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## Nuclear Abolition: Need for a Phased Plan

The Adelphi Paper, *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, through an objective and detailed analysis, looks at the two principal strands of the nuclear disarmament discourse: the political and technical dimensions of the abolition challenge. The two are clearly interconnected, and the paper makes a compelling case for addressing them simultaneously. The questions and suggestions listed in the paper, however, clearly show the political strand to be determinant in achieving progress toward nuclear disarmament and, eventually, abolition. Obtaining a broad global political consensus on a workable disarmament plan, then, should be the first step in reaching global consensus on disarmament as the goal, perhaps through a series of five-year milestones coinciding with Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conferences, and in outlining the process by which it can be achieved. The technical issues are intrinsically linked with the nuclear-weapon states and are best dealt with by them at the same time that the global disarmament consensus is being hammered out. There being little time available until the 2010 NPT Review Conference, it should limit its focus to the political threshold.

### **Establishing Political Conditions**

The Adelphi Paper recommends that the United States and Russia further reduce the size, roles, and political-strategic prominence of their nuclear arsenals. Washington and Moscow will no doubt have differences over the order in which those three issues should be addressed. Whether this is a

technical or political issue will depend on the two countries' respective threat perceptions. They will view this in the context of the larger great power and global strategic dynamic. Concern over the salience of nuclear weapons in the major powers' strategic and operational beliefs is shared by other nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear-weapon states. This is a subject on which the 2010 NPT Review Conference agenda can be developed.

The paper also recommends that the United States and Russia not routinely deploy nuclear weapons poised for immediate use. In some limited ways, this is already being done. Is it possible for the two principal nuclear powers to at least politically and unequivocally commit themselves to this before 2010? The signs are not encouraging. Missile defense and NATO expansion imperatives are perceived as being strategically constraining. And one need only refer to Dmitry Medvedev's September 2008 directive to the armed forces stating, "By 2020 we must have guaranteed nuclear deterrent for various military and political contingencies, and equip troops with new armaments and reconnaissance means"<sup>1</sup> to get a sense of the mood in favor of nuclear weapons. The commitment to give up the use of nuclear weapons is a global political concern that needs to be placed at the top of the 2010 NPT Review Conference agenda.

The immense political content of the recommendation that the United States, Russia, China, India, Pakistan, Israel, and others informally explore their objections to nuclear transparency is obvious. The political aspects involve NPT status of some states; hard-line NPT demands of signatories; and traditional unwillingness of nuclear-armed states to be transparent. Collectively, these aspects will prove to be a barrier too difficult to cross. Is this a political issue or a technical issue? NPT signatory and non-signatory countries will need to reach consensus on this. Furthermore, India, Israel, and Pakistan cannot be expected to disarm in a linked arrangement as is being suggested. There is no strategic linkage between Israel's nuclear weapons and those of India and Pakistan. Indian nuclear concerns include a larger set of strategic parameters than Pakistan's. Any suggestion that India can give up its arsenal if the Kashmir issue can be resolved is based on an inadequate understanding of India's global, regional, and domestic strategic needs. An attempt to seek linkage among new nuclear states' needs without regard to their fundamental strategic perceptions would be incomplete and would impede the cause of disarmament.

### **Verification and Enforcement**

Verification and enforcement are the most valuable and controversial issues raised in the Adelphi Paper. Verification can become irreparably contentious between nuclear-armed states and non-nuclear-weapon states and

also among nuclear-armed states. It is closely linked with enforcement, which raises doubts, fears, and strong resentment of unilateral action by the major nuclear powers. The situation is made worse by selective use of verification and enforcement and varying rules of engagement, all of which leave little confidence in the credibility of the major nuclear powers that will need to play a lead role, or in their commitment to disarmament. New nuclear states and non-nuclear-weapon states alike share this lack of confidence. What is required is a political commitment by the nuclear-weapon states to a fair and equitable verification arrangement. This will need to be painstakingly negotiated. In this context, the United Kingdom–Norway initiative should be enlarged to include all nuclear-armed states; doing so would be a significant step toward creating an inclusive and confidence-building baseline.

A partnership among India, Pakistan, and Israel in a nuclear-weapon enforcement system would draw wide-ranging objections. It is also unlikely that the three states would be willing to enforce prohibition. Israel has already been an enforcer and is seen by many to be ready to do so again. India would be unlikely to find it in its interests to join such a coalition of enforcers.

Enforcement faces a twin dilemma: intention and means. The intention to enforce adherence to nuclear processes can be global or limited to a few states. Only a few states have both the means and capability to enforce adherence, and the two have not been harmonized in the past. The power to enforce would also need to be subordinated to the intent of all states represented in the United Nations.

