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INSTITUTE OF PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES

B-7/3, Safdarjung Enclave
New Delhi, INDIA
91-11-41001900

www.ipcs.org

Towards Nuclear Disarmament: The Case for No First Use and Project Base Camp

IPCS Conference Report

Rapporteurs

Sonali Huria
Yogesh Joshi

The Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, as a part of its Nuclear Security Programme supported by the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI), organized a panel discussion on 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons at the India International Centre, New Delhi on 06 August 2009.

Dr. Scott Sagan, Professor, Department of Political Science, Stanford University and Co-Director, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, argued that 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons is the first step in the move towards global disarmament and delegitimization of nuclear weapons. He made a compelling case for the United States to undertake a thorough cost-benefit analysis of adopting a declaratory policy of "no first use" in its forthcoming US Nuclear Posture Review, to take forward President Obama's commitment, made in his speech in Prague to "reduce the role of nuclear weapons" in America's national security strategy. To this end, Dr. Sagan suggested the "Base Camp" approach that could serve as a point of departure for all countries to move to the "Summit" and the long-term goal of a nuclear weapons free world.

Following is the report of the conference.

Towards Nuclear Disarmament: The Case for No First Use and Project Base Camp

Session I: The Case for No First Use

Chair: Lt. Gen. VR Raghavan

Speaker: Dr. Scott Sagan

Discussant: K Subrahmanyam

Lt. Gen. VR Raghavan

India has not only been at the forefront of recommending the doctrine of 'No First Use' (NFU), but has also adopted the doctrine, although it is conditional in some ways. However, NFU has been looked upon with considerable doubt and skepticism especially by the nuclear weapons states which are reluctant (with perhaps the exception of China) to consider adopting the doctrine of NFU as there is a feeling that it negates the very essence of what nuclear weapons bring to states in terms of security, assurance and deterrence.

Dr. Scott Sagan

One of the criticisms of the process by which the US has traditionally gone about making doctrinal decisions and conducting posture reviews is that the process has focused almost exclusively on the effects of doctrines on deterrence. It has not looked at the multiple goals of nuclear policy and how one might assess, in a reasonable way, how different policies might influence these varied goals. The US President, in April this year, committed the US to reduce its reliance on nuclear weapons. The best way to do that would be to abandon America's traditional position of threatening to use nuclear weapons first in a variety of conditions, including situations in which US forces are overwhelmed in a conventional conflict, its allies are attacked by the adversary's conventional forces, and/or in the event that a state uses chemical or biological weapons against the US. Focusing solely on the narrow definitions of deterrence has too often led people to think that one must keep 'all options' open. And indeed it has become a rather habitual tendency among politicians in the US to make veiled nuclear threats in often inappropriate ways under the logic that it is always better to keep 'options open.' However, there are good reasons to limit the role of nuclear weapons in this broader political perspective.

An examination of the costs and benefits suggests that the US should move to adopt a NFU declaratory nuclear policy after appropriate consultation with its allies. Such a declaratory policy must add that the military would be required to devolve plans that are consistent with the doctrine, basing them on the assumption that the US would retaliate 24 hours after receiving a first strike or after its



Maj. Gen. Dipankar Banerjee and

Dr. Scott Sagan

allies have had nuclear weapons used against them and would 'respond appropriately.'

There are multiple purposes of making a declaration of when one might want to use nuclear weapons. Declarations of First Use (FU) or NFU of nuclear weapons are not mere rhetoric. Declaratory policies serve six related purposes. The first two are broad instrumental goals and the means by which the next sub-set of the remaining four objectives can be encouraged. Declaratory policies:

- Provide intellectual background for the classified guidance given to military leaders
- Help shape public debate in the US Congress and broader body politic about a variety of defence and arms control issues
- Deter adversaries by signaling intentions, options, and proclivities
- Reassure allies to whom one may have made a commitment
- There was a belief that contrary to the common view that deterrence has nothing to do with terrorism because terrorists cannot be deterred, one could actually use one's declaratory policy to deter or at least influence the likelihood of state support for terrorism and potential public support for the killing of non-combatants. The declaratory doctrine should play a limited role in terrorism or counter-terrorism policies
- Lastly, US doctrines influence both the likelihood and consequences of nuclear weapons proliferation

