

Australia and the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative: difficult times for disarmament diplomacy

110 by Tanya Ogilvie-White
27 May 2013

Nuclear issues have been grabbing the international headlines in recent months, amid renewed concern over the nuclear defiance of North Korea and Iran and the international community's inability to mount an effective response. Onlookers could be forgiven for thinking that the nonproliferation regime is moribund where difficult cases are concerned: it has responded too little and too late to repeated provocations, diplomatic initiatives have so far failed, and ideas for implementing new, more effective punitive measures have petered out. In these circumstances, one can justifiably question why so much time and resources are committed to upholding the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT).

The answer is that even though it's deeply flawed and the product of a bygone era, the NPT continues to play a crucial stabilising role in the international system. Most states believe a weak NPT's better than none at all because, although the treaty hasn't stopped the spread of nuclear weapons, it has significantly hindered proliferation. Moreover, it's facilitated disarmament between states that were once engaged in dangerous nuclear arms races, and it continues to provide political momentum for nuclear reductions. Whatever their views on the ethics of nuclear possession, even the most ardent supporters of nuclear deterrence accept that preventing the uncontrolled spread of nuclear weapons is a common good. That position is based on the logic that the more nuclear weapons there are, the more likely it is that they'll be used again, whether by accident or intent.

Australia recognises the critical role that the NPT plays in preventing uncontrolled proliferation and promoting disarmament, and upholding the treaty has long been a core foreign policy goal. As Gary Quinlan, Australia's permanent representative to the UN, stated recently, 'Australia is always willing to do its share of the work to elevate the game and make the world more stable and secure, in order to save ourselves from ourselves.'¹ But, while the record of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on this front is impressive, its disarmament diplomacy has hit a difficult patch and there's a strong possibility that its current agenda will fail unless it's adapted.

This paper examines Australia's difficulties in this area, and proposes a way forward for the next government. It focuses primarily on the goals and activities of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI), which was launched at the United Nations in September 2010. This diplomatic initiative has brought together the foreign ministers of Australia, Canada,

Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in a campaign to bolster the NPT by promoting progress in nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation at a time when international tensions are rising, proliferation pressures are growing, and momentum for nuclear arms reductions is dissipating.² In many ways, these developments make the role of the coalition more crucial than ever. But in order to have impact, the NPDI needs a realistic agenda that draws on the experience of its members, who in turn need to be seen to be sincerely committed to the goals they're advocating. At the moment, it's questionable whether that's the case. The coalition needs to rethink its short-term goals and strategy.

The troubled NPT review process

Many states, including Australia, continue to invest significant diplomatic capital in upholding the NPT, including by investing in its review process. This is a complex and lengthy negotiation involving annual preparatory committee meetings ('PrepComs') and a five-yearly review conference, during which progress on implementing the NPT is assessed and steps to help strengthen the treaty are negotiated. The ultimate goal of these meetings is to keep the treaty relevant as the strategic environment changes, while holding states to their original NPT commitments.

The nuclear-weapon states (NWS: China, France, Russia, the UK and the US):³

- promise not to proliferate to third parties
- agree to assist states in the development of nuclear technology for peaceful uses
- commit to work in good faith towards nuclear elimination, and to help create the conditions that will make this possible.

The non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS: all other NPT signatories):⁴

- promise not to develop nuclear weapons
- agree not to assist other states in developing nuclear weapons
- pledge to help create strategic and political conditions that are more conducive to nuclear disarmament.

The appendix to this paper summarises NPT negotiations, which are often divided between different constituencies, especially the NWS and a large group of NNWS that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement (the NAM—a group of 120 developing states).⁵ The NWS complain that many NAM members fail to acknowledge the disarmament steps that they've taken, or the technical, political and strategic obstacles that hinder nuclear elimination. They also express frustration that many NAM states do little to help create conditions that would be more conducive to disarmament, including by failing to exert pressure on NAM members that have refused to join the treaty, withdrawn from it, or are violating the treaty from within. For their part, NAM members bemoan the double standards inherent in the nonproliferation regime—for example, they're highly critical of the US's failure to address Israel's nuclear weapons program and NPT holdout status, and are concerned that their own nonproliferation obligations are becoming more burdensome while the prospect of a nuclear-weapon-free world is becoming more remote.

