

PAN ZHENQIANG

## Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: Why Not Outlaw Them First?

Calls for a nuclear-weapon-free world are not new. Indeed, efforts by the international community to achieve that have not ceased since 1945, when those horrible weapons were used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. None of the nuclear-weapon states, however, has ever been serious about abolition. The United States, in particular, has continued to maintain a large nuclear arsenal, along with the insistence that nuclear weapons play a legitimate role in its security strategy. The Bush administration lowered the threshold of using nuclear weapons in the post-Cold War era despite its argument in the 2001 Nuclear Posture Review that it intends to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the U.S. security strategy. Russia, the other major nuclear power with a large arsenal, has evidently upgraded the role of its nuclear weapons, declaring openly that it has to rely more on nuclear weapons to compensate for its declining conventional capability to protect its core security interests. Other nuclear powers have also worked to modernize their nuclear arsenals to catch up with the new round of nuclear competition. This continuing obsession with nuclear weapons on the part of nuclear-weapon states, has, many people believe, virtually paralyzed both the multilateral and bilateral negotiations in the field over the past decade.

Against this backdrop, the effort by George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn to revive international attention to the nuclear abolition question carries special significance. Their January

2007 op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* and their follow-up article a year later called on the United States to give up its nuclear deterrence policy and take a leading role in helping the world head toward the abolition of nuclear weapons. The world was surprised less by the views expressed than by the identity of the authors. All four are exceptional and served within the decision-making security circle of the United States—and all four were, to a man, staunch cold warriors who advocated or implemented nuclear deterrence for the United States. The fundamental shift of their perspective thus immediately drew world attention and has generated heated debates on how best to initiate the process of nuclear disarmament toward the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Many Western governments as well as nongovernmental organizations are taking steps to echo their views. Various suggestions have been made in an attempt to translate the new vision into specific action.

Still, serious differences persist as to the feasibility, or even the value, of the notion of a nuclear-weapon-free world. Many people in Washington wonder whether U.S. security interests would be undermined. Even among those who genuinely believe in nuclear disarmament, there is a wide gap in views on how it should be implemented. In the meantime, a large number of non-nuclear-weapon states elect to remain silent, indicating their strong skepticism about the motivation of the newly rising enthusiasm of the West toward the idea of a world free of nuclear weapons. They wonder if this campaign is merely a passing episode of Western interest in nuclear disarmament that will fade away before long, or if something is actually going to happen this time. They seem particularly interested in watching how the new U.S. president will act next year: Will he overcome resistance and embrace the idea of zero nuclear weapons then work out meaningful, concrete steps to that end?

Under the circumstances, *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, by two distinguished specialists in the field, George Perkovich and James Acton, can be taken as a valuable contribution to the reflection on the effort to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world in a timely manner. The authors acknowledge that in taking disarmament problems seriously, they raise more questions than answers. This open-minded attitude of exploration helps them define five major issues, among others, as particularly pertinent to nuclear disarmament: near-term improvements in political-security relations and U.S.–Russian arms reductions; verification; the impact of the expanding global nuclear industry; enforcement; and hedging. In the view of the authors, none of these issues can be bypassed if a process of securely prohibiting nuclear weapons is to start. The paper contains insightful

analysis on each of these issues, including the primary obstacles to overcome and what alternative options may exist for meaningful disarmament. The solutions offered by the authors will not be seen as ideal by many, and will be controversial to some, but the paper delineates the depth and complexity of the most daunting problems on the way to achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. In this sense, it should be recognized as almost a textbook for the study of future nuclear disarmament.

That said, the paper seems also to have raised a few important questions that, from the humble perspective of a Chinese scholar, need clarification to provide a more solid basis for exploring proper implementation of nuclear disarmament.