The strongest criticism of the NFU doctrine is that it

undercuts extended deterrence, that is, US commitment to defend allies in the Far East (Japan and South Korea) and NATO-European allies. Many have argued that a NFU policy will ruin the nuclear umbrella the US has extended to its allies and may lead to further nuclear proliferation because allies may not feel protected by the US anymore. On the contrary, the term 'nuclear umbrella' must be banished from the lexicon of the strategic community because it falsely implies a defensive shield rather than an aggressive retaliatory commitment, thereby making no distinction between two very different kinds of extended deterrence. The traditional NATO policy is that it would use or threaten the use of nuclear weapons if somebody used conventional, chemical, biological or nuclear weapons and adopt a more tailored extended deterrent guarantee that would be consistent with NFU, which is to say that it would retaliate with nuclear weapons if necessary, if someone uses nuclear weapons against an ally. This way one can still have a credible commitment to use nuclear weapons under a NFU policy if someone uses these weapons against you or your allies, and therefore, does not let NFU become the victim of the request for extended deterrence. Indeed, some in the US are using the extended deterrent argument as an excuse to have no change whatsoever in NATO or US policy or even a change towards making progress towards disarmament.

Considerable diplomatic consultation will be necessary for the US to move towards the NFU doctrine. But those who argue against a NFU policy on the grounds that this would automatically undercut support among America's allies have clearly not been talking to the allies, many of whom are fully supportive of NFU in the present day context.

On the question of the so-called policy of calculated ambiguity with respect to chemical and biological weapons – this was not a change that occurred during the Bush administration but before that – during the Clinton administration when there was great concern about what the Libyans were doing and during the first Bush administration with regard to Saddam Hussein's chemical and biological weapons programme. The Bush administration's policy simply underscored and made more public the statement that the US reserved the "right to respond with overwhelming force including the resort to all of our options to the use of any WMD including chemical, biological weapons" to counter an attack against the US armed forces, friends and allies. Those who advocate using nuclear weapons as a deterrent maintain that this helps deterrence by adding uncertainty about a response and since the US (like India) cannot 'not' respond in kind, this is an extra element adding potential costs when someone uses chemical and biological weapons. Opponents argue that this nuclear threat encourages nuclear proliferation among non-nuclear weapons states by forcing them to think that if the greatest

conventional power in the world regards nuclear weapons necessary to deter chemical and biological weapons, they also need these weapons for their security.

Any serious comparisons of current and NFU doctrines should include a clear assessment of both the consequences of deterrence failure in terms of chemical/biological attack and the long-term consequences of potential nuclear retaliation by the US because of the threat, and potential losses of the credibility or currency of nuclear threats if the US does not respond after it has made threats that it might do so.

A not widely recognized (outside the US), yet very important doctrinal innovation was made by the Bush administration in February 2008 in a speech by the National Security Advisor, Steven Hadley at Stanford where he said that people are wrong to think that deterrence plays no role in counter-terrorism. Indeed, as he put it, many terrorists value the perception of popular and theological legitimacy for their actions, and by encouraging the debate about the moral legitimacy of using weapons of mass destruction, one can try to affect the strategic calculus of terrorists by influencing public debates about people who might support terrorism. Deterrence can therefore, help prevent terrorists from ever getting these weapons in the first place. It appears that it is difficult for the US and other countries to maintain a consistent policy in this area when it continues to make threats that all options are on the table under all circumstances. One cannot have a serious debate about the legitimacy of killing non-combatants when one says that they hold open the option of using nuclear weapons under a wide variety of circumstances. Threatening a state which might enable or give a weapon to terrorist organizations would be consistent with a NFU doctrine. However, it is very difficult to have a broader debate about non-combatant immunity and the importance of maintaining that if one has a very loose policy on the use of nuclear weapons.

