010* [[http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/in\\_focus\\_nuclear\\_summit.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/in_focus_nuclear_summit.html)]

<sup>7</sup> Remarks by Shyam Saran at the Global Zero Summit, Paris, 3 February 2010, “India and the pursuit of Global Zero-A World without Nuclear Weapons”. [<http://www.maritimeindia.org/pdfs/GlobalZeroSummit.pdf>]

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

inequities of the arms control order, rather than on using arms control as a building block towards nuclear disarmament. Some even suggest that the Indian opposition to such an approach was a cynical means to protect the nuclear option and is now designed to limit its international obligations<sup>9</sup>. This position can be viewed as the failure to address the consequences of nuclear disarmament by India rather than it being mere cynicism. Disarmament for India has always been a preferred moral position based in the belief that nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved without nuclear arms control working coterminously. Hence, the Indian opposition to the NPT and other treaties due to its incompatibility with disarmament<sup>10</sup>.

Today, there is a need to extrapolate the Indian understanding of universal nuclear disarmament which for it is a state of zero nuclear weapons, and not just of fewer weapons in a few hands. There is an argument that India should seek to underline the linkages between non-proliferation and disarmament since the goal for the latter moves beyond the realm of mere reduction in nuclear arsenals or arms control through CTBT or FMCT. Unfortunately however, most recent initiatives fall short of suggesting steps beyond arms control and non-proliferation. This will result in unsustainability of non-proliferation since the continued presence of nuclear weapons practically ensures that others would feel the need for nuclear deterrence<sup>11</sup>. The recently published Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) by the United States validates this point clearly by maintaining that “without jeopardising its traditional deterrence and reassurance goals, it would maintain a credible nuclear deterrent and reinforces regional security architectures with missile defences and that it will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states party to the NPT. Yet, it is not prepared to adopt a universal policy that

---

<sup>9</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan, “The Future of Nuclear Disarmament” in V.R. Raghavan (Ed.), *India and Global Nuclear Disarmament*, Macmillan, 2010, New Delhi

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Manpreet Sethi, *India and Universal Nuclear Disarmament*, in V.R. Raghavan (Ed.), *India and Global Nuclear Disarmament*, Macmillan, 2010, New Delhi

detering nuclear attack is the sole purpose of nuclear weapons”<sup>12</sup>. While the NPR falls short of declaring that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons is to deter a nuclear attack, it accepts it as a long-term goal. Moreover, the pledge to only use nuclear weapons in extreme circumstances can be open to a wide degree of interpretation.

There are several incremental steps that the NPR takes towards the goal of a nuclear free world pledged a year ago by President Obama in Prague. “The document says the United States would not develop new nuclear warheads, which appears to rule out lower-yield and therefore more ‘usable’ bombs, and there would be no further testing. It also says it would reduce the size of the so-called strategic hedge of warheads, which are held in reserve, but are not dismantled”<sup>13</sup>. Thus, in the case of the United States, while the NPR talks of reducing the role of nuclear weapons, deterrence remains central with little proof of the commitment to the deep shifts necessary for disarmament<sup>14</sup>.

In this context, it would be useful to examine some of the steps towards nuclear disarmament that have been offered by India in recent times. A Working Paper presented by India at the UNGA in 2006 that encapsulated a set of proposals that could lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons that form part of its policy on the subject of disarmament.

- Reaffirm the unequivocal commitment by all NWS to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons;
- Reduce the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines;
- Reduce nuclear danger, including the risk of accidental nuclear war, by de-alerting nuclear weapons to prevent unintentional or accidental use of nuclear weapons;
- Negotiate a global agreement among NWS on ‘no first use’ of nuclear weapons;
- Negotiate a universal and legally binding agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons against NNWS;
- Negotiate a Convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons; and
- Negotiate a Nuclear Weapons Convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their time-bound

---

<sup>12</sup> Nuclear Posture Review Report –April 2010, United States Department of Defense

[<http://www.defense.gov/npr/docs/2010%20Nuclear%20Posture%20Review%20Report.pdf>]

<sup>13</sup> Editorial, *The Guardian*, 07 April 2010. [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/apr/07/barack-obama-nuclear-weapons>]

<sup>14</sup>Paul Ingram, *The Guardian*, 07 April 2010 [<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/apr/06/nuclear-weapons-disarmament-proliferation>]

destruction, leading to the global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of nuclear weapons<sup>15</sup>.