Given these deep and longstanding divisions, it might seem remarkable that consensus is ever achieved at NPT review conferences. Yet, as the appendix shows, most NPT meetings have produced a consensus final document. Moreover, lack of a consensus outcome at one meeting hasn't necessarily spelled disaster for the next. Many experts and practitioners believe that this owes a great deal to the diplomatic efforts of disarmament coalitions, which have helped build bridges

across NPT chasms, encouraging divided constituencies to find areas where they're prepared to be flexible and compromise.⁶

Australia as an NPT bridge-builder

Australia has played an energetic role in the NPT bridge-building process. With the help of like-minded states, it has championed the treaty by placing both nonproliferation and disarmament firmly on the international agenda, inside and outside the UN. In launching the Canberra Commission in 1995, it was the first state to explicitly call for a serious and in-depth study of the consequences of nuclear weapons proliferation and the prospects for their elimination. Thanks to that initiative and subsequent related activities, Australia's gained a reputation among many states as a moderate nonproliferation and disarmament leader in international forums—a state that accepts that the security concerns of the NWS need to be addressed in any disarmament steps, emphasises the key role that norms and regulatory institutions play in creating conditions that are more conducive to disarmament, and has consistently called for phased, balanced and verifiable progress towards the eventual elimination of nuclear weapons.

Australia has played a central role in state-sponsored nonproliferation and disarmament initiatives, having led and participated in more of those activities than any other state (Table 1).

Table 1: State-sponsored non-proliferation and disarmament initiatives

Date	Initiative	Membership	Activity
1995–96	Canberra Commission	Australia plus 17 international commissioners	Study of utility of nuclear weapons and feasibility of disarmament
1998–99	Tokyo Forum	Japan plus NGOs	Study of proliferation dangers and disarmament feasibility
1998–99	Canada and the Nuclear Challenge	Canada, Joint Standing Committee	State-sponsored review of Canada's nuclear policies
1998–ongoing	New Agenda Coalition	Ireland plus Brazil, Egypt, Mexico, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden	Diplomatic coalition proposing practical steps towards disarmament in NPT review process
2004–09	Blix Commission	Sweden plus NGOs and 14 international commissioners	State-sponsored study of WMD dangers and prospects for their elimination
2005–10	Seven Nation Initiative	Norway plus Australia, Chile, Indonesia, Romania, South Africa, UK	Diplomatic coalition promoting technical cooperation and research on nonproliferation and disarmament
2008–10	International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) ^a	Australia and Japan plus 15 international commissioners	State-sponsored initiative exploring practical measures for nonproliferation and disarmament
2010–ongoing	NPDI	Australia and Japan plus Canada, Chile, Germany, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey, United Arab Emirates	Diplomatic coalition to advance implementation of disarmament steps in NPT review process

^a The Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which is based at the Australian National University, has grown from this initiative. The centre is funded primarily by the Australian Government, and its international advisory board consists of the former members of the ICNND.

The NPDI is Australia's most recent contribution to the NPT review process. The foreign ministers of the NPDI coalition's 10 member countries have stated that nuclear weapons pose a grave threat to humanity and have expressed deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon use.⁷ From this common ethics-based standpoint, they've committed themselves to work together to reduce nuclear risks and promote a world without nuclear weapons.⁸

Above all else, the NPDI is urging states to uphold the promises that they made at the successful 2010 NPT Review Conference, which produced a consensus final document and 'Disarmament Action Plan'. This included commitments by the NWS to make progress in eight key areas:

- reductions in numbers of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons
- a diminished role for nuclear weapons in security strategies
- reductions in the operational status of nuclear weapons
- the application of the principles of irreversibility, verifiability and transparency to the nuclear disarmament process
- early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)
- immediate commencement and early conclusion of the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)
- the convening of a conference on establishing a WMD-free zone in the Middle East (now known as the Helsinki Conference)
- the adoption by the NWS of a common and high standard of transparency over their nuclear status.

Since its 2010 launch, NPDI disarmament diplomacy has focused on encouraging progress in these areas, while at the same time stressing the linkages between disarmament and nonproliferation. The NPDI has met annually at the UN First Committee in September in New York, and held ministerial meetings in Berlin in April 2011, Istanbul in June 2012, and The Hague in April 2013. It issued joint statements at the NPT PrepComs in Vienna in May 2012 and Geneva in April 2013, where it also submitted working papers for discussion in the substantive debates, and held a series of outreach events to engage civil society. Combined, the coalition's statements and activities during its initial period of operation provide insight into its strategy: to build consensus in the lead-up to the 2015 Review Conference on the need to prevent nuclear weapon use, whether it occurs as a result of conflict escalation, accident or terrorist attack, and to encourage states to take practical steps that will make it less likely.