### **The Nuclear-Armed States Must Go First**

The first question has to do with the eternal “who goes first?” issue. Nuclear disarmament is first and foremost the responsibility of the nuclear-armed states. In the field of nuclear disarmament, arms control, and nonproliferation, there has always been heated debate over how to strike a balance between the primary responsibility of the nuclear-weapon states, particularly those with the largest nuclear arsenals, and broad participation by the non-nuclear-weapon states. The difference centers on who should do more and who should do it first, along with which is more important: nuclear disarmament by the nuclear-weapon states, or nonproliferation by the non-nuclear-weapon states? But the debate itself is unfair to the non-nuclear-weapon states. Just as its name implies, nuclear disarmament means that countries that have acquired nuclear weapons take actions to reduce the size of their nuclear arsenals. Nuclear disarmament is thus the business of nuclear-weapon states. How can the non-nuclear-weapon countries be expected to follow more or new restrictions in order to make the nuclear-weapon states feel more secure in the process of nuclear disarmament? This is not to suggest that non-nuclear-weapon states have no responsibility in nuclear disarmament. What is important is that the responsibilities of the nuclear haves and have-nots simply cannot be put on the same plane.

The analysis over this question in the paper attempts to treat both categories equally. The authors stress that “it will be impossible to curtail nuclear-weapons proliferation without serious progress toward nuclear disarmament.” At the same time, they argue that “neither non-proliferation nor the abolition of nuclear weapons can be achieved without the active cooperation of non-nuclear-weapon states.” Thus, the conclusion is the belief that “the only way to resolve the ‘who goes first?’ problem among

nuclear-weapon and non-nuclear-weapon states is to move on both the disarmament and non-proliferation fronts simultaneously.”

This everybody-has-a-share principle is fine in theory. In practice, to argue that disarmament and nonproliferation should proceed simultaneously is virtually to put nuclear disarmament conditional on the progress of nuclear nonproliferation and to risk obscuring or even covering up nuclear-weapon states’ primary responsibility to disarm. Indeed, after going through the *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* paper, one cannot avoid getting an impression of bias: The authors seem more interested in how additional restrictions can be imposed on non-nuclear-weapon states than how nuclear-weapon states can be compelled to implement their special responsibility effectively.

Some of the admonitions in the paper seem particularly discomfoting. The authors argue, for example,

Clearly, nuclear-armed states would demand a great deal from each other and from many non-nuclear-weapons states in creating the conditions that would reassure them that they would not be worse off without their nuclear arsenals. The nuclear ‘haves’ would feel that they had leverage over the ‘have-nots,’ because they possessed something that the others wanted them to give up. If non-nuclear-weapon states did not accept their demands, they would, in effect, shrug their shoulders and say, ‘fine, we’ll keep our weapons then.’ ... “[F]irm leaders would be needed in the non-nuclear-weapon states to enable these states to resist the temptation to regard disarmament as a problem for the nuclear ‘haves’ alone. Accompanying the political-psychological morality play of the nuclear states’ disarmament would be the reality that when the nuclear powers feel insecure, non-nuclear-weapon states can suffer the consequences.” ... “Therefore—regardless of the fairness or otherwise of this situation—non-nuclear-weapons states would be wise to be responsive to the reasonable expectations of nuclear-armed states trying to create conditions for the secure prohibition of nuclear weapons.

And:

To make abolition feasible and to enable the detection of rearmament, all states that possess nuclear reactors, uranium-enrichment plants, plutonium-reprocessing facilities, uranium reserves or even transshipment ports would have to accept more intrusive control measures and inspection procedures

than they do today. To build confidence that an agreement to prohibit nuclear weapons would be enforced, all states would need to demonstrate a willingness to enforce international rules with greater alacrity and robustness than has been historically normal.

But what “reasonable expectations” of nuclear-weapon states must non-nuclear-weapon states listen to? And what “international rules” are the authors referring to? The language used here is vague, susceptible to different, conflicting interpretations. It arouses suspicion that a one-sided argument is being made with regard to nuclear-weapon states imposing burdens on non-nuclear-weapon states. This reduces the persuasiveness of the paper.