What this would seem to suggest is that states should target their nuclear doctrines and reduce the role and salience of nuclear weapons. The Indian list of suggestions to the Conference on Disarmament has its own logical consistency and elements of credibility creation rooted in the Indian approach to the nuclear issue over the last two decades. “It is unrealistic to talk of a nuclear weapon free world unless it is preceded by delegitimisation of the weapon. No weapon deemed legitimate will ever get eliminated. The four American statesmen talk of the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons atop a very tall mountain, and of the need to chart a course to higher ground, where the mountain top becomes visible. Logically, that higher ground is delegitimisation of the weapon and an agreement on no first use”<sup>16</sup>.

The Indian initiative in Geneva<sup>17</sup> similarly, emphasises these aspects in its seven-step approach to a world without nuclear weapons. These seven steps, with their parallels to the Four Horsemen’s action plan are given below:

(1) Reaffirmation of unequivocal commitment of all nuclear weapon states to the goal of complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

(2) Reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in the security doctrine.

(3) Adoption of measures by nuclear weapon states to reduce nuclear danger, including accidental nuclear war, de-alerting of nuclear weapons. (This is also one of the proposals of Schultz and his associates.)

(4) An agreement on no first use of weapons by nuclear weapon states. (This crucial delegitimisation measure does not feature in the proposals of the four US statesmen.)

(5) A negative security assurance in an international agreement not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states. (This also does not figure in the Schultz-Kissinger-Nunn-Perry initiative, perhaps because such a declaratory assurance already

---

<sup>15</sup> In October 2006, India put forward a set of proposals at the UN General Assembly in a Working Paper outlining certain steps that could lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

<sup>16</sup> K. Subrahmanyam, “Four Men and a Tough Promise”, *The Indian Express*, 5 March 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Statement by Hamid Ali Rao at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva presenting a 7-point Disarmament Agenda. [Speeches/ Statements – February 28, 2008 - <http://meaindia.nic.in/>]

exists. But there are also threats of the use of bunker-buster tactical n-weapons against non-nuclear states.)

(6) Convention on complete prohibition of use and threat of use of the weapons. This is an extension of no first use to no-use.

(7) Convention prohibiting development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons and on their destruction. (Perhaps this is implied in the vision of a world without nuclear weapons of the four statesmen but is not spelt out as a step). It emerges that the Indian thinking on moving towards a world without nuclear weapons is broadly parallel to the proposals of the four statesmen except in the crucial respect of delegitimising as an initial step.

### *U.S. Initiatives*

The U.S Nuclear Posture Review outlines the vision for strengthening the non-proliferation regime, reversing the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran, strengthening international safeguards, creating consequences for non-compliance and promoting the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. "The connection between nuclear posture and nonproliferation sends a credible signal to the rest of the world that the United States regards its nuclear arsenal as a defensive asset, not as a tool of coercion and domination"<sup>18</sup>. For disarmament advocates there are reportedly several welcome initiatives in the NPR. First, it reduces the circumstances under which the president would authorize the use of nuclear weapons, but prudently retains the caveat to reverse its position in extreme circumstances regarding biological weapons threats. Second, it eliminates an entire class of weapons, the Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles-Nuclear (TLAM-N) cruise missiles, which have been in storage in the United States since 1992. Third, the NPR states explicitly that "the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads," reversing the George W. Bush administration's repeated and unsuccessful goal of obtaining congressional funding for a Reliable Replacement Warhead<sup>19</sup>. The Quadrennial Defense Review advances two clear