Problems with the NPDI agenda

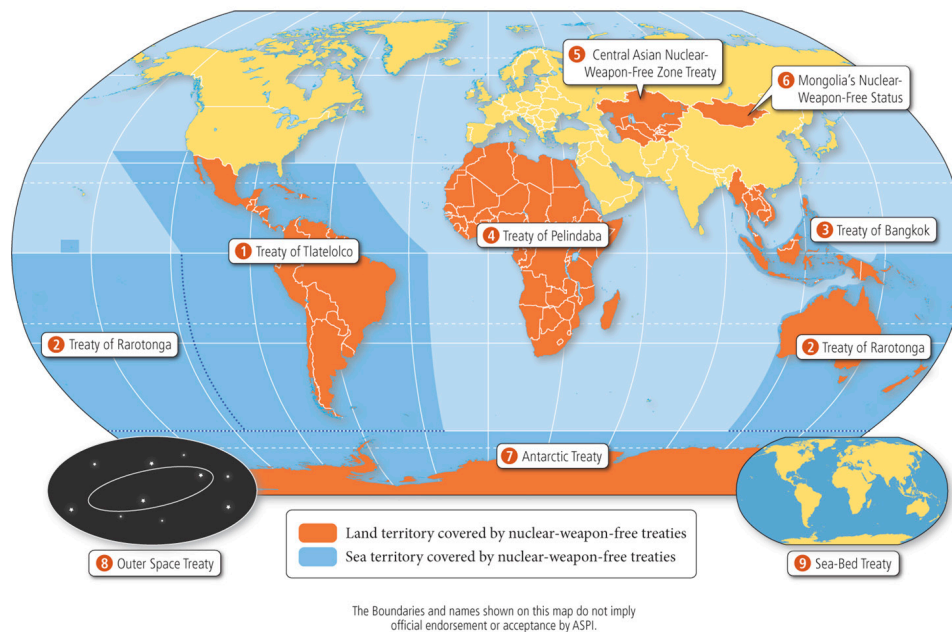
Despite the NPDI coalition's legitimate goals and good intentions, parts of its agenda are weak and its impact is likely to be marginal at best. Most significantly, a series of events that are beyond its control has made a successful review conference in 2015 an extremely distant prospect. The coalition isn't responsible for those events, but they'll nonetheless undermine its influence, particularly if it continues to pursue a bridge-building strategy aimed at achieving consensus.

For the NAM, the most important development has been the indefinite postponement of the Helsinki Conference, which was supposed to begin discussions on the creation of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East. The postponement, in December 2012, has provoked frustration and discontent among many NAM members, some of which are arguing that they should be released from the nonproliferation commitments they made in 2010.⁹ Iran's chairmanship of the NAM from 2012 to 2015 (taking over from Egypt) is likely to exacerbate this problem, making NAM flexibility on disarmament even less likely in 2015.¹⁰

Compounding these developments, the strategic context has become more difficult and complex than it was in 2010: power shifts to the East, live territorial disputes, a downturn in great-power relations, and nuclear defiance by North Korea and Iran have all put the brakes on disarmament momentum. These developments are sure to undermine President Obama's disarmament agenda in his second term, which in turn will further erode the optimism and positive atmosphere that the US was able to generate in 2010.¹¹

In addition to the increasingly difficult international context and strategic environment, the NPDI coalition's activities and statements are perceived by many as lacking sincerity, which is also problematic. Those perceptions are mainly due to the composition of the group; although it's diverse in some respects, it mainly comprises US allies that rely on US extended deterrence through either bilateral defence arrangements (Australia, Canada and Japan) or NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements (Germany, the Netherlands, Poland and Turkey). These deterrence arrangements put these seven states in an ambiguous position regarding nonproliferation and disarmament norms, leading some to question both the credibility of their stated goals and their capacity to perform a bridge-building function.¹²

Figure 1: Nuclear umbrellas and nuclear-sharing arrangements



These criticisms can't be easily dismissed or wished away—to some extent, they're valid. Currently, about 180 US non-strategic nuclear bombs—the larger yield B61-Mod 3 and the smaller yield B61-Mod 4—are deployed in Europe. They're deployed at air bases in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey, where they contribute to NATO nuclear deterrence (Table 2).

Table 2: US non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe, 2011

Country	Air base	Dual capable aircraft	Number of B-61s
Belgium	Kleine Brogel	Belgian F-16	10–20
Germany	Büchel	German Tornado	10–20
Italy	Aviano	US F-16	50
	Ghedi Torre	US F-16	10–20
Netherlands	Volkel	Dutch F-16	10–20
Turkey	Incirlik	US fighter aircraft (rotating)	60–70
Total			150–200

Source: RS Norris and HM Kristensen 2011

Interestingly, nuclear strategists consider the current military value of these weapons to be poor because there are no targets within range of the aircraft that would carry them—the only airbase that's within unrefuelled fighter bomber range of possible targets (Incirlik in southeast Turkey) doesn't host nuclear capable fighter-bombers. However, the B61 Life Extension Program and the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter (which is under development by the US, in partnership with Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Turkey and other countries) could change that situation by the end of this decade, boosting NATO nuclear capability by building the capacity for precision low-yield strikes across a range of targets, including underground facilities.