With respect to non-proliferation, a NFU policy would make the American doctrine more consistent with the negative security assurances that the government has made at many NPT review conferences stating that the US would not use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear weapons state not allied to a nuclear weapons state attacking the US. The state policy that it may use nuclear weapons under any circumstance including chemical and biological weapons use is inconsistent with statements made by the US in the past.

It could help America's non-proliferation policy by avoiding or at least reducing the temptation of politicians to resort to veiled nuclear threats to support coercive diplomacy. The habitual use of the term 'all options are on the table' has had a pernicious effect. The use of nuclear threats by the US – veiled or direct, intentional or not, play into the hands of the domestic forces in Iran for instance, that favour developing

nuclear weapons and they reduce international diplomatic support for stronger diplomatic efforts including sanctions to pressure Iran to end its defiance of UN Security Council resolutions.

The question of whether US doctrines have influenced other countries can be explored best by using India as an example, since India is not entirely transparent, but certainly more transparent as a democracy than many other countries in analyzing its nuclear doctrine. What is clear is that the 2003 change in India's doctrine in part influenced by the crisis of 2001-2002 as also the changes occurring in the US. An unidentified member of the National Security Advisory Board was quoted as having said, "all five nuclear states reserve the right to launch nuclear weapons first, then why should India not do so?" The Indian doctrine has seen a shift from a simple and deep commitment not to use nuclear weapons first to a statement holding open the option of using nuclear weapons if someone were to use chemical or biological weapons against Indian troops or territory. When one opens up such caveats, it makes it harder for others to believe that one is serious about a NFU doctrine, an important reason perhaps why Pakistan does not believe India's NFU policy. India should not be moving towards any caveated or calculated ambiguity doctrine like the US. Rather, the US should become more like India in seeing the benefits of NFU.

The forthcoming Nuclear Posture Review should include a thorough cost-benefit analysis of a NFU declaratory policy, broadening the traditional focus on deterrence requirements to look not just at deterrence, but balance it against other issues like proliferation, reassurance, and the consequences of proliferation perceptions about the illegitimacy of killing combatants. NFU in the US would have fewer costs and bring greater benefits than commonly recognized. While there still are diplomatic issues to be addressed, especially how best to consult with NATO and other allies, how to encourage other nuclear weapons states, including India to re-think their doctrines and perhaps enter into long-term discussions; the seriousness of these concerns and the best strategies for addressing them cannot be determined in abstract without assessing the benefits of doctrinal change. A thorough and broader assessment within the US government about NFU is well overdue.

K Subrahmanyam

Until 1982 the Soviet Union maintained a neutral position on the issue of NFU, but at the time of the second session on nuclear disarmament, it declared that it would join the NFU campaign. This decision was however, reversed following the breakup of the Soviet Union on the grounds that Russia was threatened by the NATO and that its conventional forces were inadequate.



Mr. K Subrahmanyam

There is a lot of confusion about what deterrence is. If a country has nuclear weapons, using them first is easier for such a country. Deterrence is when a country is able to make other nuclear-armed adversaries think about the consequences of using nuclear weapons. In the West, there is a great deal of confusion about compellence and deterrence and for a long time now, they have continued to justify policies of compellence in the name of deterrence. And very often one reads statements from them saying that 'deterrence has failed,' when actually their efforts at compellence have failed. The purest form of deterrence therefore, is when you are able to prevent a nuclear-armed adversary from using its weapons against you in a first strike by threatening them with a punitive retaliatory strike. NFU in no way dilutes or undermines the posture of deterrence. The original idea of deterrence for First Use of weapons came when the NATO argued that the Soviet forces they were facing were much more powerful and large. Today, the US knows that its conventional forces are unrivalled in the world. In fact, the US says that its forces can deal with any other nation or combination of nations. If that is the case then why does it need a FU against any superior conventional force? It does not make sense and would only indicate that the US does not have enough confidence in its superior conventional force being able to deter any other conventional force in the world.