---

<sup>18</sup> Joshua Pollack, "What Obama's Nuclear Posture Review accomplishes", *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, 7 April 2010. [<http://www.thebulletin.org/web-edition/columnists/joshua-pollack/what-obamas-nuclear-posture-review-accomplishes>]

<sup>19</sup> Micah Zenko, "Obama's Sensible Nuclear Posture Review", *First Take*, 6 April 2010, Council on Foreign Relations. [[http://www.cfr.org/publication/21837/obamas\\_sensible\\_nuclear\\_posture\\_review.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/21837/obamas_sensible_nuclear_posture_review.html)]

objectives, one, to further rebalance the capabilities of its armed forces and two, to further reform the Department's institutions and processes through the purchase of better weapons and technology. It simultaneously seeks substantial budgetary support for nuclear weapons related programs. However, this decision for allocation of more money from existing defence budgets to modernise strategic but also tactical nuclear arsenals by the United States contradicts a realistic and achievable goal of moving towards zero.

## **Nuclear Doctrine, Disarmament and NPT**

Most NWS have revised their nuclear doctrines in the past few years with each one reiterating the centrality of nuclear deterrence for national security, while stopping short of renouncing them owing to the instabilities in the international environment. "While limiting the role of nuclear weapons in only nuclear contingencies provides credible negative security assurances to non nuclear weapons states, accepting a no first use (NFU) takes the task further by removing the possibility of their use to nuclear weapons states too. The adoption of a NFU is a crucial element in the eventual delegitimisation of nuclear weapons"<sup>20</sup>. The Indian nuclear doctrine has a posture of NFU wherein nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation of a nuclear attack and not against non nuclear weapons state. There is however, a caveat to this posture: "In the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons"<sup>21</sup>. The 2010 NPR of the United States has made small and significant steps towards a possible non-first use with a similar caveat. Even though it is not a clearly stated NFU by the U.S, it is a step in that direction and is to be welcomed. Such a policy allows for greater response time though it requires nuclear weapons placed in a de-alerted, de-mated and de-targeted state. In the path to arriving at zero, a universal NFU would be even more relevant as nuclear

---

<sup>20</sup> Manpreet Sethi, *India and Universal Nuclear Disarmament*, in V.R. Raghavan (Ed.), *India and Global Nuclear Disarmament*, Macmillan, 2010, New Delhi

<sup>21</sup> "The Cabinet Committee on Security Reviews operationalisation of India's Nuclear Doctrine", Press Release Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, January 4, 2003. [<http://meadev.nic.in/news/official/20030104/official.htm>]

weapons reduce. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement at the Nuclear Security Summit in April 2010 reiterates this point: "India wants the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention and supports the universalisation of the policy of NFU. The salience of nuclear weapons in national defence and security doctrines must be reduced as a matter of priority"<sup>22</sup>.

The NPT that was ratified in 1970 and extended indefinitely in 1995 turned into a perpetual treaty and had in fact, prompted the Indian and Pakistani tests of 1998. India had hoped of shaping a new non-discriminatory regime by consensus, but the perpetuation of the NPT pushed India into becoming a state with nuclear weapons. The NPT today has become an anachronism as it unfortunately no longer has any possibility for change. The only alternative to it is to let it lie and pursue an alternative system that ensures universal participation and adherence. This is a great opportunity for India, as U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton herself declared in October 2009: "We want India to be part of our overall non-proliferation efforts, to really be a major player at the table in trying to figure out how, starting from where we are right now, we go forward in an effective, verifiable manner to reinstate a non-proliferation regime that can prevent further countries acquiring nuclear weapons, or even peaceful nuclear capacity without the safeguards that we envision. Further, India we see as a full partner in this effort and we look forward to working with them as we try to come up with the 21st century version of the NPT"<sup>23</sup>. Unfortunately, there is no real evidence of such an effort in any of the road maps in Washington.<sup>24</sup> Suggesting that the landmark India-US nuclear deal was unique, Clinton made it clear that it would not be used as a template for agreements to offer peaceful nuclear energy to other countries, but in general it could help create a better verification and safeguard regime. The goal is to create a better verification and

