

THE CHALLENGE OF NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT IN SOUTH ASIA AND THE WORLD

Keynote Address by Hon Gareth Evans QC MP, Former Foreign Minister of Australia, to Notre Dame-Jawaharlal Nehru University Forum on *The Challenge of Cooperation: South Asia and Beyond*, Kathmandu, 12 December 1998.

The Nuclear Challenge

Writing a few months ago in the *New York Times* about the dangers of a global economic slump, and the apparent indifference of policy makers to the need for urgent remedial action, Paul Krugman observed that " The only thing we need to fear is the lack of fear itself ".

Very much the same could now be said in relation to nuclear disarmament. It is true that India's and Pakistan's sudden transformation from nuclear capable to nuclear weapon status this year temporarily jolted some of those previously inclined to believe that the age of nuclear nightmare was over. It is also true that, perhaps beginning with the Canberra Commission report in 1996, we have seen for the first time the emergence of a really serious and influential global constituency - both government and non-government - for the elimination, as distinct from mere reduction, of nuclear weapons.

But we are not seeing any sign at all of commitment to that elimination goal by the governments whose commitment is most crucial - those of the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China. We are not seeing any glimmer of understanding, or at least acceptance, by these five original nuclear weapons states - even since the Indian and Pakistani tests - as to just how important that elimination objective is. As the Canberra Commission Report put it, these states "insist that these weapons provide unique security benefits, yet reserve uniquely to themselves the right to own them. This situation is highly discriminatory and thus unstable: it cannot be sustained".

We are seeing as a result an environment in which the major non-proliferation gains of the 1990s are now looking very hollow indeed. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), so successful for so long in meeting its original objectives, did receive a further boost with the renunciation of nuclear status by states like Argentina, Brazil and South Africa; the denuclearization of the former Soviet Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine; and the Treaty's indefinite extension in 1995. But with the collapse of the PrepCom in May, the five-year NPT review process, and as a consequence the Treaty itself, is in real trouble. A great many states are now very overtly expressing their discontent with the apparent double standards being applied by the Nuclear-Weapon State signatories, and in particular their refusal to enter into serious, comprehensive negotiations for nuclear weapons elimination.

We are also now seeing dissipated the momentum gained by the overwhelming approval of the

Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty by the UN General Assembly in 1996. Not only do we have the South Asian developments, but the continuing failure of the United States, China and Russia to ratify the CTBT, and growing concern about US capacity to undermine it with its highly developed "stockpile stewardship and management" programs.

And we are seeing a nuclear disarmament process that, so far from gaining new momentum from the turn of the events in South Asia, has become badly stalled. The surge of activity that began with the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty in 1987, and continued with the halving of long-range missiles through START I in 1991, and the imposition of a further 50 per cent cut in strategic nuclear forces by START II in 1993, has ground to a halt. The Russian Duma continues to drag its feet on the ratification of START II, and its implementation has in any event been pushed out to 2007. Negotiations on START III have not commenced. Growing Russian anxiety about US intentions to honour the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty is fuelling Moscow's reluctance to embrace the START process. And in the meantime Russia's capacity to control and store its arsenal is falling apart (with, among other things, at least seven documented cases of attempted diversion of significant quantities of weapons grade nuclear material).

In all of this the basic underlying reality is that we are not seeing any real fear on the part of these governments, or their publics, that any kind of nuclear catastrophe is remotely imminent. We are not seeing any sense at all that unless urgent and sustained remedial steps are taken, the occurrence of such a catastrophe is only a matter of time. In the West there is still almost a prevailing view that the Cold War balance of terror was no bad thing, and that maybe some ultimate nuclear deterrent capability is needed to guarantee security. And in India and Pakistan the unhappy reality appears to be that going nuclear has generated more exultation than anxiety.

But there *are* many grounds for real and genuine fear, by everyone in the world, so long as any nuclear weapons remain in existence. It's simply a matter of recognising three basic points, made repeatedly and with stunning simplicity in the Canberra Commission report:

- So long as any state has nuclear weapons, others will want them.
- The proposition that nuclear weapons can be retained in perpetuity by any state and never used - accidentally or by decision - defies credibility.
- Any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic.

The original five declared nuclear powers have between them at the moment a total inventory of between 33 000 and 35 000 nuclear weapons. As of August 1998, according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the US and Russian Federation had between them 13 000 deployed strategic nuclear warheads; add the inventories of China, France and the UK and the total rises to 14 425. There were another 5 921 non-strategic nuclear warheads, while reserve or inactive weapons make up the balance - 3 650 in the case of the US, and between 10 000 and 12 000 in the case of Russia.