In the First World War when the use of chemical weapons resulted in several thousand casualties, a convention on NFU of chemical weapons was concluded in 1925 in Geneva. Countries came to the realization that chemical weapons were not usable weapons as a battle-winning factor. Subsequently, in the Second World War, both sides had chemical weapons with which they mutually deterred each other, but the weapons were not used. Chemical weapons have been used only in cases where only one party (the victor) possessed these and used them against a state that did not possess these

weapons. Even nuclear weapons have only been used once – against a country which did not possess them.

It is strange that while there are numerous commissions on arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament, there are no commissions so far of strategic force commanders of nuclear weapons powers to come together to consider, in the light of their experience, if nuclear weapons can be used to win a war militarily and meaningfully.

An important question that must be asked is – isn't the use of nuclear weapons a form of terrorism? Also, the threat of use of nuclear weapons, far from having a deterrent effect on terrorists will only reinforce the jihadists' argument for their use of terror.

Thus, if we have to build international norms against terrorism, we need to factor in the 'use of nuclear weapons.' States cannot argue that they have the right to use nuclear weapons in the name of deterrence. The entire problem surrounding NFU arises because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the term 'deterrence.' Threatening someone whose behaviour one wishes to mould according to one's interests is not deterrence – that is compellence. The NFU policy in its original form must be reinforced and it is regrettable that the Indian government has diluted its NFU policy. Hopefully, this stance will be reviewed soon and the original NFU policy will be restored.

NFU, instead of diluting only increases the efficacy of deterrence because it exhibits a state's confidence to its adversary that not only is it capable of surviving a first attack, but also retaliating with punitive action.

Discussion

Comments/Questions

- There is a technological momentum behind what is happening in India in the nuclear field. Things like missile defence, increasing accuracy of missiles, and the varied configuration of its nuclear force, suggest that there is a move from a counter-value to counter-force targeting posture which dilutes India's NFU pledge, which Pakistan anyway views with skepticism. Therefore, there will always be fear within Pakistan of pre-emption by India regardless of the NFU. If India is to reinforce its NFU pledge, it will need to dilute the second pillar of its doctrine which says that India will retaliate in a 'massive' way in return for a first strike. If India were to shift its stance from 'massive' to 'flexible punitive retaliation,' then Pakistan would possibly understand

that the technological momentum is no longer aimed at counter-value targeting, but counter-force or counter-military targeting. The caveat in such a case then should be that India finishes any nuclear exchange at the lowest possible level.

- Not only has NFU not influenced Iran, even the threats of FU and sanctions have not influenced it. India's neighbour, Myanmar has wanted to develop what it terms 'civil nuclear capability' since 1998. The Russians are helping them with the research reactor and there has been a flurry of reporting since 2007 that North Korea is helping Myanmar. NFU therefore, has certainly not influenced non-proliferation in this region.
- The notion of 'extended deterrence' keeps proliferation down, at least within the NATO allies, apart from the other two nuclear members. So what would be a consideration that within the NATO it leads to a hierarchy of a structure, but outside the NATO this concept of extended deterrence would not equally apply and so the other states are free to pursue a policy of going the nuclear way? What then is the value of a NFU if NATO is primarily used now in extended out-of-area operations where its presence or absence does not seem to deter? Also, is there an argument strong enough to compel or deter terrorist groups or states willing to support them?
- What is China's stand on NFU? There seem to be conflicting perceptions about whether its NFU policy is unconditional or not.
- NFU doctrine while useful, certainly does not solve all problems related to nuclear weapons. It does not address for instance, the issue of elimination. We need far more concrete steps to realize the goal of nuclear weapons elimination.
- India has no policy of containing Pakistan and there is no ambiguity about India's nuclear policy. The policy simply states that India reserves the right to retaliate if it is attacked first by an adversary.