---

<sup>22</sup> Siddharth Varadarajan, "Manmohan Links Nuclear Security, Disarmament", *The Hindu*, 14 April 2010

<sup>23</sup> Arun Kumar, "U.S. wants India as major player in new NPT regime", *Thaindian News*, October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. [[http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/us-wants-india-as-major-player-in-a-new-npt-regime-hillary-clinton-lead\\_100263852.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/world-news/us-wants-india-as-major-player-in-a-new-npt-regime-hillary-clinton-lead_100263852.html)]

<sup>24</sup> T.P. Sreenivasan, "Bringing India's Dream to Fruition", *The Washington Quarterly*, April 2010

safeguard regime to look for ways to provide the fuel cycle that doesn't spin into use for non-peaceful purposes.

Since there is no room for change in the existing NPT and there is no consensus on what to do about it in the ongoing NPT RevCon, there is scarce reason for India to join. Nevertheless, concern over evolving ideas on what nuclear countries believe is necessary for nuclear deterrence will have to be faced even as nuclear arsenals decline in some. In the light of Secretary of State Clinton's statement there is however, ample room for cooperation in creating a better non-proliferation environment. "The U.S.-Indian nuclear deal, whose framework was presented in a joint statement on July 18, 2005, was testimony to the good faith with which India has sought to allay the fears of the international community about Indian nuclear weapons"<sup>25</sup>. As a consequence of the deal, India assumed the responsibilities of a signatory of the NPT without actually signing the treaty by agreeing to: 1) subject its nonmilitary facilities to IAEA inspections, which included 14 out of its 22 power reactors; 2) sign the Additional Protocol, which will allow for more detailed inspections by the IAEA; 3) commit to halting further nuclear testing; 4) work to strengthen the security of its nuclear arsenals; 5) pledge to negotiate an FMCT with the United States in good faith and to sign it when ready; and 6) ensure that all equipment for nuclear reactors and fuel imported by other states, including the United States, will be for peaceful uses only.<sup>26</sup> In other words, an India-specific dispensation was made in light of the new confidence in U.S.-Indian relations during the Bush administration<sup>27</sup>. The NPT regime therefore must be considered from a diverse set of national perspectives in order to gauge what steps might be possible and what constraints will be need to be addressed in order to adapt the non-proliferation regime to the emerging global nuclear order. It is far

---

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Jayshree Bajoria and Esther Pan, "The U.S. India Nuclear Deal," Backgrounders, November 20, 2009 [<http://www.cfr.org/publication/9663/#p2>]

<sup>27</sup> Bruno Tertrais, "The Illogic of Zero", *The Washington Quarterly*, April 2010

from certain that key non-nuclear weapons states will share the diagnosis and support the remedies preferred by the Western non-proliferation community<sup>28</sup>.

A shared and common goal of a nuclear-free world can create possibilities for cooperation between India and the United States. A window of opportunity presented itself to shape a common strategy to attain their objectives because of the advent of the bilateral nuclear deal, which sought to give India the same rights and obligations as other states possessing advanced nuclear technology, and the idea of delegitimation of nuclear weapons in the United States itself.<sup>29</sup> New ways should now be examined to develop a new instrument in dealing with nuclear non-proliferation outside the NPT. Indian and U.S. cooperation and convergence of goals on proliferation can provide the platform for this.

## **Moving to Zero**

The reduction or numbers debate within this context received close attention in the Blix WMD Commission report<sup>30</sup> which underlined that that states party to the NPT should fulfill its stated obligations, a task much easier said than done. It also mentions the adoption of the “thirteen practical steps” adopted in 2000. Emphasis was also laid on states making active use of the IAEA as a forum for exploring various ways to reduce proliferation risks connected with the nuclear fuel cycle, amongst others. The idea of regional nuclear weapons free zones was also stressed upon. What would a broad program of global disarmament look like? The report highlighted measures for the Conference on Disarmament (CD) in Geneva which has been unable to adopt an agenda for almost a decade. The Report recommended that the CD be empowered to make administrative and procedural decisions, including the adoption of a program of work by a qualified majority of two thirds of the membership present and voting. In addition, the General Assembly should convene a new World Summit on disarmament, nonproliferation, and the use of

---

<sup>28</sup> Steven E. Miller and Scott D. Sagan, “Nuclear Power without Nuclear Proliferation?” *Daedalus*, Fall 2009.

