16 Nuclear Abolition or Nuclear Umbrella? Choices and Contradictions in U.S. Proposals

Matthew Evangelista

> Deterrence continues to be a relevant consideration for many states with regard to threats from other states. But reliance on nuclear weapons for this purpose is becoming increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective.
> —George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons," *Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007

> Although not suited for every 21st century challenge, nuclear weapons remain an essential element in modern strategy.
> —*National Security and Nuclear Weapons in the 21st Century*, White Paper, U.S. departments of Defense and Energy, September 2008

The subtitle to Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film classic, *Dr. Strangelove*, is "How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb." This black comedy, starring Peter Sellers in three different roles, depicted a world gone crazy with exaggerated fears and far-fetched strategies for coping with them—most notoriously the Doomsday Machine, a Soviet device to launch nuclear Armageddon automatically in the event of a perceived attack from the United States. The film's main conceit stems from the fact that the Doomsday Machine could not serve its purpose of deterring such an attack, because the Soviet leaders neglected to tell their U.S. counterparts of its existence. In this respect *Dr. Strangelove* distilled an element of real-world nuclear politics: just two years earlier the actual Soviet leadership had kept secret the presence of Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba, rendering them incapable of deterring U.S. action, and instead triggering a serious international crisis. Kubrick's work, considered a masterpiece of comic invention, reflected reality in other respects. The script was in fact based on the musings of professional nuclear strategists, many housed at the

RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California. One may hesitate to claim that the RAND strategists *loved* the Bomb, but they certainly found it useful for the wide range of tasks, related to U.S. foreign and security policy, about which they worried.[1] Others—members of the public, citizens and leaders of foreign countries, scholars, and intellectuals—worried more about the Bomb itself, in particular, the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the arsenals of the so-called superpowers and of the arcane strategies for their use. They advocated nuclear arms control and disarmament and changes in strategy, such as pledges of "no first use" and the de-alerting of nuclear systems, intended to forestall the doomsday scenario depicted in Kubrick's movie.

The current situation resembles the era of *Dr. Strangelove* in two regards. There are still people who express concern about the dangers of nuclear proliferation—mainly to countries without existing nuclear arsenals and to terrorist groups—and there are still people who harbor ambitious objectives for the use of nuclear weapons. And some people, including many proponents of the long-term goal of a nuclear-free world, appear to do both: they are worried about the Bomb, but, for certain purposes, they continue to love it.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century the call for nuclear disarmament and a move toward "nuclear zero" has come from an unlikely source: four former U.S. officials—William Perry, Sam Nunn, George Shultz, and Henry Kissinger—with close ties to the Cold War nuclear strategists. Indeed Kissinger, the most famous member of the foursome, was a long-time consultant to RAND and the author of an early influential work of nuclear strategy, which advocated a prominent role for nuclear weapons in the defense of Western Europe.[2] One cannot say that such former U.S. officials have become worried about nuclear weapons only recently, however. They always expressed concern about *other* countries' nuclear weapons—particularly those of the Soviet Union, sometimes those of China, and, however briefly, even those of France. But the policies they pursued in the furtherance of their understanding of U.S. foreign and security interests suggested that they were not worried about *U.S.* nuclear weapons. Rather they valued those nuclear weapons as central to resolving U.S. security problems, and they developed strategies for nuclear use in a wide range of contingencies. Many of those contingencies—such as deterrence of an attack against European allies or discouraging China from settling its dispute with Taiwan by force—remain a part of U.S. military policy, and, as such, they pose a major barrier to nuclear disarmament.

The key element that prompted the four former officials to launch their

nuclear disarmament initiative was a worry that "the deadliest weapons ever invented could fall into dangerous hands," as they put it in the opening paragraph of their *Wall Street Journal* article of January 15, 2008, a year after they announced their original appeal in the same newspaper.[3] The implication is that nuclear weapons have been in safe hands since their invention in 1945, even though those hands dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing tens of thousands of innocents; came close to nuclear war over Cuba in 1962; put nuclear weapons on high alert during the 1973 Middle East War; and blundered into numerous hair-raising accidents and mistakes in handling nuclear weapons, some as recently as 2007, others in the distant past—their occurrence discovered in formerly secret documents and through interviews.[4] Even aside from the military use and near-use of nuclear weapons since 1945, the process of mining and enriching uranium, creating plutonium, manufacturing the weapons components, and testing the weapons in the atmosphere and underground posed life-threatening risks to many thousands of people and devastated the natural environment. None of this seemed to worry the custodians of the nuclear arsenals, who gave every indication of having instead come to Love the Bomb—as long as it seemed to them to enhance U.S. security.