Responses

- There are scenarios, some of which are realistic, some of which are not in which one can imagine the use of nuclear weapons not leading to a broader escalation. The likely scenarios include such options as what if there is a biological weapons underground facility in a non-nuclear state that cannot be reached by any other means except the use of nuclear weapons which gives a state the confidence that it can destroy such a facility? Many have argued that the use of a nuclear weapon in this scenario would in fact, reduce civilian casualties because it would burn up the fallout from a biological residue in the underground facility and therefore, the humane thing to do would be to use a nuclear weapon in such conditions. This narrow military logic which does not take into account the broader political effects of the

US using nuclear weapons however, is a reflection of a remarkable blind spot in the briefer's mindset. Therefore, while one must accept that there maybe certain conditions in which first use might not lead to escalation and might be militarily effective, they must nonetheless be rejected because the world has enjoyed the benefits of a several decades-old tradition of not using nuclear weapons and we must not use them even in circumstances in which their use might not lead to escalation.

- American threats did not cause the Iranian programme, but certainly encouraged it at certain times, especially threats of regime change. What is needed is a diplomatic approach that makes clear that the US does not think that the current Iranian regime is legitimate, since the election was fraudulent, but that the US will not use military force to change regimes.
- China seems to be actually practicing an unconditional NFU policy. In fact, one often hears of its military officers complain about how this doctrine has tied down their hands.
- One is not aware of the ground situation in Myanmar. Neither is there certainty about the veracity of the reports that are coming out on the issue. However, if this is in fact true, then it is a cause for worry.
- NFU is linked to issues of proliferation, terrorism, arms reduction, and forces us to look at the very purpose of nuclear weapons and the issue of disarmament and nuclear weapons elimination. The first step towards disarmament would be the adoption of a NFU doctrine, which will not only help decrease the importance of and reliance on nuclear weapons, but also lead to their delegitimization.

Session II: Base Camps on the Path to the Summit of Nuclear Disarmament

Chair: Amb. Arundhati Ghose

Speaker: Dr. Scott Sagan

Discussant: Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill

Amb. Arundhati Ghosh

The international community is witnessing renewed focus on the question of nuclear weapon elimination, evident in a slew of initiatives such as the global zero one. While the upcoming Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference in 2010 is seen as the driver for such initiatives, what started this debate were the two Op-eds written by the Quartet advocating the need to move towards a world free of nuclear weapons. Though the objective of nuclear weapon elimination is highly desired by many, it is a hard and arduous task and, as rightly put in the base camp approach, is at the top of the mountain.



Dr. Scott Sagan and Amb. Arundhati Ghose

President Obama's commitment towards a world free of nuclear weapons was very much evident in his campaign for the Presidency. Although he reiterated his commitments to such an enterprise in the Prague speech, he also mentioned that the objective of nuclear weapon elimination is a long drawn out one and would not be possible in his own life time. The US commitment to elimination of nuclear weapons has to confront the need for effective deterrence capabilities not only for the US national security but also for allies under its nuclear umbrella.

Reaching the top of the mountain, that is nuclear weapons elimination, requires several base camps for resting purposes. One such approach is going to be discussed by Dr. Scott Sagan and Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill.

Dr. Scott Sagan

NPT is often conceptualized as a grand bargain between the nuclear haves and have-nots where the Non Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) of the NPT gave up their rights to pursue nuclear weapons in lieu of assurances from the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) for transfers of technology and to gradually disarm themselves of all their nuclear weapons. However, this interpretation of NPT is historically inaccurate. When the treaty was drafted, Article IV and Article VI applied to both the categories and NPT symbolised a shared responsibility of both the NWS and the NNWS in making the world free of nuclear weapons. Today, the spread of nuclear weapons is highly probable looking at the flux in which nuclear technology operates. The former Director General of the IAEA warned that many countries are moving towards developing proliferation sensitive nuclear fuel cycles. Most of the NNWS consider developing national nuclear fuel cycles as their inalienable rights. However, NNWS have to understand that they share a responsibility with the NWS under Article VI of the NPT and it is important to assess what role they can play in

performing their part of the disarmament obligation.