Just to ensure that the nuclear cupboard doesn't soon run bare, the original weapon states have a

further inventory of about 227 tonnes of plutonium and 1 700 tonnes of highly enriched uranium (HEU): it takes just 5 kilograms of plutonium, or 15-25 kilograms of HEU, to produce a small nuclear device.

We need to remind ourselves what this all means in terms of destructive capacity. The Canberra Commission described it starkly: "More energy can be released in one micro-second from a single nuclear weapon than all the energy released by conventional weapons used in all wars throughout history". Commission member General Lee Butler describes the impact of nuclear conflict even more starkly: "death on a scale rivalling the power of the creator, poisoning the earth, deforming its inhabitants for generation upon generation". Even with START II fully implemented, Russia and the US would still retain - with their 3 500 nuclear warheads each - a destructive capacity equivalent to 440 pounds of TNT for every human being now alive.

With contemporary warheads having many times the destructive power of the bomb that demolished Hiroshima, there can be no argument that any use of nuclear weapons - whether by design or accident - *would* be catastrophic: wreaking havoc on a scale that dwarfs the destructive potential of any conventional weapon or, for all their horror, any other non-nuclear weapon of mass destruction. It's essentially for this reason, quite apart from time and space constraints, that I am focusing here on nuclear disarmament rather than disarmament generally. The international community must maintain an intense focus on chemical and biological weapons, on missile delivery systems, and on the compelling need to get some substance into the move for transparency and flow limitations on conventional weapons. But for reasons of sheer global survival the primary focus must continue to be on the nuclear problem.

Nuclear weapons are not, of course, confined to the five original declared Nuclear-Weapon States alone. While neither of the two new South Asian nuclear states is believed to have actually deployed nuclear weapons so far, India is considered to be able to assemble at short notice between 60 and 70 weapons, and Pakistan about 15. Israel, which continues to refuse to declare its nuclear weapons capability, is believed to have an operational arsenal of over 100 nuclear weapons.

Of other countries suspected of aspiring to nuclear weapons status, North Korea is probably the closest to developing them: it agreed to freeze its program under the US-North Korean Agreed Framework, but there is considerable concern as to whether that agreement is being honoured, with doubts being compounded by its testing this year of a medium range ballistic missile. Iraq's nuclear capability, much more so than its chemical and biological weapons capability, may well have been for the moment effectively destroyed - probably why it was prepared, in the most recent contretemps with UNSCOM, to continue receiving IAEA inspections - but there is not much doubt it would go nuclear if it could. Iran and Libya are still widely considered to be suspect, although (like Iraq and North Korea) they are parties to the NPT, with its controls and technological constraints, and have denied attempting to acquire nuclear weapons.

Looking further ahead, and to an international environment where we have learned to expect the unexpected, it is clear that potential proliferation problems cannot be confined to those states widely perceived to be rogues, or to have roguish inclinations. For example, as former Australian

Prime Minister Paul Keating put it in a recent speech, "In North Asia, more than any other part of the world - more even than the Middle East - a combination of historical animosities, unresolved relationships, territorial disputes and technologically sophisticated economies makes it distressingly plausible to envisage conditions emerging which might induce Japan or Korea or Taiwan to seek nuclear weapons".

The reason the world and its policy makers ought to be fearing the situation I have just described is that it is inherently unstable and uncontrollable. The fact that deliberate use of nuclear weapons by any of their present possessors is almost unthinkable does not mean that this situation will prevail in perpetuity. Personalities change, political environments change and perceived threats and opportunities change, often with bewildering rapidity. Who, ten years ago, was predicting the imminent demise of the Soviet Union? Who, just over one year ago, could have imagined the scale of the economic, political and social insecurity we are now seeing all round us in East Asia?

Quite apart from catastrophe by design, the risk of nuclear catastrophe by accident or miscalculation is very real, and becoming even more so in the less disciplined post-Cold War environment. As more and more stories come to light, it is apparent that there were - even during those relatively disciplined Cold War years themselves - innumerable occasions when false alarms occurred, any one of which could have triggered a nuclear holocaust.