### **First Among Unequals, the United States and Russia Must Lead**

The second question is about the special responsibility of the United States and Russia toward nuclear disarmament. Again, this is common sense. While all nuclear-weapon states bear primary responsibility, the two major nuclear powers should have special responsibility. They should take the lead in carrying out all the substantive measures leading to a nuclear-weapon-free world.

The eight states the authors put in the same category of nuclear-armed states can be better divided into three groups. The first group is the two major nuclear weapon powers: the United States and Russia. They have consistently been the driving force in the nuclear buildup as well as nuclear arms control and disarmament, and their nuclear arsenals constitute more than 95 percent of the world total. Furthermore, they are still equipped with aggressive nuclear doctrines that envisage the use of nuclear weapons in a way that no other nuclear-weapon state can match. In short, they should be the main target of any nuclear disarmament process, and only by seriously honoring their obligations can nuclear disarmament be put on the right track.

The second group consists of the United Kingdom, France, and India. Despite the different backgrounds against which they developed nuclear weapons, they share one major motive for their nuclearization: to be accepted by the international community as a major world power. Their motivation is more for prestige than for security. One can hardly imagine a scenario in the post-Cold War era in which the U.K. or France would be seriously tempted to use nuclear weapons to protect its core interests. India may even have diminished the value of its overwhelming superiority vis-à-vis Pakistan in terms of conventional capability; its becoming

nuclear armed challenged Pakistan to follow suit. From a purely military point of view, India's nuclear decision made no sense for its security. There is certainly a China factor. But even to cope with the so-called threat from China as the major motivation, as New Delhi claimed, is also more political in nature than military. I remember an episode at a 1996 International Institute for Strategic Studies conference on potential future challenges from rising Asia. Despite the broad topic being Asia, the real interest was over China. I attended that conference, and almost all the participants were talking almost exclusively about China, whether as a challenge or an opportunity. Then an eminent Indian delegate rose and asked angrily, "If we were talking about Asia, where is India?" His point vividly reflects resentment on the part of many Indians, the elites in particular, that the world had wrongly neglected India as a significant player in the world. It also explains the true motivation of India, that is, to match China's rising influence and to be acknowledged as a major world power through the shortcut of going nuclear, even at a political and military price. Thus, as long as the United States and Russia maintain their nuclear posture and nuclear weapons continue to play a decisive role in ensuring their prestige as major world powers, it would be very difficult to persuade the UK, France, and India to give up their nuclear assets.

The third group consists of China, Pakistan, and Israel. They could be described as responsive nuclear-armed states, as their motivation for going nuclear is to respond to a specific, serious threat that each faces. For China, it is the nuclear threat from the two major nuclear powers, the United States in particular; for Pakistan, it is the nuclear threat from India; and for Israel, from the hostile environment in its neighborhood. As long as the threats they perceive against them are not eliminated or at least reduced, it is highly unlikely that any of these three countries would be willing to consider abandoning their nuclear arsenals.

In short, when the world today is witnessing such discrepancy with regard to the nuclear architecture, many questions asked in the paper as to what the other nuclear-weapon states can do to help induce the two major nuclear powers to embark on nuclear disarmament are as off the mark as asking what the non-nuclear-weapon states can do to help induce the nuclear-weapon states to implement their obligation for nuclear disarmament. To the contrary, the most pertinent and urgent question to ask is twofold: what the United States and Russia can do to pave the way for lesser nuclear-weapon states to participate in the disarmament process and what they can do to provide a better environment in which the key non-nuclear-weapon states would be willing to cooperate in enhancing the

international nonproliferation regime “with greater alacrity and robustness,” as the authors of the paper hope to see.

Surprisingly, the paper devotes little space to discussing this most vital question, although the authors acknowledge that “if the new leaders of [the United States and Russia] do not take initiatives to further reduce the size, roles and political-strategic prominence of their nuclear arsenals, the overall project of nuclear disarmament cannot proceed.” Their greater interest seems to focus on how other nuclear-armed states should act even before the United States and Russia proceed to further reduce their nuclear arsenals.