### **Nuclear Industry**

The Indian nuclear position is a unique model for the future, as shown by its nuclear agreement with the United States, the approval of its nuclear industry needs by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and its safeguards designed to the satisfaction of International Atomic Energy Agency. Even though India is allowed to retain enrichment facilities outside safeguard arrangements, its strategic intentions and posture are nonthreatening. It is thus possible to visualize arrangements under which responsible stewardship of doctrines, force structures, and strategic postures can be constructively combined with peaceful uses of nuclear energy. India's commitment to a moratorium on testing, a no-first-use pledge, nonproduction of tactical weapons, and clear and complete political control over nuclear arsenals and delivery means are useful indicators of a basis for future global disarmament.

### **An Indian Perspective**

This fine paper combines political and technical aspects that are immediately feasible with those that are medium-term probable or long-term visualizations. And in all of these categories, the paper goes to the heart of the issues. It is apparent, however, that no single international treaty can cover all these issues and at the same time be relevant or practical. Hence, it is necessary to reach globally acceptable critical political conclusions on the key issues described above. The 2010 NPT Review Conference offers a unique opportunity to take the political discourse of disarmament to new commitments that would be acceptable to the five nuclear powers and act as encouragement to NPT signatories to stay the course. A clear and unambiguous statement by all nuclear-weapon states that they renounce the use of nuclear weapons unless attacked by nuclear weapons would be the first step, and it is one that can be achieved even before 2010. Such an agreement would go beyond the no-first-use pledge of some nuclear-armed states. A no-first-use doctrine does not foreclose the use of nuclear weapons; agreeing not to use nuclear weapons unless attacked by nuclear weapons adds value to the doctrine, while opening the doors to disarmament and eventual abolition. Furthermore, this could set the stage for working to establish additional political commitments and consensus.

Inability to agree by 2010 on renouncing the use of nuclear weapons unless attacked by nuclear weapons could have a long-term adverse impact. The Adelphi Paper leaves no room for doubt on the difficulties and obstacles on the route to disarmament and eventual abolition, even as it attempts to show possible directions for it. Should the 2010 NPT Review Conference fail, it would reaffirm as insurmountable the difficulties in achieving disarmament and abolition. That in turn would lead to redoubled efforts among nuclear-weapon aspirants to obtain weapon capability. One breakout state is all that is necessary to encourage others to act. The conclusion would quickly be reached that the benefits of possessing nuclear weapons outweigh the costs of sanctions and opprobrium that would follow. Meanwhile, of course, the disarmament process would be severely set back. Limitations that were apparent in the Six-Party Talks over North Korea's nuclear-weapon program will be a further incentive for some states to speed up efforts to possess nuclear capability. Iran's nuclear ambitions will also be viewed in some circles with empathy should the 2010 NPT Review Conference fail. The overwhelming U.S. superiority in conventional and space-led military capabilities will provide additional cause for states threatened by its policies to seek a nuclear hedge. The political commitments to give up the use of nuclear weapons will also need to

be linked to ongoing evolution of security structures in Europe and Asia. Reassuring Russia and China that their overarching strategic concerns are recognized is as important as the assurance the paper recommends that the United States give its allies.

A possible model for a phased program exists in the seven-point disarmament agenda enunciated by India at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Geneva in March 2008. India had also conveyed its willingness as a nuclear-armed state to turn its no-first-use policy into a multilateral legal commitment. It formally proposed two multilateral agreements and two global conventions in a detailed framework.<sup>2</sup> Its proposal recommended:

- Reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines
- Negotiation among nuclear-weapon states of a no-first-use agreement on nuclear weapons
- Negotiation of a universal and legally binding agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states
- Negotiation of a prohibition on using or threatening to use nuclear weapons
- Negotiation of a prohibition on development, stockpiling, and production of nuclear weapons, moving toward global, nondiscriminatory, and verifiable elimination of these weapons
- Unequivocal commitment of all nuclear-weapon states toward the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons
- Adoption of additional measures by nuclear-weapon states to reduce risks and dangers arising from the accidental use of these weapons

The 2010 NPT Review Conference can become the milestone from which a series of political and technical initiatives can be developed to move the disarmament discourse from mere statements of intentions to actual measures. To make it happen, political commitments must be agreed upon; only then can an international treaty encompassing technical issues be attempted. Such a phased strategy would stand a better chance of building global consensus for reviving the disarmament movement, so convincingly argued in the Adelphi Paper.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Vladimir Radyuhin, "Russia to Modernise Armed Forces," *Hindu*, September 28, 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> Statement by Hamid Ali Rao, ambassador and permanent representative of India to the UN Conference on Disarmament, Geneva, February 28, 2008, accessed on September 30, 2008, at <http://meaindia.nic.in>.