One spectacular example (recounted in a recent book by Robert Gates) was in 1980, when Zbig Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor, was awakened at 3 AM to be told that 2 200 Soviet missiles had been launched against the United States. The President had from three to seven minutes to decide whether to order a counter-attack; within that time frame the message came that someone had mistakenly put military exercise warning tapes into the computer system. On another occasion in 1995, a US weather rocket fired by Norway was identified as a nuclear missile, and President Yeltsin ordered Russian strategic forces to prepare to counterattack - until it was determined that the rocket would land in the ocean rather than on Moscow.

A more contemporary concern is the possibility of a nuclear accident occurring on or around 1 January 2000 as a consequence of the Y2K bug. Most of the anxiety here focuses on Russia, with its older military computers and less money to spend on them.

More generally speaking, it is fair to say that the risk of a nuclear catastrophe is more acute in South Asia now than anywhere else in the world. As Richard Haass and Morton Halperin make clear in their Brookings Institute-Council on Foreign Relations study of US policy toward India and Pakistan, *After the Tests*, there are a number of reasons - relevant to nuclear use both by accident and design - why there is a greater risk of conflagration in South Asia now than was the case between the US and the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War. There is no geographical buffer here; there are no well-developed intelligence and early warning systems; there is no assured second strike capacity; and there is a long history of not merely potential but actual armed conflict.

Meeting the Challenge in South Asia

The ground now lost in South Asia is not going to be quickly or easily recovered. Too many players are involved, with too many irreconcilable agendas, for that. But it ought to be possible, if the right approaches are applied bilaterally, regionally and globally - and a response is required at all these three levels - for the present situation to become no worse, and then gradually improve.

To find a way out of any problem it is always important to understand how the parties got into it. In the case of India's decision to test - which made Pakistan's reaction absolutely inevitable - the reasons are not hard to identify.

First, and fundamentally important, was India's sense of place in the world: its longstanding belief that it was simply not being afforded the global respect it deserved, particularly in comparison with China, as the world's largest democracy and second most populous nation. Its restraint in not openly crossing the nuclear threshold after its original tests in 1974 simply was not being recognised or rewarded.

Secondly, there was the BJP's desire to consolidate its domestic political position - newly elected and clinging to office, as it was, with the fragile support of eighteen coalition partners. Whatever the case with the rest of the world, testing was always going to be popular with the electorate.

Thirdly, there were the stated security concerns: India's sense of vulnerability with the growing authority and assertiveness of its nuclear neighbour and longstanding rival China; and the growing military capability of Pakistan, particularly - with China's support - in missile technology, in an environment where Kashmir and related problems remain as explosive as they have ever been.

The trouble with these motivations is that each of them owed more to emotion than reason. Even on the domestic political front, the gains for the BJP from its testing decision - real as they were - seem to have been quite shortlived, with other issues carrying more substantial resonance with voters. Certainly internationally the exercise was quite counterproductive. India's case for permanent membership of the Security Council - and all the global respect and recognition that goes with it - was unanswerable before the tests, and is now unpursuable. There is no mood whatever, even among those very sympathetic to India's frustration on this and related issues, to do anything that could be perceived as "rewarding" India for its nuclear behaviour. I cannot see that changing unless and until India embarks on a different and much more constructive course.

In strategic terms, it has to be said that going overtly nuclear made little sense for India. Its continuing conventional military superiority over Pakistan meant that it had no defensive need for nuclear weapons against that country: the "force equalizer" rationale has always had some obvious appeal for Pakistan, but hardly for India. If India's concern was primarily with China, then it was starting a long way behind, both quantitatively and qualitatively, and was not going to even begin to close the gap sufficiently to mount a credible deterrent.

The more sophisticated defences of India's decision seemed to recognize all this, putting the argument back on the high ground of the discriminatory character of the world's current nuclear arrangements. Thus Jaswant Singh, arguing *Against Nuclear Apartheid*, in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs*: "India's nuclear policy remains firmly committed to a basic tenet: that the country's national security in a world of nuclear proliferation lies either in global disarmament or in exercise of the principle of equal and legitimate security for all". That is not so much a reasoned security argument as a cry of pain, a demand for the redress of a moral injustice.

Because their nuclear weapon decisions have not advanced, and cannot, India's and Pakistan's real national interests, there is reason for confidence over time that the present situation can be contained and wound back. It will be a step by step process, requiring patience, moderation and understanding by everyone concerned, not least at the international level. "One size fits all" responses to proliferation concerns have not been particularly constructive in the past, and are not likely to be now. Expressions of outrage, and perhaps even some sanctions to go with them, had their place at the outset, but they are just as counterproductive now - in terms of advancing the global interest in a nuclear free world - as India's decision in the first place was for its own national interest.