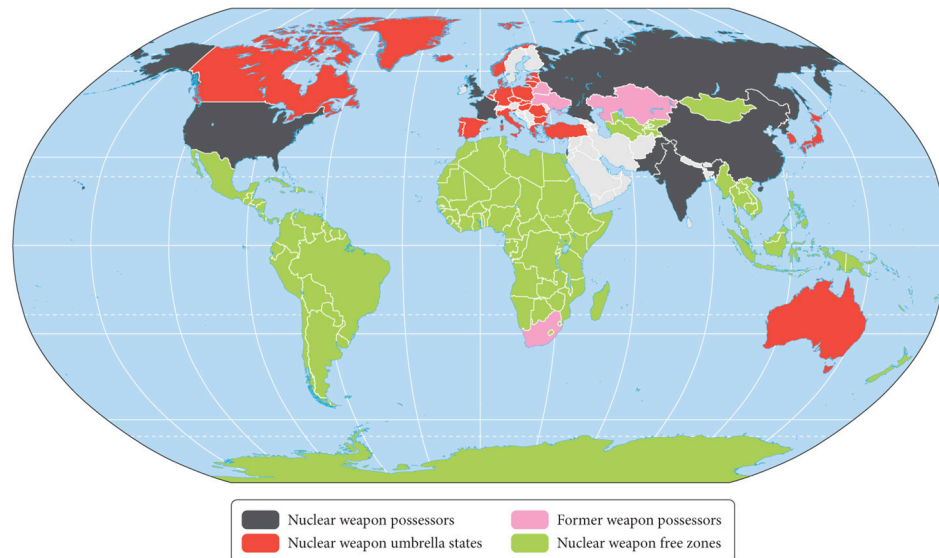
This upgrade of NATO non-strategic nuclear weapons is drawing criticism on two fronts. First, it isn't consistent with the pledges made by states at recent NPT review conferences. In 2000, it was agreed by consensus that steps would be taken to 'diminish the role of nuclear weapons in security policies to minimise the risk that they will be used'.¹³ In 2010, it was agreed—again by consensus—to 'diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies'.¹⁴ The B61 Life Extension Program isn't compatible with those commitments for two reasons: first, the new B61-12 will have new and greater military capabilities than the weapons it replaces; second, the deployment of the new bomb to Europe may well reduce the nuclear threshold and increase the risk that nuclear weapons are used in war fighting (because the new weapons will be able to destroy targets with lower yield and less radioactive fallout).

Given these developments, it's not surprising that the activities of some NPDI members appear insincere. It's hard to avoid the conclusion that the coalition's European members, in particular, want to have their cake and eat it. On one hand, their diplomats are presenting themselves as champions of nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament—a role that's popular with their domestic constituencies.¹⁵ On the other hand, their defence establishments are deeply invested in the existing nuclear order, and appear to support or at least acquiesce in the development of new nuclear weapons with enhanced capabilities. Similar charges of insecurity have been levelled at Australia and Japan, which both provided the initial momentum for the launch of the NPDI but whose defence and foreign affairs officials appear to be pursuing conflicting agendas. Moreover, Australia's nonproliferation and disarmament responsibilities extend beyond those of most NPT parties, Canberra having been the driving force behind the creation of the South Pacific Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone and party to the Rarotonga Treaty since the mid-1980s. Of the NPDI members, only Chile, Mexico and the United Arab Emirates can be said to have consistent non-nuclear credentials; the others occupy a murky grey area.

Having been a source of quiet debate in the corridors at the 2012 PrepCom, the NPDI's 'sincerity deficit' became a more central concern in 2013. This was partly due to the high profile refusal of NPDI members, with the exception of Chile and

Mexico, to sign the Joint Statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, which was supported by 78 governments at the 2013 PrepCom.¹⁶ Revelations by senior Washington analysts at a side event on reducing the role of nuclear weapons highlighted the issue as well: they indicated that, in 2012, the Obama administration had considered a proposal to reduce the role of and numbers of US nuclear weapons much further than had been envisaged in the 2010 New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty and Nuclear Posture Review, but ‘had been stymied by Japan and a few NATO allies’.¹⁷

Figure 2: Nuclear weapons-free zones



The Boundaries and names shown on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by ASPI.

Given the combination of the difficult strategic environment and the perception that the NPDPI lacks sincerity, the coalition needs to take special care about which issues it chooses to prioritise and how they're addressed. Unfortunately, the coalition isn't excelling in this respect—a working paper on transparency that it submitted during the 2012 PrepCom was its strongest contribution to date, but even that suffers from weaknesses.¹⁸ The coalition highlighted the point that, without transparency, suspicions among the NWS and NNWS over numbers of nuclear weapons, capabilities and doctrines will remain, and the trust and confidence needed to promote stability will be elusive. However, its solution to this problem—the development of a standard reporting form, which it's asking the NWS to adopt—misses the mark. The form asks the NWS to list the number of nuclear warheads and delivery systems that remain in their stockpiles—deployed and undeployed, strategic and non-strategic—and to provide exact details of their nuclear reductions since 1995. It also asks them to provide details of their nuclear doctrines, their stocks of fissile materials, steps they've taken to reduce nuclear dangers (including the risk of nuclear accidents and unauthorised use), and all measures they've taken in support of nuclear disarmament.

