

The Future of NPT: India's View

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Over the course of its four decades long existence, the nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) had established an indispensable yet imperfect set of interlocking nonproliferation and disarmament obligations and standards. Even that less than perfect nuclear nonproliferation regime is seen to be at a critical juncture.

It is best to start by reiterating that India is not a signatory state to the NPT. India's definition of arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation is at some variance with the views of other countries¹. India views disarmament as referring to concrete reductions in nuclear arsenals with the ultimate objective of achieving a nuclear-free world. It does not envisage it as replacing existing arsenals by new categories of nuclear weapon systems. The perception of arms control is that by addressing the issue piecemeal it merely tends to perpetuate nuclear weapons in the hands of a few chosen nations. Non-proliferation is mainly seen as an extension of the arms control regime. India's approach to nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation, and by extension to arms control is primarily based on the belief that there exists close synergy between all three. Non-proliferation cannot be an end in itself, and has to be linked to effective nuclear disarmament. Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation should be seen as mutually reinforcing processes. Effective disarmament must enhance the security of all States and not merely that of a few.

In June 1988, the then Prime Minister of India, Rajiv Gandhi, had presented to the United Nations an 'Action Plan for ushering in a nuclear weapons-free world and non-violent order', which outlined India's imperatives. At the heart of the Action Plan was a commitment to eliminate all nuclear weapons in stages by 2010. In the twenty years that have gone by there has been the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995, the complete failure of the NPT Review in 2005, and the world is facing the prospect of the 2010 NPT Review with uncertainty. There is encouragingly a revived discourse on disarmament. India has taken note of the initiatives in this regard launched by four eminent statesmen – Dr. Kissinger, George Shultz, William Perry and Sam Nunn, whose ideas are now included in the 'Hoover Plan'. India's Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh enumerated India's position on June 9, 2008, and again when he addressed the UN General Assembly in September 2008. The essential theme of both the speeches was a reiteration of India's support for a Nuclear Weapons Convention and endorsement of a nuclear weapons-free world.

In a landmark declaration, India as a nuclear weapons state formally proposed two multilateral agreements and two global conventions in a detailed framework for nuclear disarmament at the Conference on Disarmament in February 2008². India's seven point agenda for disarmament was delineated as the following:

¹ M.K. Narayanan, Address by NSA at the Munich Conference on Security Policy, in *Strategic Digest*, Vol. 39, No. 3, March 2009.

1. Reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons in security doctrines
2. Negotiation of a an agreement on no-first use of nuclear weapons among nuclear weapon states
3. Negotiation of a universal and legally binding agreement on non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states
4. Negotiation of a convention on the complete prohibition of the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons
5. Negotiation of a nuclear convention prohibiting development, stockpiling and production of nuclear weapons, moving towards a global, non-discriminatory and verifiable elimination of these weapons.
6. Unequivocal commitment of all nuclear weapon states to reduce risks and dangers arising from possibility of accidental use of these weapons.
7. Adoption of additional measures by nuclear states to reduce risks and dangers arising from possibility of accidental use of these weapons.

The Future

The statement that the NPT regime is in crisis begs the question on what really is in crisis: the non-proliferation regime or the NPT? Those close to the negotiations in Geneva about the forthcoming Review Conference of the NPT suggest that it is the regime that is in trouble and not the NPT itself, while others disagree. There is considerable confusion on the subject. This has important implication for India and other nuclear weapon states outside the NPT, whose primary objective is not to the regime so much as to the NPT. India exemplifies this approach well. New Delhi has long opposed the NPT but also supported the fundamental core of the regime, the opposition to the spread of nuclear weapons. After 1998, India has been caught between asserting its NWS status independently of the Treaty and seeking entry into the NPT, as befits a “responsible” nuclear power. For nuclear wannabe states like India, a new NPT would not be a bad thing. If it is the NPT that is in trouble rather than the regime, this might actually be an opportunity, since there would be an incentive in changing the NPT but keeping the regime. On the other hand, if it is the regime that is in trouble rather than the NPT, further proliferation would be inevitable and dangerous. Thus a collapsing regime would be in no one’s interest.³

India is not party to the NPT and has therefore refrained from officially commenting on what needs to be done in the future. It has however reaffirmed its commitment to the non-proliferation and disarmament issue in many ways.

- i. India has pledged belief to a moratorium on nuclear tests
- ii. It has promised not to come in the way of CTBT entering into force
- iii. It has agreed to join the FMCT negotiation when they commence

² Statement by Hamid Ali Rao, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the Conference on Disarmament, February 28, 2008. [www.mea.gov.in] [Accessed on 4 April 2009]

³ Rajesh Rajagopalan, “ Prospects for Nuclear Non Proliferation Regime” in **Emerging Nuclear Proliferation Challenges** edited by C. Uday Bhaskar & C. Raja Mohan, Institute for Defence Studies & Analysis, New Delhi, April 2005.

- iv. It has effective legislation and processes in place to ensure there is no transfer of nuclear technologies or material from India
- v. It has signed India-specific safeguards with the IAEA
- vi. India has pledged itself to a No First Use doctrine.

India has thus subjected itself to the provisions of the NPT, as other Nuclear Weapons State. It has also harmonized its export controls with the NSG and MTCR member states. The Indian authorities and the strategic community had watched with dismay at the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference. India has observed the inaction on the 13 Steps proposal. It looks forward to a constructive outcome at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The International Commission on Nuclear Non Proliferation & Disarmament, to which I am an Advisor, is working energetically to bring forth recommendations to reinvigorate the NPT at the 2010 Conference. Today's conference in Edinburgh is a timely and constructive endeavour to involve the civil society in the NPT. I applaud the effort and am privileged to be part of it.