Now they worry, because the Bomb could fall into dangerous hands and put U.S. security at risk. As the second paragraph of the 2008 *Wall Street Journal* article explains, paraphrasing the one a year earlier, "[W]ith nuclear weapons more widely available, deterrence is decreasingly effective and increasingly hazardous."[5] In releasing his administration's *Nuclear Posture Review* in April 2010, President Barack Obama articulated the same concerns. The review, he argued, "recognizes that the greatest threat to U.S. and global security is no longer a nuclear exchange between nations, but nuclear terrorism by violent extremists and nuclear proliferation to an increasing number of states."[6] The main concern of the former officials and the current president is, not surprisingly, for the effectiveness of U.S. deterrence. Rhetorically eliding "U.S. and global security," as the president did, will not convince everyone that they are the same thing. And as long as the initiative for a nuclear-free world gives priority to U.S. security, it will not make much of an impression on states that aspire to obtain nuclear weapons, let alone on terrorist groups, which are presumably undeterred by the traditional remedy of nuclear retaliation.

In the pages that follow, I describe the barriers to achieving nuclear disarmament posed by U.S. policy. They include: (1) that, despite changes announced by President Obama, the United States continues to depend on the threat of nuclear retaliation—often called "extended deterrence" or the quaintly nonsensical "nuclear umbrella"—to serve a wide range of security concerns; and (2) that the "nuclear zero" initiative provides no way of addressing the security concerns of the countries to which it is intended to deny nuclear weapons. Although the first steps toward nuclear zero seem promising—working with Russia and the other members of the nuclear club in the framework of traditional arms control to reduce their arsenals—even here there are serious difficulties. U.S. policy toward ballistic missile defense and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization risk undermining cooperation with Russia and limits the possibilities for Russian reductions in nuclear weapons.

Even if these first steps are successful—convincing the acknowledged nuclear-weapon states to begin the process of disarmament—what would be the next steps in the absence of cooperation by the aspiring nuclear-weapons states, such as Iran and North Korea? Stopping those states from acquiring or accumulating nuclear weapons would then require coercive measures such as economic sanctions or military action. The nuclear-free initiative begins to look like a ploy by the dominant nuclear powers to rally support for such measures without seeming too hypocritical. The second part of the chapter takes up this issue by considering U.S. objectives in pursuing nuclear zero.

The third part of the chapter draws on historical experiences to suggest some alternative means to move toward nuclear disarmament by connecting the nuclear predicament to the broader security environment. The end of the Cold War in Europe came when the rationale for deployment of nuclear weapons disappeared. Initiatives on the part of the Soviet Union—such as unilateral reductions in its offensively oriented armed forces and political liberalization within the Soviet bloc—removed the threat of major conventional war in central Europe. Thus it was no longer necessary for the United States to pose the risk of nuclear escalation to deter such a war. Scholars and activists had prepared the groundwork for the changes that ended the Cold War arms race by explicitly proposing initiatives that would take account of the links between conventional and nuclear war. Prospects for a successful "nuclear zero" initiative will also need to take account of the links between nuclear weapons and broader security concerns—not only for the nuclear "haves," but also the nuclear "have-nots" and the nuclear "wannabes."

The end of the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union is owed not only to the material changes, such as withdrawal of Soviet

armed forces from central Europe, but also to ideational ones. The top leadership in the two countries—most notably Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev—endorsed concepts such as "common security," where one side's security does not come at the expense of the other's. They publicly expressed their antipathy to nuclear weapons. Their views reflected widespread public revulsion and alarm at the prospect of nuclear war. Nuclear disarmament will become easier to achieve if leaders of the countries that have deployed nuclear weapons actively contribute to stigmatizing their possession and use—the focus of the final part of the chapter. To do so, they will have to face the contradictions in their existing strategies and make a choice between keeping their nuclear umbrellas and pursuing nuclear abolition.

