Nuclear Disarmament: Impractical Initiatives

By Associate Professor Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, at International Relations Department, Quadi-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Nuclear disarmament remains a captivating subject for nuclear abolitionists. Rhetorically at least, the nuclear weapon states (NWS) also support the concept of nuclear disarmament. In reality, however, no nuclear-armed state is ready to relinquish its deterrence capability.

On June 30 and July 1, 2011, the five de-jure members of the 'nuclear club' China, France, Russia, Britain and the United States by virtue of Article IX, Clause 3, of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) met in Paris to deliberate on nuclear disarmament. The Paris conference was a follow up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and the conference on Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) towards disarmament and non-proliferation issues in September 2009, held in London. The delegates at the Paris conference tried to generate an impression that they were serious about nuclear disarmament. However, their nuclear doctrines did not support their declarations.

The members of the nuclear club always reiterate their pledge to carry out their lawful obligation to implement Article VI of the Treaty. This Article categorically demands nuclear disarmament of all parties to the NPT. Article VI is an important bargaining tool between the NWS and Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS). In reality, NWS are primarily concerned about horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons among the NNWS, instead of vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons stockpiles among the established nuclear weapons powers.

Ironically, the new START Treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation is viewed by many security observers as a disarmament treaty. It is, however, a mere arms control treaty, which neither bans the research and development of nuclear capable delivery systems, nor prohibits the qualitative evolution of nuclear weapons. For instance, the United States military reportedly:

> *"wants Congress to approve 213 billion dollars for the modernization of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems over the next 10 years. That is in addition to average annual spending of 54 billion dollars on nuclear maintenance."*[i]

Presently, the 'Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone' has been receiving serious attention from the Western states. Israel is the only country in the Middle East, which remains outside the NPT. Indeed all the Middle Eastern countries, except Israel, gave up their right to acquire nuclear weapons. Article II of the NPT prohibits the NNWS to develop or acquire nuclear weapon.

The entire focus in the Middle East is on Iran's nuclear program. Though Iran is party to the NPT, its nuclear program is viewed by

the United States and likeminded states as a nuclear weapon program. It was reported that Saudi Arabian Prince Turki al-Faisal in early June 2011 informed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) at a meeting in Britain that, *"[i]f Iran develops a nuclear weapon, that will be unacceptable to us and we will have to follow suit".*[ii]

Importantly, Tehran is not willing to end its uranium enrichment program, which generates scepticism about Iran's nuclear weapon intentions. If Iran's uranium enrichment program continues, the Saudis may start investment in uranium enrichment in the near future. This action-reaction initiative would unleash nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East.

On April 30, 2011, the foreign ministers of 10 non-nuclear nations stretching across continents—Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates — called for 'a Middle East free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction' in Berlin. The joint Berlin Statement of the foreign ministers emphasized:

> *"the crucial need to promote the creation of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, in line with pending requirements for the organization in 2012 of the special conference agreed at the (May) 2010 NPT Review Conference".*[iii]

The Berlin conference also proposed an action plan for nuclear non-proliferation.

The Berlin conference action plan seems idealistic. Though these recommendations contain rational argument, they are impractical in the prevalent global strategic environment. The following discussion clarifies the limitations of ten foreign ministers' action plan.

First, it emphasized that further delays on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)[iv] in the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD) should be avoided. It recommended that if the CD, in its 2011 substantive session, remains unable to find agreement on launching FMCT negotiations, we would ask the United Nations General Assembly, to address the issue and consider ways to proceed with the aim of beginning negotiations. It was an indirect threat to Pakistan's stance on the FMCT at the CD. These ministers failed to realize that FMCT sponsored by the UN General Assembly, which circumvents the CD, would not serve the purpose. This kind of adventurism neither affects Pakistan's nuclear weapon posture, nor is it benign to the global nuclear nonproliferation regime.

Second, the action plan called on all states which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The CTBT draft has been finalized and opened for membership since September 1996. The Treaty's entry-into-force article requires 44 countries, including the United States, India and Pakistan's ratification. On October 13, 1999, the United States Senate refused to ratify the CTBT. Similarly, both

Islamabad and New Delhi rejected the United Nation Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1172 (June 6, 1998), which categorically called upon India and Pakistan to:

> *"immediately to stop their nuclear weapon development programmes, to refrain from weaponization or from the deployment of nuclear weapons, to cease development of ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons and any further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons".*[v]

An arms race is going on between India and Pakistan. The United States is least interested in ratifying the Treaty. More precisely, the CTBT is in limbo.

Third, the Berlin conference demanded transparency and accountability in the nuclear disarmament process. For this sake, they developed a draft of a standard reporting form which could be used by the nuclear weapon states in meeting that commitment. They also invited the nuclear weapon states to examine their proposal at the Paris meeting in June (2011). During the last week meeting in Paris, the NWS did not show any interest in the proposal.

To conclude: the trends in the high-politics reveal that NWS have ganged up to prevent the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, check nuclear/radiological terrorism and above all, uphold their prestigious nuclear weapon capable states status in the prevalent anarchical global politics. Hence, the serious nuclear disarmament initiative is missing in the prevalent global politics.

Views expressed in this article are not necessarily those of SAGE International

http://www.qau.edu.pk/betaqau/index.php

***

Nuclear fireball image:

http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_Um3kD4sSF4w/SVsFkv4kcjI/AAAAAAAACB0/4jeHuMCz1lk/s400/Nuclear_fireball.jpg

New START Treaty image:

http://peaceactionwest.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/newstartsigned.jpg

Prince Turki al-Faisal image:

http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/pictures/2011/6/29/1309363133053/Prince-Turki-al-Faisal-fo-007.jpg

---

ENDNOTES

[i] Haider Rizvi, *"U.S. Plan to Boost Nuke Spending Undercuts Nonproliferation, Activists Warn",* June 6, 2011, http://www.nuclearabolition.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=416:nuke-spending&catid=16:nuclear-abolition-news-and-analysis&Itemid=17

[ii] InvestmentWatch, *"Saudi Prince warns: we will build nukes if Iran gets them"*, June 29, 2011, http://investmentwatchblog.com

[iii] Jamshed Baruah, *"Ten Non-Nuclear States Plead For Nuke Abolition"*, May 2, 2011, http://nuclear-

news.net/2011/05/02/non-nuclear-nations-call-for-nuclear-weapons-abolition/

[iv] Prohibiting the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons

[v] United Nations Security Council, RESOLUTION 1172 (1998), Adopted by the Security Council at its 3890th meeting, on 6 June 1998, New York, p.2.