Negotiation regarding the multilateralization of the nuclear fuel cycles is one such avenue where positive involvement of all NNWS is very important. Placing the intrinsically dangerous nuclear activities under some sort of international or multilateral control would drastically decrease the chances of weapons proliferation as well as any accidental use or theft of nuclear material for terrorist purposes. NWS would be less likely to move towards zero nuclear weapons if many NNWS have access to sensitive nuclear fuel cycles. Multilateralization is an obligation of the NNWS under the good faith negotiations clause of Article VI which they agreed to enter for global nuclear disarmament. Moreover, it will be a very important confidence building measure. On the other hand, the NWS have to be forthcoming in their commitment to the cause of disarmament. International safeguards for all nuclear facilities in the NWS would be a right step. The 1967 commitment made by President Lyndon Johnson has to be reaffirmed by all NWS. Similarly many new measures have to be taken with regard to augmenting the safeguards. India can do a lot in this regard by providing an example of the best practices which must be followed. NNWS should also contribute for verification and inspection regime, which is to be developed completely and Norway is a model to be followed.

What is of crucial importance is the question of engaging all NWS in the debate over nuclear disarmament. The debate is often restricted to strategic arm cuts between the US and Russia, thus making it a bilateral exercise. The need is to emphasize that nuclear disarmament is a universal responsibility and all NWS are tied together in this objective. Many NWS are waiting to see what Russia and US are doing before they would even discuss the matter. In Project Base Camp, we have discussed the idea of proportional cuts where by the chicken-egg dilemma of 'you go first or I go first' is addressed. Under this plan, different countries will be disarming at different rates so that at the end of a stipulated time all countries will have the same number of reduced weapons. The salience of nuclear weapons has to be de-emphasized or in other words, nuclear weapons have to be delegitimized. There has to be engendered a general repulsion towards nuclear weapons and in this endeavour a normative vision of nuclear weapons free world would help significantly. Such delegitimation has to be accompanied with doctrinal changes where a thorough restructuring of national security and military forces would be required. The delegitimation will provide an ethical goal which would require some kind of sacrifices from all the stakeholders.

Lastly, the endgame scenario in case of a situation where

nuclear world eventually gets rid of all nuclear weapons is enormously important. The most sensitive consideration at that point of time would be the danger of someone cheating in the process. To realise the dream of a world free of nuclear weapons these questions need to be entertained right now. In this regard, first the NWS and the NNWS have to work together to enforce agreements that already exist. An acid test will be the cases of North Korea and Iran. Concerted actions in both these cases should be set as a precedent for future violators. Second, the UNSC should be automatically referred to in case of any breakout from the NPT regime. Moreover, the safeguards agreement must continue even if the state withdraws from the NPT regime. This will necessitate stronger enforcement mechanism and violations of any kind need to be taken more seriously. In the contemporary period, due to the enormity of the arsenal which states have, leaders can be complacent regarding the violations but in the world free of nuclear weapons any violation had to be strictly confronted.

Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill

The best thing about the metaphor of a 'Base Camp' is that it allows all the stakeholders to think creatively and constructively towards a nuclear free world. It provides a conceptual ground on which the immediate steps which need to be taken can be synchronised with those events that are far away on the climb to the top of the mountain. The coming year of 2010 is a decision forcing year, in the terminology of the organisational theorists, since it holds the future of the NPT regime and therefore will also, to a large extent, affect the viability of various plans and concepts presently being discussed towards the goal of nuclear disarmament. In the Project Base Camp, different working papers were presented by delegates of different countries and it was quite a mixed group of states that participated in this project making it a truly international gathering. However, the project missed the Chinese perspective. Different representatives took different situations as their starting point. Ian Leviante from Israel took a multilateral base camp as his starting point in which the total number of nuclear weapons was around 200 to 300. Pavel Pudwig from Russia took strategic arms reduction by the US and Russia as his starting point and subsequently others joining their efforts. Dr. Sagan took the NPT RevCon as his starting point where a decision regarding proportional disarmament is made. Brunue Detray from France took a very colourful and cinematic starting point, a catastrophic exchange of nuclear weapons which shakes all the states and then everybody starts moving towards elimination. All these imaginations pose several conceptual problems which the Project Base Camp seeks to deal with.