While this is a valid request, its prospects for success aren't good. The most stubborn holdouts are likely to be Russia and China, both of which are wary of the NPDPI's agenda because of the status of its members as US allies, most of which participate in controversial missile defence plans and in nuclear-sharing and extended deterrence relationships. On a strategic level, the fiercest resistance is likely to come from China, the NWS with the smallest and least sophisticated nuclear arsenal, and therefore the one with the least incentive to accept the

level of transparency that the NPDI is seeking. China currently regards some level of nuclear opacity—especially over its nuclear modernisation plans—as non-negotiable and is likely to ignore any pressure from the NPDI or the other NWS to conform to a high standard of nuclear transparency.

Perhaps surprisingly, the NPDI transparency initiative is also unlikely to attract the wholehearted support of France, the UK and the US—three states that have been much more transparent about their nuclear arsenals and doctrines in recent years and which have been calling for Russia and China to follow their lead. The NPDI might have overlooked the fact that the 2010 NPT Review Conference encouraged NWSs to negotiate among themselves on devising practical measures to implement their disarmament commitments, including over the issue of nuclear transparency. This has helped legitimise the P5 conference process (involving the five permanent members of the UN Security Council) that began in London in 2009 and has continued since, allowing the NWS to close ranks on the transparency issue.¹⁹ Although officials claim that progress has been made during these quiet, closed-door discussions, including on the issue of reporting, they've expressed strong reservations about the NPDI standard reporting form.²⁰ This doesn't bode well for the NPDI agenda in the lead-up to the 2015 NPT Review Conference, especially given that the coalition's capacity to exert pressure over this issue is extremely limited.

The NPDI transparency initiative mightn't achieve its goal, but at least it has substance. The same can't be said for other components of the NPDI agenda, the weakest of which are its 2012 and 2013 working papers on nonproliferation and disarmament education. The 2012 paper sets out a few basic principles of disarmament education, makes anodyne suggestions about the use of social media tools in education activities, and lists a few unimpressive unilateral initiatives that four of its members (Canada, Japan, the Netherlands and Poland) have launched since 2003. The 2013 paper reads like an afterthought, highlighting a couple of worthy initiatives by Japan and Mexico, but leaving the reader wondering about the efforts being made by the other eight NPDI members. Together, these are disappointing offerings, which give the impression of having been cobbled together by officials with next to no knowledge of—or even interest in—nonproliferation and disarmament education. They miss an opportunity to present far-reaching, collaborative initiatives that would improve this important area of policy. Such initiatives could include the establishment of a joint NPDI fund for disarmament education, which could be hosted by the UN University in Japan and to which all ten NPDI members could contribute. The fund could generate research that encourages well-informed, leading-edge thinking on a range of nonproliferation and disarmament challenges, including the thorny issues of how stability and mutual restraint can be achieved in an Asia-centric nuclear order, and the impact of cross-domain threats (such as conventional, cyber and space weapons) on disarmament dynamics. Another worthwhile idea would be for the coalition to sponsor an annual international disarmament forum, hosted in a different NPDI capital each year, with the goal of attracting leading scholars and practitioners to address disarmament gridlocks. This part of the coalition's agenda urgently needs fresh input, and preferably before the 2014 NPT PrepCom.

Changing course: the NPDI coalition as dialogue facilitators

Despite these criticisms, the NPDI could still make an important contribution in the lead-up to the 2015 Review Conference. For this to happen, two major changes are needed. First, NPDI members need to be more transparent about the roles that extended nuclear deterrence and nuclear sharing play in their security policies. Second, the coalition needs to adapt its agenda to take into account recent events and changing strategic realities, focusing primarily on promoting candid and well-informed debate on nuclear weapons and disarmament dynamics in a world of rising tensions and growing uncertainties.²¹ Admittedly, this would be a

dramatic change in direction, and could risk alienating the three NPDI members that enjoy the strongest non-nuclear credentials (Chile, Mexico and UAE). But if a diplomatic strategy can be found to keep the group united through this transition, the NPDI would fulfil the critical and underappreciated role of clarifying the strategic challenges associated with disarmament. This would draw on the strengths of its members, close the credibility gap, and provide the NPDI with a role and function that would make an important and genuine contribution to the nonproliferation regime.