THE PURPOSES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Before considering how to get rid of nuclear weapons, we should review why they exist. The common answer is "deterrence," and the common follow-up question is "how much is enough?" to achieve it. When we think about nuclear weapons, however, the most important question should not be "how many?" but "what for?" We typically think of deterrence as the threat of retaliation with nuclear weapons by one country to forestall a nuclear attack by another. This is only one narrow category of deterrence, however, and it usually requires an adjective to specify its constrained role: *limited*, *minimum*, *finite*, or *existential* are the ones often attached. Beyond this limited purpose for nuclear weapons, the United States has pursued many far more ambitious ones. One of the most important purposes of U.S. nuclear weapons has been to deter war against U.S. allies or military conflict that implicates U.S. interests abroad but does not pose a threat of nuclear attack against the United States itself. Such purposes typically fall under the designation *extended deterrence*. Without addressing head-on the purposes of U.S. possession and planned use of nuclear weapons, many of the well-meaning discussions about how to reduce nuclear arsenals are beside the point. Experts who write about such topics as "redefining deterrence" without posing the question "deterrence of what?" are missing a key element of the picture.[7]

If we consider the history of nuclear weapons and U.S. policy we can see that from the beginning the United States deployed nuclear weapons for purposes that went far beyond the deterrence of a nuclear attack against itself. The United States developed the first atomic bombs during World War II initially in response to fears that Nazi Germany would do so. In that respect the new

weapons might have been considered a deterrent to Germany's prospective use. But Germany was defeated before it developed a nuclear weapons capability. Following the end of the European war, the U.S. government used two atomic weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. Their purpose was not deterrence, but actual *use* in the service of what later became known as "compellence"—dropping the bombs was intended to compel the Japanese authorities to surrender quickly and perhaps to influence the policy of the Soviet Union.[8]

For the next four years, the United States held an atomic monopoly, and following the first Soviet atomic test in August 1949 it continued to maintain a monopoly on "deliverable" weapons into the early 1950s. By definition U.S. development, production, and deployment of atomic weapons during this period served not to deter the threat of nuclear attack by other countries—because no other countries could mount such an attack—but a variety of other purposes. The United States deployed "atomic-capable" B-29 bombers to Europe during the Berlin Crisis, for example, to signal resolve to the Soviet Union. It developed a worldwide system of air bases, planned already during the later stages of World War II (and without a specific postwar enemy in mind), and eventually used it to surround the USSR with nuclear-armed aircraft.[9] One of the purposes was to deter the Soviet Union from starting a war. U.S. leaders during the late 1940s justified monopoly possession of nuclear weapons as a counter to what they claimed was a Soviet superiority in conventionally armed forces poised to pour across the borders of the USSR in pursuit of worldwide military conquest. The security of Western Europe was a particular focus of concern. Even though declassified documents have made it clear that U.S. analysts and political figures overestimated the strength of Soviet forces in the immediate postwar era, perceptions of Soviet conventional superiority served as a justification for a U.S. policy of extended nuclear deterrence—the threat of U.S. nuclear attack against the Soviet Union to deter that country from invading Western Europe.[10]

Much of the subsequent development of U.S. nuclear strategy and weapons was premised on the need to bolster the credibility of extended deterrence—for example, to allay doubts that the United States would risk global nuclear devastation to protect its European allies. To that end, the United States deployed thousands of so-called tactical nuclear weapons into Europe starting in the early 1950s. But U.S. nuclear weapons had roles to play beyond Europe as well. In the early 1980s, for example, following the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet

invasion of Afghanistan, the United States made increasingly explicit threats to escalate to the level of nuclear war in the event that a hostile power seeking militarily to deny U.S. access to oil supplies could not be defeated by conventional forces.[11] In the Pacific region, the United States has deployed nuclear weapons and employed nuclear threats for a variety of purposes over the decades: to influence China's policies toward Taiwan, to deter North Korean aggression against the South, and—however chimerical—to bolster the prospects for U.S. success in its disastrous war against Vietnam.[12]

To the extent that the United States still relies on nuclear weapons for a range of purposes associated with extended deterrence, it will be harder to move toward a nuclear-free world. Historically the U.S. Department of Defense has accorded nuclear weapons both a deterrent role and a "war-fighting" role in the event of military conflict. As late as May 2009 a doctrinal document from the U.S. Air Force, for example, stressed the importance of using nuclear weapons as a deterrent against countries suspected of developing chemical or biological weapons.[13] In April 2010, President Obama rejected this particular role for nuclear deterrence, when he declared that "we will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and in compliance with their nuclear non-proliferation obligations."[14] Even limited to nuclear-armed states, and countries such as Iran and North Korea, which the United States does not consider to be in compliance with the NPT, U.S. military policy for nuclear war is still ambitious. Perhaps battle plans will change in response to Obama's commitment "to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy." But as it stands, the Pentagon intends to use nuclear weapons not only at the "strategic" level against countries that have attacked the United States, but also "in support of theater objectives" during an ongoing military conflict. Such use would have both military and political objectives, as the U.S. Air Force's doctrinal statement describes: "While the use of nuclear weapons will affect an ongoing engagement between friendly and enemy forces, their use should also be designed to help achieve the political goals of the operation." The document claims that "the law of armed conflict does not expressly prohibit the possession or use of nuclear weapons," and although "the destruction wrought by nuclear weapons can be immense," it can also "be tailored and limited for a particular scenario."[15]