<sup>29</sup> T.P. Sreenivasan.

<sup>30</sup> Weapons of Terror: Freeing the World of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms, Report of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission, Stockholm, June 2006

WMDs by terrorists. The report also recommended that states with nuclear weapons should commit themselves categorically to a policy of no first use, and the United States and Russia should reciprocally take their nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert. In all of this, the United States has decisive leverage. If the United States takes the lead by bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty into force and by accepting a verified ban on the production of fissile material for weapons, the world is likely to follow.

The ICNND report goes further to recommend a specific phased approach in meeting the challenge of nuclear disarmament. The basic themes outlined in it are in terms of delegitimising nuclear weapons and applying a phased approach that can be realistically pursued as a two-phased process. It proposed minimisation as the immediate goal and elimination as the ultimate one. Short term (to 2012) and medium term (to 2025) efforts should focus on achieving a minimisation point of very low numbers of warheads (less than 10 per cent of present arsenals). Further, analysis and debate should commence on the conditions necessary to move from the minimisation point to elimination, although a target date for arriving at zero cannot be credibly specified at this stage<sup>31</sup>. A Global Zero initiative spearheaded by more than 200 leaders worldwide in its Action Plan proposes a four-phased approach with each phase offering specific and concrete steps to be reached. *Phase I* is from 2010 to 2013 under which the U.S. and Russia, following the conclusion of the START replacement treaty would bilaterally negotiate an accord to reduce the total number of weapons down to 1000 warheads per country (to be implemented by 2018). *Phase II* is from 2014 to 2018 under which the U.S and Russia will agree to reduce the numbers to 500 total warheads each by 2021 in a multilateral framework. This would be contingent upon all other nuclear weapons countries agreeing to maintain a freeze on their stockpiles until 2018, followed by proportional reductions until 2021. In this period, a comprehensive verification and enforcement system will be established. *Phase III* is from 2019 to 2023 that would entail negotiations on a Global Zero accord and *Phase IV*

---

<sup>31</sup> Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A practical Agenda for Global Policymakers, Report of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Canberra/Tokyo, November 2009

from 2024 to 2030 would be marked by a complete phased, verified, proportionate dismantling of all nuclear arsenals to zero total warheads.

### *U.S.– Russian Disarmament Objectives*

In April 2010 the United States and Russia opened a new era in their tumultuous relationship as they signed an arms control treaty to seal a New START Pact. Under the Treaty, the U.S. and Russia will be limited to significantly fewer strategic arms within seven years from the date the Treaty<sup>32</sup> enters into force. Each Party has the flexibility to determine for itself the structure of its strategic forces within the aggregate limits of the Treaty as the following:

- 1,550 warheads. Warheads on deployed ICBMs and deployed SLBMs count toward this limit and each deployed heavy bomber equipped for nuclear armaments counts as one warhead toward this limit. This limit is 74% lower than the limit of the 1991 START Treaty and 30% lower than the deployed strategic warhead limit of the 2002 Moscow Treaty.
- A combined limit of 800 deployed and non-deployed ICBM launchers, SLBM launchers, and heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments.
- A separate limit of 700 deployed ICBMs, deployed SLBMs, and deployed heavy bombers equipped for nuclear armaments. This limit is less than half the corresponding strategic nuclear delivery vehicle limit of the START Treaty.