To begin this process, the NPDI members could bring together serving members of their defence and foreign affairs establishments to discuss disarmament challenges from strategic and political perspectives, in the context of their own deterrence relationships and recent developments affecting regional and international security. As part of this initiative, they could offer a platform to strategic thinkers in academic and think tank communities to prise open some of the wider debates about the relationship between stability and disarmament, especially in a multipolar world in which power shifts and cross-domain threats and vulnerabilities are heightening insecurities. This includes developments in—and relationships between—precision-guided conventional weapons, missile defence, space weaponisation and cyberwar, as well as strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons. Once these debates are underway domestically, and among NPDI partners, the next step would be for the NPDI to sponsor a series of discussions on these issues on the sidelines of the 2014 NPT PrepCom and 2015 Review Conference.

Although at first sight this might appear to be an abstract exercise, it would serve an important practical purpose by bringing together practitioners and experts who usually operate in separate spheres, helping them to appreciate the full range of political and strategic dilemmas and the interconnectedness of deterrence, arms control, nonproliferation and disarmament. It would encourage those expressing various degrees of resistance to nuclear disarmament to consider the strategic role that the NPT has played in the past, the pressure it's under today, and the impact that national security policy choices are having on the treaty's future prospects. Equally, it would encourage those expressing various degrees of support for nuclear disarmament to appreciate the real and immense difficulties involved in disarmament, including the many challenges of maintaining order and stability on the road to nuclear elimination, especially as power shifts eastwards, and the challenge of preventing major conventional war in a world without nuclear weapons.

Bringing these groups together in an international forum in frank and open dialogue, rather than perpetuating the current situation, in which they don't engage or they talk past each other, is an important service that NPDI members could provide to the international community.

An Australian-led regional dialogue

Following the September election, a window of opportunity will open for Australia to lead a new non-proliferation and disarmament dialogue that could help strengthen the NPDI agenda and bolster the NPT. Canberra's geostrategic position, long record of NPT advocacy, and efforts to turn regional security challenges into opportunities for closer cooperation, put it in a special position to provide this leadership. Moreover, Australia's experience of handling its close alliance with the United States, including the nuclear umbrella, would be a help rather than a hindrance in this context, especially if the focus of the dialogue is on Asia-Pacific non-proliferation and disarmament challenges, including the difficult issues of nuclear brinkmanship, extended nuclear deterrence, and missile defence. Interest in this initiative among states in the region is likely to be strong, especially in the wake of the North Korea crisis, concerns over further proliferation, and the international community's desire to avoid further descent into Asian nuclear disorder.

The initiative could begin with a series of track 1.5 discussions, drawing on the expertise of a wide range of non-proliferation and disarmament practitioners and analysts from the Asia–Pacific. The first gathering could take place in Canberra later this year, leading to a series of meetings in capitals across the wider region, and to the production of two final reports. The first report could be presented to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade in late 2014, setting out fresh ideas for Australia’s non-proliferation and disarmament diplomacy, identifying opportunities for Australia to enhance its regional role. The second report could be presented to the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties, also in late 2014, setting out priority issues and proposals for Australia and its NPDI partners to debate at the 2015 Review Conference and UN First Committee, and a series of forward-looking proposals around which NPDI could begin to develop a new agenda beyond 2015.

Conclusion

Frank dialogue is unlikely to help build consensus at the 2015 NPT Review Conference (it might even have the opposite effect), but the truth is that there’s little value in reaching superficial agreements that will later be reneged upon anyway.²² Taking into account the ambiguous nuclear status of its members, and an international environment that’s not conducive to effective disarmament diplomacy, the NPDI would have more to offer if it switched its focus from a traditional bridge-building role to addressing the difficult strategic uncertainties that are dissipating disarmament momentum. States have failed to discuss these challenges honestly and openly in the past either in domestic political forums or at NPT meetings. As a result, divided constituencies have had little chance of fully appreciating perspectives that differ from their own. This is a major obstacle to progress, so, while there are risks involved in pursuing this agenda, those risks are worth taking. Furthermore, the pace of change in the international system makes the need for frank and well-informed dialogue more pressing than ever.