For many decades, such U.S. plans for "tailored" and "limited," as well as massive, use of nuclear weapons have coincided with an inhibition on the part

of U.S. leaders actually to resort to nuclear war—something Nina Tannenwald has described as the "nuclear taboo."[16] The political reluctance to launch a nuclear attack rests uneasily with the detailed military planning for doing so. The political commitment to *use* nuclear weapons in defense of allies rests uneasily with the goal of a nuclear-free world, even if Obama limited that commitment to defense of allies menaced by a nuclear-armed state.

As former and current U.S. leaders endorsed "nuclear zero," they still maintained and frequently reiterated a commitment to deter attacks against U.S. allies by threat of nuclear retaliation. That commitment is captured in the expression "nuclear umbrella," which so readily trips off the tongues of both supporters and opponents of moving toward a nuclear-free world. In a May 2009 article in the *Wall Street Journal*, for example, William Perry, a signatory of the original call for zero nuclear weapons, wrote with two other former U.S. officials that "an effective strategy to reduce nuclear dangers must build on five pillars: revitalizing strategic dialogue with nuclear-armed powers, particularly Russia and China; strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime; reaffirming the protection of the U.S. nuclear umbrella to our allies; maintaining the credibility of the U.S. nuclear deterrent; and implementing best security practices for nuclear weapons and weapons-usable materials worldwide."[17] In a response in the same newspaper the following month, Richard Perle, a former Defense Department official, and Republican senator Jon Kyl criticized President Obama's commitment to a nuclear-free world for, among other things, its effect on "allies who may one day lose confidence in our nuclear umbrella."[18]

The criticism of Obama was misplaced. The U.S. president has regularly reasserted his country's commitment to use nuclear weapons to deter attacks against various countries, and some of his fellow Democrats have proposed additional commitments. In June 2009, for example, Senator John Kerry, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, suggested in an interview with London's *Financial Times* that "Israel should be included under the U.S.'s nuclear umbrella."[19] That same month, at a summit meeting in Washington, DC, with South Korean president Lee Myung-bak, Obama reaffirmed that the U.S. security commitment to the Republic of Korea included a nuclear component. As the Korean president put it at the joint press conference, "President Obama reaffirmed this firm commitment towards ensuring the security of South Korea through extended deterrence, which includes the nuclear umbrella." Both presidents vowed that North Korea should not be allowed to possess nuclear weapons.[20] To illustrate the possible consequences of the U.S. commitment to use

nuclear weapons in defense of South Korea, and to deny those weapons to its northern neighbor, the *Korea Times* accompanied its article about the summit meeting with an illustration titled "Possible US Nuclear Umbrella Scenario." It depicted a map of the Korean peninsula, with B-52 bombers, F-117 "stealth" bombers, carrier-based aircraft, tactical nuclear-armed missiles, and 155 mm artillery pieces all carrying out a nuclear attack on a spot on the map not too far north of the border between North and South Korea.[21] Whether or not the illustration reflected accurately what weapons the United States might use in a nuclear attack in the region, it represented a rare depiction of the meaning of the anodyne expression "nuclear umbrella."

The dual approach of pursuing nuclear disarmament while issuing commitments of extended deterrence and expanding the "nuclear umbrella" constitutes official U.S. policy. In his speech in Prague in April 2009, announcing his administration's support for a nuclear-free world, President Obama, for example, promised simultaneously to "reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy" and extend the nuclear deterrent to the Czech Republic as a member of NATO: "Make no mistake," he cautioned. "As long as these weapons exist, the United States will maintain a safe, secure and effective arsenal to deter any adversary, and guarantee that defense to our allies—including the Czech Republic."[22] He repeated nearly the same words a year later when releasing the Nuclear Posture Review.

President Obama explicitly connected the U.S. commitment to defend the Czech Republic, including with nuclear weapons, to the North Atlantic Treaty: "NATO's Article V states it clearly: An attack on one is an attack on all. That is a promise for our time, and for all time." During the last year of the Bush administration, especially following the military conflict between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Georgia in August 2008, the issue of extending NATO membership to Georgia and to Ukraine came to the fore. To the degree that the Obama administration pursues the expansion of NATO to those two countries, both of which border Russia, it will further complicate the prospects for nuclear disarmament. Would the United States and its allies be tempted to resurrect the arcane system of extended deterrence that characterized NATO's Cold War nuclear strategy, with its various "steps" along the "escalation ladder" to achieve "escalation dominance," and its thousands of "tactical" nuclear weapons deployed on European soil?