At the bilateral level, what is needed is a sustained series of confidence building measures (CBMs), beginning with frank exchanges on respective security concepts and military doctrines. The object would be for agreement to build on agreement across a spectrum of security issues, keeping as far away as possible - at least until the process was a long way advanced - from issues that are essentially political and intractable, like the future of Kashmir. Talks over the last two months have generated some optimism that all this may be about to happen.

A good early theme on which to focus would be a formal de-alert agreement, recognising the reality that weapons in South Asia - unlike those elsewhere - have not yet actually been deployed in ready-to-fire condition. Obviously an extremely helpful further confidence building measure would be a reciprocal "no first use" commitment. Pakistan is not in a mood at the moment to quickly embrace this, but it is a position to which it could and should be encouraged as the CBM process acquires momentum.

Former Chief of the Indian Navy, Admiral Ramdas, succinctly identified the real interests of India and Pakistan at stake in all of this when he said recently: "It should be possible to recognise that we are not each other's enemies, but that poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease of the millions of our peoples is the real enemy. We must agree to cut down our respective defence budgets to enable us to divert funds for urgently needed developmental activities".

At the wider regional level, a serious effort now needs to be made to engage India and Pakistan in a dialogue - especially with China, but desirably with all the major security players in Asia - so that underlying strategic anxieties can begin to be seriously addressed. New frameworks could be created for this purpose, for example the US-initiated mechanism proposed by Senator Joe Biden, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, whereby India would be invited to sit at a table with China, Japan, Russia and the US. But a ready-made option also exists with the ASEAN Regional Forum, the security dialogue forum embracing all the significant Asia

Pacific security players: India, albeit not yet Pakistan, recently became a full member of ARF. India in particular has been notoriously reluctant - primarily because of its preoccupation with Kashmir - to multilateralise any security issue in which it has had an interest, but it needs to start thinking of dialogue processes of this kind as opportunities rather than constraints.

What might be hoped for from such a regional process? The Canberra Commission suggested there could be a role by way of assistance and assurances from outside powers, particularly the Nuclear-Weapon States, covering such matters as security assistance, positive and negative nuclear security assurances, assurances about access to important technologies, and agreed restraints in arms exports to the region.

At the global level, overwhelmingly the greatest contribution that could be made to meeting the nuclear challenge in South Asia would be for the original Nuclear-Weapon States to get serious once and for all about their obligation under Article VI of the NPT to negotiate not just nuclear weapons reduction, but nuclear *disarmament* - and in the process remove, at least over time, the inherent distinction between nuclear weapon haves and have nots that so enrages both India and Pakistan. I will return below to how that global agenda might be advanced.

More immediately, the task is once again to endeavour to embrace India and Pakistan in the relevant international non-proliferation and arms control regimes. In relation to the CTBT, there is no doubt that the rest of the international community is wholly in favour of both India and Pakistan joining the Treaty, and unimpressed with their long-held position that a CTBT without a time-bound framework for nuclear weapons abolition would be a backward step. There are now indications that both India and Pakistan may be prepared to sign the Treaty next year, and they should be given the maximum encouragement to do so.

A more complicated issue arises in relation to the NPT, because there is a very widespread reluctance on the part of the states party to that Treaty to recognise them formally now as having Nuclear-Weapon State status within the meaning of that Treaty: to do this (as with conferring Security Council permanent membership) is seen to be "rewarding" states for their own misbehaviour. To some extent this objection is misconceived, because the NPT does not *legitimise* the possession of nuclear weapons so much as identify differential obligations for those states owning up to their possession, but it continues to have some emotional force.

The best way through the impasse may be to encourage India and Pakistan to undertake some of the obligations of Nuclear-Weapon States (e.g. no transfer of nuclear materials, and joining nuclear arms control measures) and also some of the obligations of non-Nuclear-Weapon States (e.g. no receipt of nuclear material). This approach was supported at a UN Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) "track one and a half" conference in September sponsored by Australia and other governments. The object would be effectively to incorporate India and Pakistan in the regime, but without recognising them as precisely equivalent to the Permanent Five.

The Way Forward Globally

As already stated, it is difficult to see any really major recovery of ground on nuclear disarmament in South Asia until the momentum for *global* disarmament is regained. For that to occur a whole set of ingredients have to come together, including - most elusively of all, particularly among the original Nuclear-Weapon States - political will. One critical ingredient was an intellectually compelling case for both the desirability and feasibility of completely eliminating nuclear weapons, part of which would be a map of how the ultimate goal could be achieved by a series of concrete and realistic steps without prejudicing any state's security along the way.