Understandably, this misplaced interest comes from the authors’ belief that in the path to zero nuclear weapons, it should not be so difficult for the United States and Russia, as a first step, to each cut its nuclear arsenal to, say, 1,000 nuclear warheads. The tough part is that further nuclear disarmament may well depend on other factors, including the strengthening of the international nonproliferation process; the efficient regulation of the expanding nuclear industry; and the attitude of other nuclear-weapon states, particularly China. The authors of the paper even argue that the United States might be less an obstacle to nuclear disarmament than other countries, or at least the other nuclear-weapon states.

This optimism about the attitude of the United States seems a little far-fetched. The fact is that the United States and Russia (and Russia’s predecessor, the Soviet Union) have been and will continue to be not only the major driving force in the nuclear arms race but also the most reluctant states to pursue truly meaningful nuclear disarmament. For these two major nuclear powers, making deep cuts in their nuclear arsenals has been comparatively easy: Having so many nuclear warheads has actually been a burden. With or without a bilateral agreement in the future, they would almost certainly take measures to reduce the number of their nuclear warheads in a dramatic way. The critical issue is whether they are truly ready to embark on the path to zero after the first round of reductions to 1,000 nuclear warheads.

A recent official document jointly released by the secretaries of defense and energy in September 2008 seems to give further testimony to the U.S. determination to keep its reduced nuclear arsenal as one of major pillars of its security strategy in the twenty-first century. The document stresses, among other things:

Nuclear forces continue to represent the ultimate deterrent capability that supports U.S. national security.... Maintaining a safe,

secure, and reliable nuclear weapons stockpile and supporting infrastructure is of vital importance to U.S. interests. Currently, the U.S. is pursuing an alternative to the strategy of service life extensions for existing warheads. The long-term goal is to rely more on a revived infrastructure and less on the non-deployed stockpile to respond to unforeseen events. We seek replacement of existing warheads with Reliable Replacement Warheads (RRW) of comparable capability that would have advanced safety and security features, be less sensitive to manufacturing tolerances or to aging of materials, and be certifiable without nuclear testing.<sup>1</sup>

The document expects “the logic presented here provides a sound basis on which this and future administrations can consider further adjustments to U.S. nuclear weapons policy, strategy, and force structure.”<sup>2</sup> Evidently, in line with this logic, deep cuts in the redundant nuclear weapons (the non-deployed stockpile) would be not only possible but also imperative as the component part of the future U.S. nuclear strategy. But as a path toward abolishing nuclear weapons? Absolutely not.

### **More Than Numbers, Attitudes Toward Use and Salience of Nuclear Weapons Must Change**

The key to finding the pathway to nuclear abolition does not lie in numbers. It lies in the change of the U.S. vision for security, including the role of nuclear weapons in the security strategy, and the way to deal with nuclear proliferation. In a broader sense, it may also involve a new approach toward international relations. To Washington, a world free of nuclear weapons would also mean giving up the nuclear umbrella that is part of the extended deterrent it provides to allies. As a result, the United States must be prepared to make major readjustments in its political relations with its allies as well as with its potential adversaries.

The same can be said in Russia’s case. Deep cuts in the nuclear arsenal are possible, but for Moscow, giving up all nuclear weapons would seem to take away the most physical and reliable instruments that make Russia a world military power and enable it to deal with the preeminence of the conventional capabilities of the United States and NATO. This is going to be the case particularly now that U.S.–Russia relations have become increasingly soured, and a new round of nuclear arms would be pursued after the United States decided to go ahead with the plan to deploy its missile systems in Eastern Europe and Russia vowed to react. On September 26, President Dmitry Medvedev announced that Russia would upgrade its

nuclear weapons systems by 2020, which would include new “warships, primarily nuclear-powered submarines carrying cruise missiles and multi-functional submarines as well as a system of aerospace defense.” He emphasized that Russia “must guarantee nuclear deterrence under various political and military conditions by 2020.”<sup>3</sup>

Another inhibiting factor in both the United States and Russia is the strong negative voice from conservatives, the powerful military-industrial complex, and the nuclear weapon laboratories in both countries. As a result, it can be envisaged that the greatest challenge for these two major nuclear powers to embrace the path to a world free of nuclear weapons would come from the political-military environment of their own countries rather than the attitudes of other states.