This is the sort of situation for which the term "Strangelovian" was coined—and today's situation is not so different, given the purposes that nuclear weapons continue to fulfill in U.S. security policy, despite official endorsement of a nuclear-free future. Especially in the wake of Obama's speech in Prague, however, numerous observers began to call into question the role of tactical nuclear weapons stationed in Europe, and, in some cases, the merits of extended nuclear deterrence.[23] In announcing the Nuclear Posture Review in April 2010, Obama chose not to address the weapons in Europe, promising instead to consult with U.S. allies about them.[24]

U.S. INTEREST IN A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD

In Obama's Prague speech the president described U.S. interest in preventing further countries from developing nuclear weapons and stressed the importance of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. "The basic bargain," he claimed, "is sound: Countries with nuclear weapons will move towards disarmament, countries without nuclear weapons will not acquire them." But he stressed the need for better enforcement measures for countries in the latter category: "We need real and immediate consequences for countries caught breaking the rules or trying to leave the treaty without cause." Specifically, "[V]iolations must be punished." Even more specifically, "[We] must stand shoulder to shoulder to pressure the North Koreans to change course" and deal with the "real threat" posed by "Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile activity." Finally, he argued, "[We] must ensure that terrorists never acquire a nuclear weapon," a possibility that he described as "the most immediate and extreme threat to global security."

Thus, the Obama administration's motives for seeking a nuclear-free world echo those of the original proposal from Perry, Nunn, Shultz, and Kissinger. Unlike them—and in a rare, if not unprecedented, acknowledgment for a U.S. president—Obama allowed that "as the only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act." Although Obama claimed, at another point in his speech, that "moral leadership is more powerful than any weapon," his administration remains concerned about nuclear weapons in dangerous hands. It is intent on denying such weapons to North Korea, Iran, and terrorist groups. But his critics have wondered how initiatives on the way to a nuclear-free world, such as U.S. ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, would achieve that goal. Would U.S. ratification of the test ban treaty make North Korea, Iran, or al Qaeda any less interested in obtaining nuclear arms?[25]

A key argument that proponents of nuclear zero summon is that taking such near-term initiatives helps address the fact, as Perry, Nunn, Shultz, and Kiss-

inger wrote, that "non-nuclear weapon states have grown increasingly skeptical of the sincerity of the nuclear powers" in their commitments under the Non-proliferation Treaty to move toward nuclear disarmament.[26] The problem is—as Kyl, Perle, and other critics point out—that professions of U.S. sincerity are unlikely to dissuade Iran or North Korea (let alone al Qaeda) from their nuclear ambitions. By ratifying the Comprehensive Test Ban and even negotiating deeper reductions with Russia, the United States could render its position less hypocritical on the matter of nuclear disarmament, but that will not be enough to achieve the main goal that motivates the nuclear zero initiative: the fear of nuclear weapons in the hands of "irresponsible" states or groups.[27] Moreover, to the extent that U.S. security policy still relies on nuclear weapons for a variety of purposes—not least to threaten (deter) states such as North Korea and Iran—that policy will still be seen to embody a double standard. Critics will understand the U.S. rhetorical commitment to a nuclear-free world, and even the intermediate steps in that direction, as a means to summon an international consensus to punish the states that refuse to go along.

The crux of the matter is that the United States pursues two contradictory paths to reducing the threat of nuclear weapons in "dangerous hands." The first is embracing nuclear disarmament as a long-term goal. The second is maintaining nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence until that goal is achieved. In an interview with the *New York Times*, President Obama made the point with characteristic clarity: "We will retain our deterrent capacity as long as there is a country with nuclear weapons."[28] Thus, in Obama's lights, the last step to a nuclear-free world would be U.S. monopoly possession of nuclear weapons. This, however, is a world we have already experienced. Monopoly possession of atomic weapons by the United States in the second half of the 1940s served as an inducement, not a deterrent, to other countries' acquisition of nuclear arsenals. The disarmament scheme premised on the U.S. atomic monopoly—the Baruch Plan—demonstrably failed. Only when other states, most notably the Soviet Union, had built their own nuclear capabilities, were they willing to negotiate restrictions.