What was needed, for governments and publics that were both complacent about the post-Cold War environment and often sceptical about the case for abolition, was an argument that addressed head-on the common assumption that because the world *has* these weapons, it continues to *need* nuclear weapons to deter their use. It is an argument, interestingly, that has no resonance at all when it comes to chemical and biological weapons, but an extraordinary tenacity when it comes to the nuclear debate.

The great contribution of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, established by the Australian Labor Government in 1995 was that it was the first ever report commissioned by a sovereign state to make that case and draw that map. Its authority was enhanced by its membership, which included not only indefatigable long-time campaigners for a nuclear weapon free world like the Pugwash Nobel Prize winner Joseph Rotblat; but also hands-on military practitioners like General Lee Butler, responsible until 1994 for all US strategic nuclear forces, and Field Marshal Lord Carver, the former Chief of the British Defence Staff; and some accomplished political sceptics like Michel Rocard, the former Prime Minister of France.

The Canberra Commission Report has been followed in rapid succession by a series of influential reports from other bodies, including the US National Academy of Sciences, the Stimson Center and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, all pursuing similar themes and mapping similar agendas of practical next steps. The case for elimination received a major boost in July 1996 with the unanimous declaration of the International Court of Justice that there is an obligation in international law to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to comprehensive nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control.

These developments have stimulated a resurgence of NGO activity in this area, one of the most interesting developments being the establishment in March 1998, under the chairmanship of former Canadian Disarmament Ambassador Douglas Roche, of the "Middle Powers Initiative", designed to encourage influential non-nuclear states to take a lead on the issue. This concept bore fruit, with a little help from the South Asian tests, in the formation of the "New Agenda Coalition" (NAC) in June 1998 by the Foreign Ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden. (Unhappily, despite its role in initiating the Canberra Commission, Australia - under its new conservative Government - was not a participant).

The NAC in turn produced an important UN resolution, passed through the First Committee on

13 November 1998, the centrepiece of which was a call upon the Nuclear-Weapon States to "pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to the elimination of" nuclear weapons. The most interesting feature of the vote - 97 in favour to 19 against, with 32 abstentions - was that the abstentions included, very much against the will of the US, Germany and eleven other NATO partners.

This is not the occasion to review in detail all the ways forward that have been promoted by the Canberra Commission and other advocates for change. But there are some key elements around which quite a broad based coalition of anti-nuclear weapon interests has coalesced, and they can be distilled as follows.

Element I: The Commitment

- An unambiguous commitment by the nuclear weapon states to achieving the elimination of all nuclear weapons within a reasonable time frame.
- The weapon states are now under unprecedented pressure in the UN General Assembly, in the NPT review process, and as a result of events in South Asia, to make good their Article VI obligations. Their reluctance is likely to continue for some time, and need not impede movement forward on other fronts, but it is crucial that the pressure be maintained. As the Canberra Commission made clear, such a commitment, at the highest political level, would change instantly the underlying nuclear weapons paradigm, and the thrust of modern defence planning.

Element II: Immediate Steps

- Take nuclear forces off alert and remove warheads from delivery vehicles.
 - This would be a natural extension of the stand-down of bombers in 1991, and (much more than in the case of mere de-targeting, which can be reversed in seconds) dramatically reduce the chance of an accidental or unauthorised launch. The physical separation of warheads from delivery vehicles would strongly reinforce formal de-alerting. A strong verification regime could readily be developed as an extension of existing arrangements.
- End deployment of non-strategic weapons.
 - This would be a logical follow-on to the US and Soviet decisions in 1991 to remove and store on shore all non-strategic nuclear weapons from ships and submarines. The tactical nuclear weapons deployed in Western Europe serve, in the present environment, no constructive security purpose.
- Commit to no first use.
 - Since the only conceivable residual role of nuclear weapons now is to pose a threat of

retaliation against nuclear aggression, a joint no first use undertaking would be at no strategic cost to the nuclear weapon states. They should declare that they would not be the first to use or threaten nuclear weapons against each other and that they would not use or threaten them in any conflict with a non-nuclear weapon state. The new German Government has now put this issue squarely on the international agenda in the context of the current review of NATO nuclear doctrine: the predictably negative reaction of the US, UK and France should be taken as the beginning, not the end, of this argument.