Thus, the real question underlying all the other concerns about nuclear disarmament continues to be the attitude of the two major nuclear powers toward taking concrete steps beyond deep cuts in their nuclear arsenals. The following are some other suggested measures that the United States and Russia should take toward achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world:

- 1) Review their military plans and redefine their security strategies without nuclear weapons.
- 2) Take their nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert on reciprocal steps.
- 3) Declare a categorical no-first-use policy of nuclear weapons without any conditions.
- 4) Eliminate all types of nonstrategic nuclear weapons before complete nuclear disarmament is achieved. In the meantime, they should agree to place these nonstrategic nuclear weapons in central storage on national territory.
- 5) Refrain from upgrading and manufacturing new nuclear weapons of any type while the reduction of the number of nuclear weapons is carried out. As a minimum, they must refrain from developing nuclear weapons with new military capabilities or for new missions. They must not adopt systems or doctrines that blur the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons or lower the nuclear threshold.
- 6) Refrain from developing or deploying strategic missile defense systems.

- 7) Provide legally binding negative security assurances to non-nuclear-weapon states.
- 8) Support the establishment of nuclear-free zones in various regions, including the Middle East and northeast Asia, and undertake their obligations to that end.

All these measures, if truly put into practice, would go a long way toward building a solid political and technical basis for further nuclear disarmament by all nuclear-weapon states and toward strengthening the international nonproliferation process. Many specific problems involving implementation of obligations of all the states regarding zero nuclear weapons would also be much facilitated. The paper could doubtless become more comprehensive and complete if the authors gave more thought to the leading role of the nuclear-weapon states, the United States and Russia in particular.

In this connection, even if the steps suggested above were effectively taken and there were substantial progress on the path toward zero, the greatest uncertainties in ensuring effective enforcement and hedging policy would still probably come from the United States and Russia. As the authors rightly point out, these two powers possess the greatest potential (in terms of material basis to manufacture nuclear bombs) to cheat or break out. Just imagine, in a nuclear-weapon-free world, if a non-nuclear-weapon state suddenly breaks out, declaring its determination to develop a nuclear bomb. Such a challenge is serious but not without a solution, as the authors elaborately discuss. But if the culprit is the United States, what could possibly be done? Is it possible to pursue sanctions or use force against Washington? Unfortunately, the authors did not give adequate weight to this problem or offer a solution.

### **Moral and Legal Pressure Needed**

Another major question worthy of further discussion is how much time is needed to solve all the problems as defined in the paper to lead toward a nuclear-weapon-free world. For all the authors' efforts to try to cover every aspect of nuclear disarmament, this sense of moral urgency is missing. The paper's conclusion offers five major reasons to justify global efforts for a nuclear-weapon-free world. Although these are very good reasons, they are not adequate in arguing for nuclear disarmament, because they do not question the legitimacy of these weapons. Using security interests as the primary variable or criterion can lead to reaffirmation of nuclear

deterrence just as easily as it can lead to disarmament. Emphasizing security interests narrowly understood may exacerbate the circular problem to which the authors refer: The two major nuclear powers—the United States and Russia—would easily become prey to their own paranoia that the nuclear disarmament process, once initiated, may not be matched with progress of nonproliferation or the corresponding disarmament measures by other nuclear-weapon states, thus undermining their core security interests. These other countries in turn then seriously question the sincerity of the two major nuclear powers for genuine nuclear disarmament, and they might become reluctant to cooperate.