Conceptually, project base camp involved a number of issues. First, on the aspect of shared responsibilities, sharing

of roles and responsibilities can flow from a number of avenues. It can come from the UN charter, NPT Review Conferences or from the special sessions on disarmament in the UN. However what needs to be emphasized is that most often shared responsibilities have a tendency to be shelved responsibilities. Shared responsibilities without elaborating the individual responsibilities of various states can lead to role ambiguity. There should be nothing ambiguous about the role of the principle possessors. The US and Russia have to take lead on both qualitative as well as quantitative reductions and others may join them later in the path to nuclear disarmament.

Second, in view of the current challenges, there are calls for tightening the loopholes. This may lead to a feeling among the NNWS that the screws are further tightened and that more restrictions are being imposed, to say the case for multilateralization of nuclear fuel cycles, without any progress on disarmament. However, such frustration among the NNWS may lead to a repeat of the situation in 1990's, where amid the euphoria of indefinite extension of the NPT and the successful engagement of the clandestine nuclear activities of Iraq by the IAEA, NPT regime was not able to hold itself to its success and crumbled due to its internal frailties.

Third is the issue of proportional reductions or mathematically calculated reductions on the part of all states to move towards global zero. The challenge confronting the world today is not of moving towards a fixed reduced number of weapons but that of preventing any use of nuclear weapons anywhere by states or any non-state actors. Whether the non-use of nuclear weapons is a tradition or a taboo or is it something in the middle is an issue of debate but drawing a distinction between civilian combatants and non-civilian combatants is very difficult and therefore, efforts to relativise the moral issue by advocating different targeting strategies should be pursued.

Lastly, delegitimization is another issue which also needs to be further debated on. Delegitimization basically means devaluing currency overtime so that in a period of time it is deemed to be out of use. The question which then needs to be answered is why the delegitimization strategy has not worked with the nuclear weapons? The answer is that nuclear weapons offer unique political and security benefits. Nuclear disarmament has been debated in very rigid framework of either a reduction within some stipulated time or has been talked about with a lot of moral overtones and therefore, delegitimization necessitates following a middle route.

The Base Camp in the case of India was a UN setting in 2024 in which four countries, the US, China, India and



Mr. Amandeep Singh Gill

South Africa move a No First Use (NFU) draft proposal in the UN Security Council. This group is a very curious mix of states. South Africa which is presently a NPT member has been a former nuclear weapons state. The US has been a weapon state from the first nuclear age, the nuclear age of flux and symmetry. China is a second generation nuclear power and pivotal player in the Asian continent and already has a NFU policy. India is a non-NPT member and has a NFU doctrine.

However, beyond the characteristics of different countries who initiate this process, a number of events unfold in the meantime which makes possible such political moves in the first place. First, is the return of the US to what National Academy of Sciences calls the 'Core-Deterrence Mission' and this resolution can be only be possible with such a development. The US Nuclear Posture Review is nearing and there are many years to 2024 and hopefully this should materialise in near future. Then, before approaching the Base Camp, a number of training camps are required which can be conceived in the form of dialogues among the major stakeholders. These dialogues can take place on the margins of Conference on Disarmament in Geneva or the IAEA board of Governors for all those states who are interested in developing Nuclear Fuel Cycles. Moreover, an Asian dialogue on nuclear disarmament is important for the political significance attached to these weapons is much higher than its value in war doctrine in this continent. However, countries such as Russia will have reservations over legally binding commitments to NFU. To solve this problem, the Geneva protocol of 1925 is a perfect model to be followed. Just as the 1925 protocol allowed graduated response, it will also allow states to take their time to join others. Moreover, the convention for delegitimization has to be a framework convention just on the lines of Chemical Weapons Convention; it should allow new protocols to be added as and when the issues arise rather than addressing all of them in the starting itself. The question of zero also needs to be addressed. The zero in this particular base camp would

be any set of small number and that number would depend upon the latency inherent in the weapons programme of the advanced nuclear weapon states and the advancement in the ballistic missile defence and conventional capabilities.