- Initiate negotiations to further reduce US and Russian nuclear arsenals.

- START II could be leapfrogged without being abandoned. Quickly finalising a START III agreement with a ceiling of 1 000 deployed strategic systems (around half that set in the Helsinki Protocol) would eliminate most of the Duma arguments against the pact, while reducing many more nuclear weapons. There are recent reports that the US is in fact planning to announce major unilateral reductions in its nuclear arsenal simply because of the huge budget cost involved in maintaining it - and the financial pressures in Moscow are even more daunting.

Element III: Reinforcing Steps

- End testing once and for all.

- The critical importance of bringing the CTBT into force hardly needs further emphasis. Pending its universal application, all states should observe immediately its moratorium on nuclear testing.

- Act to prevent further horizontal proliferation.

- The critical need to give the NPT universal application, stop it unravelling, hold the line on existing non-proliferation gains, and gradually wind back the breakout in South Asia, again all hardly need further emphasis.

- Cease production of fissile material.

- After more than a decade of sparring, preliminary negotiations will commence next year on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT). Given existing inventories, an FMCT will impose little burden on the original Nuclear-Weapon States, but it will be an important constraint on India, Pakistan, Israel and other potentially nuclear capable states. For that reason, there should be no illusions about the degree of difficulty involved in actually negotiating an effectively verifiable treaty here.

- Account for stocks of fissile material.

A crucial element both in consolidating the achievement of an FMCT and in creating the

conditions for the final elimination of nuclear weapons will be an international accounting system that tracks both the exact number of fabricated weapons and the exact amounts of the fissionable materials that provide their explosive power. Achieving this politically will be, again, more difficult than it is technically.

- Further assist Russia to address the overhang problem.
 - The security of stored nuclear weapons and excess fissile material in Russia is a huge continuing problem, only partly being redressed by the \$400 million a year being provided under the 1991 Nunn-Lugar Program. Given this assistance only accounts for some 1/6 of 1 per cent of the US Defense Budget, it could readily be doubled or tripled.
- Develop verification arrangements.
 - A great many of verification tasks are involved in nearly every step along the way to elimination, and they are spelt out in detail in the Canberra Commission Report: an ongoing, cumulative effort is required, and it should begin now. In many ways verifying chemical weapons abolition was an even more daunting task, because of the nature and scale of the world's chemical industry, but the global community did not hesitate to tackle it. No arms control verification regime can ever provide absolute certainty, but there is no reason why sufficient levels of assurance could not eventually be reached to enable the final elimination decisions to be made.

Element IV: Final Steps

- Join other nuclear weapon states in the process.
 - As major reductions eventually occur in the US and Russian nuclear arsenals, the other nuclear weapon states - and any remaining undeclared and threshold states - will need to be drawn into the detailed negotiation process. The Canberra Commission outlines how that process might most constructively proceed.
- Get to zero.
- In addition to the technical and political judgements that will finally have to be made about verification arrangements and the like, attention will have to be paid to the legal regime best able to achieve and sustain a nuclear weapon free world. The Canberra Commission suggested that serious thought be given to combining all the separate treaty elements involved into a single new Nuclear Weapons Convention - not least as a way of overcoming some of the acrimony long associated with some existing instruments like the CTBT and NPT. It is not too soon for interested states to commence preparation of a working draft of such an all-embracing new Convention.

The challenge of nuclear disarmament is a huge one, and the size of the task ahead - politically and technically - is daunting. Locking in and consolidating gains, and ensuring no backsliding, is

a big enough exercise by itself, before one even gets to breaking new ground. But because there is so much distance to travel before the goal of outright elimination is achieved, the task for the moment is in a sense a little easier. Proponents of minimum nuclear deterrence - who believe that deterrence at progressively lower levels is the most that can be achieved, and who dismiss the feasibility of putting the 'nuclear genie' back in the bottle - can travel the same road together for a few years yet as those who are advocates of a nuclear weapon free world.

That said, the commitment to outright elimination cannot be delayed forever. It is becoming increasingly obvious that if the non-proliferation line is going to be held at all, it is going to have to be held very much sooner than later. The task for all of us who want to see this planet survive through the new century is to jolt the world's key decision-makers out of their present comfortable complacency - not just temporarily, as may have happened with the South Asian tests, but permanently. For that to happen, those decision makers are going to have to become just a little bit fearful. It's our job to tell them, in the most effective possible way, why they should be.

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