Thus despite all the meticulous efforts in defining solutions to so many specific issues involved in nuclear disarmament, the strategy offered by the authors lacks legal and moral pressure. Why must the nuclear-weapon states proceed to disarm? And how do we ensure that regional powers would not resort to the nuclear option once some unexpected contingencies occur? Countries without legal and moral pressure would always be able, one way or the other, to find excuses to keep a nuclear option. To that end, perhaps nuclear weapons should be outlawed first in a form of a world convention, just as chemical and biological weapons were banned, so that a powerful legal and moral framework is created in which all the other measures on the path to zero are to be taken.

Some argue that such an approach may be too utopian. That may be true. But it may also be true that nuclear disarmament toward the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons would continue to remain an unachievable dream because, as outlined in *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons*, states are bogged down in debates as who should do what and first in the name of protecting their security interests. The past ought to teach us a lesson: Nuclear weapons cannot be abolished unless we adopt a new vision, one that regards them not as legitimate weapons, but the equivalent of chemical and biological weapons—inhumane weapons that must be banned by the international community. Outlawing nuclear weapons would not solve all the problems for nuclear disarmament. But it would be a good first step—a big step if the world is ready to agree, in the form of a binding legal document, that possession of nuclear weapons is a crime against humanity that violates the norm of international relations. With such a convention in place, the nuclear-weapon states would find it more difficult to argue that they need to keep their nuclear arsenals for their security or any other reason. Non-nuclear-weapon states would also find it harder to cross over the red line of proliferation. And if states or non-state actors violate that convention, the international community would find it easier to bring

them to justice. In the final analysis, if chemical and biological weapons can be outlawed, why not nuclear weapons? Much depends on the strategic wisdom and political courage of world leaders, particularly in nuclear-weapon states. Indeed, taking specific action to outlaw nuclear weapons now while advocating abolishing them in a far more remote future may constitute a litmus test on whether world leaders are truly serious about nuclear disarmament.

### **China's Role**

Finally, a few remarks about China. China is not a nuclear-weapon state in the Western sense. Ever since it began acquiring nuclear capability in 1964, it has pledged that the purpose of its nuclear arming was solely for self-defense, that is, only for retaliation against a nuclear attack, which it presumed would come from the United States or the former Soviet Union. Unlike other nuclear-weapon states, Beijing has no intention to use its nuclear weapons to make up for inferiority in conventional weapon capability. Thus, the day it acquired nuclear capability, China pledged never to be the first to use nuclear weapons and never to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear-weapon state. China has never changed its no-first-use position, which has become a signature in China's nuclear doctrine.

Against that backdrop, an apparent hint in *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* that China would resort to its nuclear deterrent arsenal to prevent Taiwan's formal independence, and the intervention of U.S. conventional military power on Taiwan's behalf, is a gross mistake, typical of Western ignorance of China's strategic intention for its small-scale nuclear force. Indeed, if there were ever a military conflict across Taiwan Strait, it is not Beijing but Washington that would seriously consider, as a preemptive strike, the use of nuclear weapons.

Given the situation today, and looking toward the future, the only factor that could fundamentally alter Beijing's position on nuclear disarmament is Washington's huge nuclear arsenal and its strategic intention. It would be difficult to imagine China participating in the disarmament process in a substantive way as long as the United States maintains a formidable nuclear-weapon capability and targets China with it. (Russia may also be a concern, but Beijing considers Russia a remote factor in influencing its nuclear posture.) China views the U.S. nuclear threat as multidimensional. The overwhelming U.S. superiority in the number of warheads is only one aspect. As important, if not more so, is the preeminent quality of the U.S. nuclear lethal capability. Thus, although a reduction in the number of nuclear warheads would certainly be a positive development, China

would still want to make sure that the quantitative reduction is not a way for the United States to disguise a qualitative upgrading of its nuclear weapons. The deployment of U.S. missile defense systems, combined with Washington's strong interests to create new space capabilities, would add further complexity to Beijing's calculation. In a broader context, the uncertain nature of the political relations between the two nations may become an even more fundamental cause of mutual mistrust. In such an atmosphere, the United States would be more reluctant to give up its nuclear weapons that target China for the sake of hedge. In turn, China would insist that Washington do more to provide greater reassurance of its nuclear disarmament.