Appendix: Summary of NPT Review Conference outcomes, 1975 to 2010

NPT meeting	Outcome	Explanation
1975 RevCon	Consensus final document agreed	NAM wanted to support NPT as only treaty committing NWS to negotiate on disarmament
1980 RevCon	No consensus	North–South disagreements over the wording of the CTBT and US–European disagreements over Carter administration’s efforts to restrict reprocessing and fast-breeder reactors
1985 RevCon	Consensus final document	Deep divisions over disarmament handled via a procedural device
1990 RevCon	No consensus	Divisions over disarmament between NWS and NAM proved too deep for a procedural fix
1995 Review & Extension Conference	Treaty indefinitely extended Review process strengthened (annual PrepComs to discuss substance for three years leading up to RevCons) Three ‘decision documents’, including yardsticks for progress in disarmament—CTBT, FMCT, nuclear reductions and ultimate elimination	End of Cold War had led to deep reductions by US and Russia CTBT negotiations were underway in Vienna
1997 PrepCom	Consensus document	Parties agreed next RevCon would have special focus on nuclear disarmament

1998 PrepCom	No consensus	Disagreements over purpose of PrepCom: to focus on next RevCon or on more immediate challenges
1999 PrepCom	No consensus	More disagreements over PrepCom purpose
2000 RevCon	Final document and '13 steps'—an expanded disarmament action plan and set of principles, including an unequivocal undertaking by the NWS to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals, leading to disarmament Backtracking on the strengthened review process agreed to in 1995—no need for a consensus documents in first two PrepCom sessions, only factual summaries	New Agenda Coalition active in building bridge between NWS and NAM NWS and European Union states agreed on joint documents on disarmament Conference on Disarmament was stalemated over starting negotiations on an FMCT—RevCon 'only game in town' 1998 nuclear tests in India and Pakistan increased nuclear fears
2002 PrepCom	Factual summary only	Deep divisions over missile defence, NWS backtracking over 13 steps Concern over US post-9/11 focus on nonproliferation and seeming disregard for disarmament
2003 PrepCom	Factual summary only	More deep divisions over the same issues Questions from NAM over whether the 1995 extension decision was now voided Disagreement over how to respond to North Korea's NPT withdrawal
2004 PrepCom	No consensus	Deep divisions between NWS and NAM New Agenda Coalition also internally divided
2005 RevCon	No consensus Agenda not even agreed until day 14	Negotiations deadlocked Iran filibustered over the agenda Lack of joint statement from the P5 US and France backtracked on 2000 commitments Egypt inflexible over the Middle East WMD Free Zone negotiations NAM refusal to agree to any document that did not advance disarmament beyond 13 steps
2007 PrepCom	Factual summary only	Atmosphere more positive—parties determined to avoid a repeat of 2005
2008 PrepCom	Factual summary only	No need for consensus, plus sense that parties keeping their powder dry until 2009
2009 PrepCom	Consensus document	Assisted by the Obama administration's Prague speech and commitment to disarmament
2010 RevCon	Consensus final document and plan of action Conference president developed new procedural fix whereby only forward-looking elements in the final document need to be agreed by consensus	Obama administration took positive approach Egypt kept Iran in line Agenda satisfied most parties by developing three equally balanced plans of action for nuclear disarmament, nonproliferation and peaceful uses.

FMCT = Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty; PrepCom = preparatory committee; RevCon = review conference

Notes

- 1 General Assembly, GA/DIS/3453, 8 October 2012.
- 2 For a detailed description of the current nuclear landscape, see Ramesh Thakur and Gareth Evans (eds) *Nuclear weapons: the state of play*, Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, 2013, pp. 1–292.
- 3 These are the five states that had already demonstrated a nuclear capability before the treaty opened for signature in 1968.
- 4 India, Israel and Pakistan are the only states that have never joined the NPT. North Korea is the only state that has joined and then withdrawn (it withdrew in 2003). If they face a serious threat to their security and give sufficient notice (and are in good standing with their treaty commitments), states can legally withdraw from the treaty under Article 10.
- 5 These states form a powerful voting bloc in the UN system, focusing on development challenges. They also form a strong caucus in the NPT, where they prioritise disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology.
- 6 See, for example, Marianne Hanson, 'The advocacy states', in Tanya Ogilvie-White and David Santoro (eds), *Slaying the nuclear dragon: disarmament dynamics in the twenty-first century*, University of Georgia Press, 2012.
- 7 Joint Statement by Foreign Ministers on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation, New York, 22 September 2010.
- 8 *ibid.*
- 9 This led Egypt to walk out of the 2013 PrepCom in protest. Joel Gulhane, 'Egypt withdraws from preparatory committee of NPT conference,' *Daily News Egypt*, 30 April 2013.
- 10 At the UN First Committee in October 2012, Iran's representative stated that the NAM's 'principled position' on nuclear disarmament remained its 'highest priority'. General Assembly, GA/DIS/3453, 8 October 2012.
- 11 According to reports, Obama is intent on negotiating an addendum to the 2010 New Start treaty with Russia. New Start limits the US and Russia to deploying no more than 1,550 strategic nuclear weapons by 2018, but places no limits on nuclear weapons held in storage or those considered non-strategic (about 2,700 in the US and 2,680 in Russia). Under Obama's new proposal, Moscow and Washington would agree to cut deployed warheads to around 1,000 to 1,100 and, for the first time, begin to consider the other categories of nuclear weapons. R Jeffrey Smith, *Obama administration embraces major new nuclear weapons cut*, Center for Public Integrity, 8 February 2013, available from <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2013/02/08/12156/obama-administration-embraces-major-new-nuclear-weapons-cut>.
- 12 Private discussions with participants at the Wilton Park conference (The Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime: Laying the Groundwork for the 2015 Review Conference), 10–14 December 2012, Wiston House, Sussex, UK, available from <http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/en/conferences/policy-programmes/defence-and-security/?view=Conference&id=792687982>.
- 13 Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, NPT/CONF.2000/28 (parts I and II), available from <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2000/docs/2000FD.pdf>.
- 14 Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, NPT/CONF.2010/50 (parts I and II), available from <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/images/documents/Disarmament-fora/npt/revcon2010/2010NPTActionPlan.pdf>.
- 15 Oliver Meier, *Germany pushes for changes in NATO's nuclear posture*, Arms Control Now, 14 March 2012, available from <http://armscontrolnow.org/2012/03/14/germany-pushes-for-changes-in-natos-nuclear-posture/>.