This Base Camp fits in with many other approaches to nuclear disarmament which delegates from other countries suggested during the project. Delegitimization can fit into any of these Base Camps approaches. Although it recognises the existence of deterrence and can therefore be criticized for allowing deterrence to hold, at the same time it also thins out the concept of deterrence making the breakout more difficult and allows for more verification and inspection of the intent and actions of all the actors. Most importantly, it is inclusive in nature and goes beyond the divides of yesterday.

Discussion

Comments/Questions

- The point of how and when others join the contribution of the US and Russia cannot be neglected. Others will only join in when these two principle nuclear states reduce their arsenals drastically. Moreover, the idea of an Asian dialogue on nuclear disarmament is extremely important. Should this dialogue be restricted to the nuclear weapon states in the continent? The sort of civilian killings which have taken place in Sri-Lanka and Palestine, and are still taking place in Swat and Afghanistan will certainly have an impact over the idea of non-combatant immunity and states can reconsider their commitments to civilian protection.
- Just like the debate on Climate Change, the issue of nuclear disarmament involves responsibilities especially of the permanent members of the UN Security Council. How can states with weapons in ten digits share responsibilities with those who have weapons in thousands. Another flaw with the Base Camp approach is that it considers a political *ceteris paribus* between two Base Camps on way to the summit. There will be change in the political milieu and it is not very clear that how the Base Camp approach would deal with such changes.
- The question of nuclear technology is one that involves the aspects of order and justice. Maintaining the order in the international system necessitates restriction of nuclear technology to a select group of states, whereas justice involves nuclear technology to be available to all the states. This primary contradiction is the chief internal weakness of the NPT and any movement towards elimination of nuclear weapons has to take this into account.
- There are two aspects of the elimination process which need to be delved into. First is the challenge of time and second is the degree of difficulty the world will face in eliminating all these weapons. Even in the International Commission on Nuclear Disarmament, nuclear weapon elimination is considered to be a long drawn out process and it will take time to do so. However, it is the second concern which is much more challenging. In the process of elimination the challenge is not regarding the reduction of weapons from 2000 to 1000 or to 500 but the real challenge will be to move to zero from a state of 100 or 200 weapons. This will be the point of time that trust, verification, cheating, extended deterrence and the idea of nuclear order will all become very pivotal.

Responses

- Although irreversibility of nuclear weapon reduction has been stated as a goal by most NNWS, it is neither possible nor it is something which should be the objective in any case. One can possibly dismantle nuclear weapons but it is extremely hard to eradicate the knowledge or the technology of producing these weapons and therefore, to argue that irreversibility is a sacrosanct objective is stretching the argument too far. It should not be objective because different countries will have different degrees of latency. Some countries would be more latent than others but what they can do to help the whole process is to be very transparent.
- There are a number of ways in which states can start together on the road to disarmament. One way would be to commit irrevocably to eliminate nuclear weapons through any kind of instrument. It will create confidence among the other possessors that the principle possessors are serious about it.
- The dialogue in Asia should be one which is inclusive in nature and should not be restricted to NWS because nuclear weapons involve a question of latency. There can be threshold states possessing the technology to go nuclear and therefore their inclusion is very important. Iran is a classic example It will be interesting to see the latent capabilities of Iran in more of an Asian security picture.
- On the question of whether delegitimization would have an affect over the non-state actors, Dr. Steve Hadley in Stanford said that if the world decides to put the nuclear weapons at the backburner and decide to delegitimise them, it may also influence the non-state actors. There is some substance in that argument.