It is not difficult to draw the historical parallels to the era of U.S. atomic monopoly and the arms control negotiations of the Cold War. Why would Iran or North Korea forgo the nuclear option given their current security predicaments? A look at the map shows Iran effectively surrounded by nuclear-armed states: Pakistan on its eastern border, India just beyond, Russia to the north, Israel to the west, and the United States with aircraft carriers and nuclear-armed

submarines deployed in the Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea, and Indian Ocean, as well as the global reach of its land-based intercontinental missiles. The *Korean Times* article about the U.S. nuclear umbrella presents a good approximation of the nuclear threat posed to North Korea, without even taking into account the nuclear arsenals of neighboring Russia and China.

The security environment that confronts Iran and North Korea, and the incentives they face in making judgments about their nuclear options, are obvious to many well-informed international observers. In an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, for example, Mohamed El Baradei, then head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, "told the BBC that countries with nuclear weapons were treated differently to those without. He said North Korea, with a bomb, was invited to the conference table, while Saddam Hussein's Iraq, without one, was—as he put it—pulverised." Regarding Iranian motives, he said, "[It] is my gut feeling that Iran would like to have the technology to enable it to have nuclear weapons, if it decides to do so." The Iranians, in his view, "want to send a message to their neighbours, to the rest of the world, don't mess with us." Even recognizing the incentives for Iran to obtain a nuclear weapons capability, El Baradei offered as a solution that the nuclear "haves" take the initiative: "The only safe future, he said, was widespread nuclear disarmament led by the existing nuclear powers."[29] As long as Iran and North Korea perceive those existing nuclear powers—the United States, in particular—as hostile, they are unlikely to disarm first on the promise of future disarmament by their adversaries. But that seems to be the only plan on offer by the Americans.

RELATING NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT TO BROADER SECURITY CONCERNS

Previous efforts at nuclear disarmament suggest that states achieve progress only when they take other states' security concerns into account. During the Cold War that meant U.S. acknowledgment that the Soviet Union would insist on achieving "parity" with the United States before it would pursue mutual reductions. A more significant reduction of the nuclear threat came with the end of the Cold War and the East-West conflict, when the governments on both sides—spurred by nongovernmental organizations and popular movements—recognized the interconnection of security issues with political concerns, including human rights.[30] A key turning point came when the reformist Soviet leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledged the effect on U.S. and

NATO nuclear policy of the large Soviet conventional armed presence in central Europe and the role that the Soviet Army had played in bolstering the rule of communist parties in the region. Gorbachev's unilateral initiatives—such as deep reductions and restructuring of conventional forces, a halt to Soviet nuclear testing, and an acknowledgment of "freedom of choice" in the domestic political order of the East European states—paved the way to the end of the Cold War and the prospect for further reductions in nuclear weapons. Although Ronald Reagan was sympathetic to the goal of abolishing nuclear weapons, his successors were more skeptical and squandered an opportunity to achieve more dramatic progress. Nevertheless, that the United States and Russia ceased to consider each other mortal enemies in a nuclear stand-off constituted a major achievement.

Picking up where Gorbachev and Reagan left off—an explicit goal of Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, and Nunn, articulated in their first *Wall Street Journal* article—is a sensible first step toward achieving nuclear disarmament. Yet the fact that Russia and the United States are no longer the leaders of rival military alliances does not mean there are no security concerns that could complicate the prospects for nuclear disarmament. Indeed, the Russian government has made clear two of those concerns: the continued expansion of NATO, and U.S. plans, promoted by the administration of George W. Bush, to deploy components of a missile defense system in Eastern Europe, ostensibly to defeat an attack from Iran. Russian officials expressed concern about the system and doubts about the rationale.

Regardless of what one thinks of NATO and of the merits of extending security guarantees to countries along Russia's border with which Moscow has conflictual relations, no one can plausibly argue that NATO expansion enhances the prospects for nuclear disarmament. The Russian armed forces have to plan for the contingency of war, and if they contemplate a war with states allied to a nuclear-armed United States, they must also contemplate the use of nuclear weapons. The continued expansion of NATO—both the eastward expansion and the expansion into a worldwide military force for so-called out of area missions—will hinder nuclear disarmament, much as the deployment of large, offensively oriented conventional forces did during the Cold War. Few countries, Russia included, are going to be willing to give up their nuclear weapons if the United States continues to flaunt its global dominance in conventional military forces.