- 16 Joint Statement on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, 24 April 2013, available from <http://www.acronym.org.uk/official-and-govt-documents/npt-prepcom-2013-joint-statement-humanitarian-impact-nuclear-weapons?page=show>.
- 17 Rebecca Johnson, 'NPT and risks to human survival: the inside story,' *Open Democracy*, 29 April 2013.
- 18 *Transparency and nuclear weapons: the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative*, NPT/CONF.2015/PC.I/WP.12, 20 April 2012.
- 19 Discussions with P5 officials at Wilton Park (The Nuclear Non-proliferation Regime: Laying the Groundwork for the 2015 Review Conference), 10–14 December 2012, Wiston House, Sussex, UK, available from <http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/en/conferences/policy-programmes/defence-and-security/?view=Conference&id=792687982>.
- 20 *ibid.*
- 21 Debates on these issues are well underway in the academic and think tank communities and in some governments, but they're still at a very early stage in official international forums. See James M Action, *Deterrence during disarmament: deep nuclear reductions and international security*, IISS Adelphi series, April 2011; Commander Robert Green, *Security without nuclear deterrence*, Astron Media, Christchurch, New Zealand, 2010; Tanya Ogilvie-White and David Santoro, *Slaying the nuclear dragon: disarmament dynamics in the twenty-first century*, University of Georgia Press, 2012; George Perkovich and James M Acton (eds), *Abolishing nuclear weapons: a debate*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington DC, 2009; Ward Wilson, 'Stable at zero: enforcing the peace in a world without nuclear weapons', in Blechman and Bollfrass (eds), *Elements of a nuclear disarmament treaty*, Stimson Center, 2010; and Ward Wilson, *Five myths about nuclear weapons*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.
- 22 Despite the panic that sometimes takes hold among commentators, the NPT review process has survived the many occasions when consensus has been elusive. Following the disastrous 2005 Review Conference, experts debated whether the deep divisions that were on display would cause the NPT to collapse, but their pessimistic predictions proved premature. George Perkovich, 'The end of the nonproliferation regime?', *Current History*, November 2006, available from http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/perkovich_current_history.pdf; Josef F Pilat, 'The end of the NPT regime?' *International Affairs*, May 2007, 83:469–482; Michael Wesley, 'It's time to scrap the NPT', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, September 2005, 59(3):283–299.

Acronyms and abbreviations

CTBT	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
FMCT	Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NGO	non-government organisation
NPDI	Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative
NPT	Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
NNWS	non-nuclear-weapon state/s
NWS	nuclear-weapon state/s
P5	permanent members of UN Security Council
PrepCom	NPT review conference preparatory committee
RevCon	NPT review conference
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

About the author

Tanya Ogilvie-White is an ASPI senior analyst specialising in international security.

About Policy Analysis

Generally written by ASPI experts, the **POLICY ANALYSIS** series is provided online to give readers timely, insightful opinion pieces on current strategic issues, with clear policy recommendations when appropriate. They reflect the personal views of the author and do not in any way express or reflect the views of the Australian Government or represent the formal position of ASPI on any particular issue.

ASPI

Tel + 61 2 6270 5100

Fax + 61 2 6273 9566

Email enquiries@aspi.org.au

Web www.aspi.org.au

© The Australian Strategic Policy Institute Limited 2013

This publication is subject to copyright. Except as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part of it may in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, microcopying, photocopying, recording or otherwise) be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted without prior written permission. Enquiries should be addressed to the publishers.

Notwithstanding the above, Educational Institutions (including Schools, Independent Colleges, Universities, and TAFEs) are granted permission to make copies of copyrighted works strictly for educational purposes without explicit permission from ASPI and free of charge.