



"New Momentum for Nuclear Disarmament"

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Background:

In London, Presidents Obama and Medvedev agreed to re-open bilateral negotiations over nuclear warheads and stockpiles to replace the START I treaty set to expire at the end of 2009, sending a signal to the NPT PrepCom meeting scheduled for May 4-15 in New York that nuclear weapon states are prepared to follow their obligations to disarm under Art 6 of the treaty. In Prague, on April 5, President Obama gave a major speech on security policy, amongst other things reiterating his commitment to a nuclear weapon free world. He pledged to "immediately and aggressively" seek ratification of the CTBT, to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in US national security strategy, to seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials, and to build a new framework for civil nuclear cooperation, including an international fuel bank. However, the resounding silence in some major capitals following these public pledges demonstrates that more obstacles need to be overcome than just US Congress.

Against this background, policy makers and experts from Brazil, China, Egypt, Germany, India, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States met on April 22 in Berlin to explore if and how these and other international stakeholders would be willing to join these initiatives to create new momentum for nuclear disarmament.

1 Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

The end of nuclear testing has always been the litmus test for non nuclear weapon states (NNWS) if nuclear weapon states (NWS) are serious about their obligation to disarm under Art. 6 NPT. Accordingly, the permanent extension of the NPT in 1995 succeeded under three main agreements: significant reduction of warheads and stockpiles, unilateral pledges of no-use against NNWS, and ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Therefore, the collapse of the ratification of CTBT in US Congress was a major blow to the basic bargain of the NPT. Ever since, with India, Pakistan, North Korea going nuclear (and Iran raising significant doubts about his motives), the other part of the bargain began to disintegrate. President Obama's statement in Prague, that the "basic bargain of the NPT is sound", and to "aggressively and immediately seek ratification of the CTBT" aims at this connection. The US Constitution requires a two third majority for the ratification of international treaties, which translates into 67 votes in the US Senate. Thus, the Obama administration needs to win not only all Democratic Senators, but also eight Republican votes. There was unanimous agreement that allies and major stakeholders should take significant efforts to persuade policymakers of the importance of CTBT ratification to open the door for new momentum in nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. An important argument could be China's willingness to follow the United States in ratification. After its initial testing, India also could be prepared to rethink its objections to the CTBT.

2 Nuclear Disarmament

Coinciding with the conference, US and Russian officials announced that they resume negotiations over arms control in Rome on Friday April

24. Participants expressed cautious optimism that a new US-Russian treaty reducing warheads and stockpiles, redefining accounting rules and enhancing the verification process will eventually be in place. In that context, the initiative of the UK and Norway for a better verification system was widely lauded as helpful. However, to enter into force by the end of 2009, such a replacement treaty would need to go into US Congress by the beginning of August. Therefore, it could be easier to reach a more symbolic agreements first, and win some time for further negotiations by extending the START I by an exchange of notes. In general, both sides seem to aim to reduce warheads under revised accounting rules to around a 1000 in the following two to three years. Russia seems to be prepared to include delivering systems. Such as ICBMs and heavy bombers. To go beyond this threshold, the United States and Russia seem determined to engage first the P5 NWS, and later the Non NPT nuclear weapon states. The sequencing is all the more important as most of these states consider their current nuclear arsenal as a minimal deterrent and wait for US and Russian leadership in reducing stockpiles. There was a sense that China, the UK and India would not stand in the way of disarmament. Significant cuts would be a positive signal to the 2010 NPT Review by indicating that states no longer depend on nuclear weapons for their security, thus lowering their political value as great power status symbols.

There was a consensus amongst participants that significant cuts in nuclear warheads and stockpiles cannot be reached without complementary conventional arms control. Further, strategic reductions are linked to agreements over missile defense. Several participants urged to extend disarmament negotiations to include tactical nuclear weapons. While the United States, Russia and China seem to have started

talks over a slowdown of the “weaponization” of outer space, one participant suggested a treaty banning interference with satellites.

3 Nuclear Posture

Even a cut down to a thousand warheads would not be enough to prevent proliferation, therefore reducing the role of nuclear weapons is also necessary. While China and India already declared a no-first-use policy, debate inside NATO is still under way. In the United States, the new report on the nuclear posture review to US Congress (due in December 2009) will be a significant cornerstone in this debate. In Prague, President Obama announced: “we will reduce the role of nuclear weapons in our national security strategy, and urge others to do the same.” Besides a “no-first-use” posture, the international debate evolves around limiting the use of nuclear weapons only to deter nuclear weapons, to de-alert nuclear weapons and to refrain from targeting other states. Several participants argued to end deployment of nuclear weapons beyond the own territory of a NWS. NNWS need assurances that nuclear weapons will not be used against them. While NWS gave legally non-binding unilateral pledges of no-use, similar assurances of Non NPT states with nuclear weapons are outstanding. Such assurances towards non-nuclear states would be easier to issue if the use of nuclear weapons would be limited to deter a nuclear attack only. One participant proposed to declare the use of nuclear weapons as a “crime against humanity” under Chapter 7 UN Charta to achieve a legally binding assurance.

4 Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty

President Obama declared in Prague that the United States will seek a new treaty that verifiably ends the production of fissile materials. This indicates that the new administration is prepared to resolve the issue of verification that the Bush administration put forward. However, agreement about the necessity of such an initiative notwithstanding, there was scepticism amongst several participants about the outlook for a FMCT. India, who had reservations about the verification process and the size of its own fissile stockpile, seems to be prepared to join negotiations if they restart at the Conference on Disarmament.

5 Outlook

The good atmosphere of the conference notwithstanding, it became clear that nuclear disarmament is part and parcel of the bigger picture of security policy. Frictions will not disappear overnight, and trust needs to be rebuilt, but all sides seem to be determined to build better relations as a basis for disarmament. There was a consensus amongst participants that 2009 constitutes a “once in a generation” window of opportunity to move beyond the NPT towards “Global Zero” that could close again quickly, and therefore must be used.

Speakers

Alexander Babakov, Vice-Speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. Professor Cui Liru, President of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR). Nabil Fahmy, former Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt to the United States and Japan. Ambassador Thomas Graham, Special Representative of President Clinton for Arms Control, Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Prof. Boris Guseletov Chair of the International Department of the Political Party "A Just Russia". Professor Harald Müller is Director of the Director of Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF). Dr. Rolf Mützenich is member of the Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non Proliferation of the German Bundestag. Professor Götz Neuneck is a member of the Council of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. Aduino Zago Pralon is an expert on anti-terrorism and nuclear security at the Brazilian Federal Police. Professor Rajesh Rajagopalan served as Deputy Secretary in the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India. Baroness Shirley Williams of Crosby is a member of the British House of Lords and advises Prime Minister Gordon Brown on nuclear non-proliferation. Professor Xia Liping is Secretary-General of the Shanghai Institute for International Strategic Studies (SISS).

For further information, see also:

Interview with Ambassador Thomas Graham
<http://www.fes.de/gpol/video/GRAHAM.wmv>

Interview with Prof. Dr. Rajesh Rajagopalan
<http://www.fes.de/gpol/video/RAJAGOPLAN.wmv>

Interview with MoP Dr. Rolf Mützenich
(in German)
<http://www.fes.de/gpol/video/MUETZENICH.wmv>

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