On missile defense, Moscow still sees the connection between nuclear defense and disarmament in pretty much the traditional way it was understood during the Cold War. One side's deployment of defenses undermines the deterrent effects of the other side's retaliatory nuclear offensive forces. The Russian public interpretation of U.S. plans for missile defense in Eastern Europe held that they were directed against Russia and, in former president Putin's words, would "upset the balance" of nuclear forces. Russian analysts suggested the new deployments were intended to neutralize Russia's capability to launch a retaliatory nuclear attack against Europe if Russia faced a nuclear attack from the West. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dismissed these concerns as "ludicrous." In fact, the proposed deployments in the Czech Republic and Poland were not well suited for their stated mission of defending Europe from an Iranian attack; if upgraded, they would have been more effective in hindering a Russian missile attack. In response to the announcement of U.S. deployment plans, Putin proposed to the Bush administration more cooperative means of dealing with a potential Iranian threat, including sharing data from Russian radar systems and even joint operation of early-warning centers in Moscow and Brussels.[31] The Bush administration preferred its own plan. In November 2008, following the election of Barack Obama, Defense Secretary Robert Gates dismissed Putin's offer out of hand rather than let the new administration make its own decision.[32]

The incoming Democratic administration did, in fact, revise the Republican decision—substituting for it one that it described as more plausible from a security standpoint. In the process it opened the possibility for new sites for deployment in Eastern Europe and a redistribution of the contracts to a new set of military industrial firms within the United States.[33]

Although the change in policy on missile defense offered an opportunity to try to address Russian security concerns, Obama's advisers seemed to go out of their way not to do so, even in the interest of negotiating reductions in nuclear arms. As Michael McFaul of the National Security Council staff insisted in July 2009, "[We're] not going to reassure or give or trade anything with the Russians regarding NATO expansion or missile defence."[34] The proposal offered at NATO's Lisbon summit in November 2010 to cooperate with Russia on missile defense suggests a departure from such an obstinate approach. Russia is still, however, likely to find the prospect of missile-defense components in Romania and Poland troubling.

Russia is the easy problem, however, compared to addressing the security concerns of Iran and North Korea. Resolution of the conflict with those two

countries may have to await changes in their internal policies, much as the Soviet reforms of the *perestroika* era combined domestic and international change. But as in the Soviet case, the United States must be prepared to recognize genuine initiatives toward reconciliation when they appear. In Prague, President Obama expressed such readiness when he stated that his "administration will seek engagement with Iran based on mutual interests and mutual respect. We believe in dialogue." That line received warm applause compared to his earlier threat to punish violators of the nonproliferation regime. His Czech audience also reacted positively to the prospect that "if the Iranian threat is eliminated, we will have a stronger basis for security, and the driving force for missile defense construction in Europe will be removed." That prospect, however distant, would simultaneously remove one of the barriers to nuclear reductions with Russia. In his June 2009 press conference with the South Korean president, Obama indicated that there "is another path available to North Korea" as well, "a path that leads to peace and economic opportunity for the people of North Korea, including full integration into the community of nations. That destination can only be reached through peaceful negotiations that achieve the full and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula."[35] The United States is presumably not prepared to put its own nuclear arsenal on the table during such negotiations. Under the circumstances, one may doubt whether the North Korean leadership sees the negotiations as fully "peaceful," when they are conducted under the shadow of the "nuclear umbrella" that the United States extends to its South Korean ally.

The end of the Cold War and the East-West arms race took many observers by surprise. But the proposals that led to the withdrawal of hundreds of thousands of troops from central Europe and substantial reductions in nuclear weapons were many decades in the making. Peace researchers and activists in the United States and Europe worked with their counterparts in the Soviet Union to promote initiatives for restructuring and reduction of military forces and respect for human rights.[36] Sympathetic diplomats and political leaders incorporated many of the ideas into their policies. Today's security challenges seem no less daunting, and the solutions will have to be equally creative and bold.

THE NORMATIVE CONTEXT FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

Many observers have noted the antipathy toward nuclear weapons that Ronald Reagan shared with Mikhail Gorbachev. These weapons, in order to achieve their deterrent effect, must inspire terror, and they did so by threat of