The Adelphi Paper hints that even if the United States were willing to get rid of all its nuclear weapons, China might need to retain nuclear weapons just to balance U.S. conventional power. Reinforcing this suspicion, certain Chinese specialists are inaccurately quoted in the Western media to the effect that China must change its no-first-strike posture in a future conventional conflict with the United States over the Taiwan Strait. But that, too, is a misperception. It highlights serious doubts on the part of Western countries as to whether China will change its avowed nuclear position of not striking first. Western doubts, however, fail to take into consideration China's overall strategic objective of building an enduring peaceful international environment so it could concentrate on domestic development. Nuclear strategy is only part of China's overall national strategy. If China's pledge not to initiate use of nuclear weapons has helped keep it out of an arms race and has contributed to a more or less stable world nuclear order in the past, there is no reason that China must change its approach in the future. Furthermore, despite the fact that China and the United States are so discrepant in their nuclear capability and so divergent in their perspectives on the role of nuclear weapons, the two countries should agree that cooperation rather confrontation serves the best interests of both of them. Both hope to build up a new nuclear world order that can ensure sustained international security and stability pending nuclear disarmament, and to that end, both seem to be striving to put their nuclear weapons in the background. With that in mind, changing China's posture on not striking first in the hope of offsetting the U.S. conventional weapon superiority not only would work against China's nuclear philosophy, but it also would practically undermine China's efforts to build a more harmonious world, jeopardize its strategic stability with the United States, and invite a new round of nuclear arms race with other nuclear powers.<sup>4</sup>

Under the circumstances, Beijing would not resort to its nuclear card to enhance its security. On the contrary, it is far more likely to continue to seek to play down the role of nuclear weapons. China would like to see the United States and Russia take specific measures to implement their special responsibility on nuclear disarmament first so as to create a more propitious condition for China to participate in the nuclear disarmament process in the future. Implementing the eight measures mentioned above, in addition to deep cuts in their excessive nuclear arsenals, could demonstrate true good political will on the part of the United States and Russia for the task of nuclear disarmament.

This does not suggest that until all of its security concerns are met, China is indifferent to the efforts in Western countries to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. After all, complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all nuclear weapons has been China's consistent position. The proposals by Shultz et al. and the dynamic push worldwide for a nuclear-weapon-free world ought to give China adequate incentives to ponder the more detailed arrangements around the question of nuclear disarmament. In particular, China should be prepared to respond to a legitimate question raised in the *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons* paper, that is, at what phase of nuclear disarmament by the two major nuclear powers would China think it is time to join them for further actions. An appropriate answer will require a lot of homework on the part of China. I don't think Beijing would know now at what phase to get involved, other than its long-held, rather abstract principles, given that neither the United States nor Russia demonstrates willingness to embark on the road of true nuclear disarmament.

At the current stage, what is most essential is better communication. To that end, while urging the United States and Russia to take their share of responsibility, China would probably welcome various explorations of an effective approach at different levels and channels. Beijing may also support enhanced communication and contact among nuclear-weapon states, including the suggestions by the authors to set up a panel of specialists for further consultation and to strengthen the bilateral and even trilateral strategic dialogues among China, the United States and Russia on appropriate procedures and a time frame to achieve nuclear disarmament.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *National Security and Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*, released by the U.S. Departments of Energy and of Defense, September 2008, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/nuclearweaponspolicy.pdf>.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>3</sup> See Atlantic Council of the United States, *Russia to Upgrade Nuclear Weapons System*, September 26, 2008, [http://www.acus.org/atlantic\\_update/russia-upgrade-nuclear-weapons-systems](http://www.acus.org/atlantic_update/russia-upgrade-nuclear-weapons-systems).
- <sup>4</sup> For further discussion on why China will not change its no-first-use posture, see Pan Zhenqiang, "China Insistence on No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons," *China Security*, no. 1, Autumn 2005, p. 5.