The principal U.S. objective in this bilateral strategic arms control effort was to increase stability in the U.S.-Russian nuclear relationship, at significantly lower levels of nuclear weapons. The New START Treaty sets aggregate limits which are 56% lower than the limit for deployed strategic nuclear delivery vehicles and 74% lower than the limit for deployed warheads as established in the 1991 START Treaty. This highlights the technical and political difficulties in arriving at these numbers in a span of seven years. Moving to zero will therefore be even slower and technically challenging. Larger stockpiles create unique elimination challenges. On the other hand, smaller stockpiles will find it easier to delink from security and strategic considerations.

---

<sup>32</sup> Malcom Phillips, The New START Treaty and Protocol, 8 April 2010  
[<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2010/04/08/new-start-treaty-and-protocol#section1>]

“India appears to be shaping, through choice as much as necessity, a minimum credible deterrent. Publicly available estimates of its arsenal size suggest that the second most populous nation in the world, located in a dangerous regional neighbourhood and with two nuclear armed neighbours, has only tens of nuclear warheads at its disposal, perhaps none of them thermonuclear. By comparison the U.S. has about 2700 deployed strategic warheads and Russia has around 3900. Both countries have also substantial tactical stockpiles, yet both present their new Pact to reduce those figures to 1550 apiece as a great leap for disarmament. Of all the nuclear armed states, India has been the most active in promoting global agreement on no first use, including through bilateral and multilateral treaties, and on negative security assurances, or guarantees not to strike non-nuclear states<sup>33</sup>. Any proposal that envisages or proposes that India should reduce its arsenal in the immediate term would thus, be both unrealistic and irrelevant.

There is an argument made that in arriving at the goal of global zero, proponents of abolition lay too much faith in U.S. leadership given the current trends in military matters. Yet, in the past two decade Russia has increased the role of nuclear weapons in its defence policy while North Korea and Iran have neared the nuclear threshold. While Israel appears to be moving towards a second-strike capability, France considers nuclear weapons to be critically essential to its security and is not too convinced about moving towards zero. It doubts that abolition of nuclear weapons as a vision would be key to reinforcing the non-proliferation norm. In Asia, Pakistan, China and India are viewed as building up their capabilities in realistic terms, more so when nuclear weapons are also seen as a symbol of great power status<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, in one pertinent statement on the subject, Brent Snowcroft sees potential dangers in any attempt to achieve a world without nuclear weapons too quickly by moving to zero, and asserts a better strategy would be to try and shape the world’s nuclear arsenals in a way that discourages their ever being used. “One of things to worry about with zero as a policy goal is that one may skip over some of

---

<sup>33</sup> Rory Medcalf, “India’s Nuclear Example”, *The Wall Street Journal*, April 14, 2010

<sup>34</sup> Bruno Tertrais, “The Illogic of Zero”, *The Washington Quarterly*, April 2010.

the things that can be done to reduce the likelihood in the interim of making steps that will help reduce the possibility of nuclear war. Because the tendency is likely to be that if the goal is zero, we should try to get there directly and as quickly as possible. And if the process is simply one of reducing numbers, one would reach a point where the world would be unstable and the incentive in the crisis to strike first could be powerful. These issues make the case for a more cautious approach to the problem.”<sup>35</sup>

### ***India & Disarmament***

Indian policy practitioners have emphasised that in its perception global zero or moving to zero is premised on the perception that its security will be enhanced and not diminished in a world free of nuclear weapons. This lends credibility to the Indian willingness in multilateral negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention prohibiting the development, production, stockpiling and use of nuclear weapons. This is in addition to India’s adherence to a policy of these weapons time bound elimination on the basis of global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination. Pending the realization of this objective, Indian adherence to a policy of no first use and non-use of nuclear weapons in certain circumstances, underscores its commitment to disarmament. In the context of global zero, or reduction in numbers, the question of time frame is a constant reference with an argument for gradual and phased approaches.<sup>36</sup>

The ICNND report included the Indian proposal for the creation of a new multilateral forum of all nuclear weapons states. This will help all nuclear weapons states to work together in an agreed forum, through carefully structured meetings, on the scope and speed of nuclear disarmament. This will be a step further than the current nuclear disarmament negotiations confined to bilateral U.S-Russian agreements. It will prepare the ground for establishing disarmament benchmarks for all nuclear weapon states. Thus, by concentrating on the immediate task of working together in the near future up to 2020,