mass destruction of innocent life—even if civilians were not deliberate targets. More than a half-century ago a prominent strategist of the RAND Corporation referred to the U.S.-Soviet nuclear stand-off as a "delicate balance of terror."[37] A quarter-century after that, U.S. and Soviet leaders, fearing that the balance might not be adequate to prevent a nuclear war, thought about the dreadful consequences. In the case of Reagan and Gorbachev that thinking spurred them to action in the cause of nuclear disarmament. They were undoubtedly influenced by the fact that people worldwide shared their fear, and at certain points in history many of them protested against nuclear arms in large numbers. Research has suggested that a prerequisite for meaningful limitations on nuclear weapons has been popular mobilization, and that fear and a sense that political leaders are acting irresponsibly tended to fuel that mobilization.[38] Public reaction to the threat of radioactive fall-out from the massive nuclear tests in the 1950s and the near catastrophe of the Cuban Missile Crisis, for example, contributed toward the first achievements in arms control, such as the Limited Test Ban Treaty. Loose talk by members of the Reagan administration about fighting and winning a nuclear war, combined with a worsening of U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1980s, spurred a worldwide peace movement that inspired Gorbachev's initiatives and gave him some hope that they would be well received.[39] The overall normative context included a stigmatization of nuclear weapons as dangerous and potentially genocidal, no matter who owned them.

A deliberate and forthright condemnation of nuclear weapons by the leaders of the nuclear-armed states could make an important contribution to the prospects for global nuclear disarmament. President Obama made a gesture in that direction by acknowledging U.S. moral responsibility for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—implicitly recognizing as morally dubious the disproportionate killing of innocents even in the service of a just cause. Many observers have likened the process of nuclear disarmament, or the more ambitious goal of abolishing war, to the abolition of slavery.[40] Tannenwald has argued that the use of nuclear weapons has already attained the status of a taboo, but that no such stigma attaches to the possession of nuclear weapons, nor to the planning for their use. She argues that the taboo against use could be strengthened by what she calls "virtual abolition schemes" entailing changes in "habit, attitude, norms, law." These might include international pledges of "no first use" of nuclear weapons and criminalization of the use of nuclear weapons, with threats of war-crimes trials of leaders who violate the prohibition.[41] President Obama's commitment of April 2010 not to use U.S.

nuclear weapons against (most) non-nuclear states, however welcome, does not constitute a "virtual abolition scheme" in Tannenwald's sense.

The logic of such proposals assumes that the more a practice is considered morally abhorrent the less likely it is to recur. The process of nuclear disarmament would be bolstered if the leaders of states that possess nuclear weapons not only rejected their use, but apologized for their acquisition and possession. As it stands, their current position—advocating disarmament but retaining the threat of nuclear annihilation—undermines the goal of a nuclear-free world. Imagine if leaders instead emphasized only the negative side of nuclear weapons: the tremendous economic and environmental costs they have imposed over the decades, and even on future generations (if one considers the legacy of genetic damage caused by radioactive fallout); the near misses from accidents and during Cold War crises, and what the consequences might have been had those crises triggered a war; and what the consequences will be if even a small fraction of the world's current nuclear arsenal is used. Consider again the parallel to the abolition of slavery. No one doubts that any country that harbors slave-traders, or individuals found to enslave others, would be subject to unqualified condemnation. No one would argue that one should balance such condemnation against the economic or psychological benefits that accrue to slave-holders. Why should nuclear weapons be treated any differently?

If the possession of nuclear weapons were universally stigmatized, many of the problems that arise in discussions of the merits of nuclear zero would diminish in significance. Consider the problem of verification, and the concern—often associated with Jerome Wiesner, MIT professor and science adviser to President John F. Kennedy—that as fewer nuclear weapons exist the ones that remain become more significant. This formulation applies when countries treat nuclear weapons as valuable additions to their arsenals. But what if they treat them rather as stigmatized instruments of genocide which call forth universal condemnation? On the topic of verifying "nuclear zero," Andrew Mack has pointed to the potential role of whistle-blowers as a way of preventing cheating on a disarmament agreement: "No state that contemplated reneging on its disarmament commitments could be certain that its transgression would not be revealed *from within*. If just one individual refused to go along with the deception, all would be revealed." He points to several familiar cases: "Israel's nuclear-weapons programme had its Mordechai Vanunu, Russia's chemical-weapons plans had their Vil S. Mirzayanov, and Saddam Hussein had his defector son-in-law, Hussein Kamel Hassan."[42] One could imagine that the prospect

of whistle-blowing would be even more threatening to potential violators if the weapons in question were publicly condemned by all of the world's leaders and held in revulsion by all of the world's citizens.

The stigmatization of nuclear weapons to the extent that no country would admit to desiring them may seem an unrealistic goal. The history of prior abolition movements, as well as the evidence from moderate successes in arms control during the Cold War, suggest that a prerequisite for such a significant change may be popular mass mobilization contributing to a gradual evolution in the normative context. Unless people experience the right combination of fear and hope, they may not be willing to act. If instead, along with Dr. Strangelove, we stop worrying and learn again to Love the Bomb, our prospects for achieving nuclear disarmament will diminish.

NOTES

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