---

<sup>35</sup> Bruce Odessey interview with Brent Snowcroft, “Playing Percentages”, eJournal USA, Pg. 9, February 2010, New Delhi

<sup>36</sup> Remarks by Shyam Saran at the Global Zero Summit, Paris, 3 February 2010, “India and the pursuit of Global Zero-A World without Nuclear Weapons”. [<http://www.maritimeindia.org/pdfs/GlobalZeroSummit.pdf>]

India and the United States would be able to overcome the obstacles posed by regimes, practices, and policy blockages in arriving at zero level of nuclear weapons in haste. As the Indian case demonstrates, small nuclear arsenal meets the requirements of its security needs as manifested in its nuclear doctrine and common practice on nuclear non-proliferation. India's disarmament priorities will remain focussed on obtaining a global, non discriminatory and verifiable set of regimes that significantly diminish the dependence on nuclear weapons as guarantors of security. "While bilateral and regional negotiations can accomplish a lot, long lasting and effective cooperation on a global scale requires more. The UN is the world's sole universally accepted arena for debate and concord, among nations and broader society. It serves as a source of independent expertise"<sup>37</sup>.

### ***India-U.S. Cooperation on Disarmament***

Unlike the decades preceding the 1990's the cascade of nuclear disarmament ideas currently in the field offer meaningful scope for India-U.S. cooperation. The United States has through the initiatives of President Obama's administration, taken small but deliberate steps towards reducing its dependence on nuclear weapons for security. Its impressive military capabilities also make it militarily more secure than ever for the foreseeable future. Indian initiatives on the disarmament and proliferation front have laid the ground for both deterrence stability and proliferation control. India and the U.S. can now work together to evolve mechanism and jointly work towards eliminating nuclear weapons. The issues which show the greatest potential for eventual success are given below:

- a) Evolving a new mechanism and processes to further the NPT's objectives
- b) Taking concrete steps to halt nuclear testing of all kind
- c) Abolishing the use of nuclear weapons
- d) Until abolishing becomes a universal goal, reducing the role of nuclear weapons through a universal NFU agreement
- e) Working towards a global Nuclear Convention

---

<sup>37</sup> Ban Ki Moon, "A New Ground Zero, *The New York Times*, 29 April 2010

- f) Working for a NU sponsored special session on disarmament through a UN Nuclear Convention
- g) Creating a forum for all nuclear weapons states to explore ways to speed up disarmament
- h) Find ways to harmonise the interlocking elements of the new nuclear discourse viz. nuclear power, nuclear disarmament and nuclear proliferation.

On each of the issues listed above, U.S. and India will need to work with other nuclear and non nuclear states to move forward on non-proliferation and disarmament objectives. “The global support for the elimination of nuclear weapons has grown and is moving towards a positive momentum ever since President Obama’s Prague agenda. The future of nuclear weapons has moved beyond fringe proposals and political posturing. It is now a central element in American strategic thinking owing to the great strength of the Obama strategy on its recognition of the dramatic shift in perceptions of the value of these weapons”<sup>38</sup>. India and the United States need to combine their efforts into building a set of multi-nation initiatives on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament in a global environment where the “risks may have increased but the contributions of nuclear arsenals to nations’ security have declined”<sup>39</sup>.

---

*V. R. Raghavan is Director, Delhi Policy Group and Nidhi Narain is Research Fellow at the Delhi Policy Group*

---

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Cirincione, “Taking the Field: Obama’s Nuclear Reforms”, *Survival*, Vol.52 No. 2, April –May 2010

<sup>39</sup> Frank Carlucci and William Perry, ‘Foreword’, in Barry Blechman and Alexander Bolfrass (eds.), *Elements of a Nuclear Disarmament Treaty*, Washington D.C: Stimson Center, 2010