



Forum: 3rd Committee (Disarmament & International Security)

Issue: Preventing a Crisis of Arms Control Especially in Regards to Nuclear Weapons

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Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, the number of nuclear weapons in the world has decreased five to six times. Nevertheless, the treaty system and the negotiation process in the field of nuclear arms control is undergoing a deep crisis, which could lead to a new large-scale arms race, the destruction of nuclear non-proliferation regimes and the weakening of international standards for the safe storage and use of nuclear materials. In the past, the strategic communication between Russian and American leaders contributed to their common understanding of the essence and rules of mutual nuclear deterrence and the dangers of escalation of the crises. Now this understanding has disappeared. It is contradicting to the concept of arms control which implies cooperation between competing states in the areas of military policy in order to reduce the likelihood of war or to limit the destructive power of war if it occurs. However, not only these two nuclear superpowers, but also other countries, which possess nuclear weapons, do not want to join the disarmament process. The United Kingdom, France and China have not agreed to any legal limitation on nuclear weapons. On the contrary, these states still require that Russia and the United States (which possess almost 90% of the world's nuclear arsenal) make reductions to levels close to their own. Today, the leaders of Russia, the United States and their European allies should recall the wisdom of the former leaders of their countries who were able to cooperate in order to prevent a nuclear catastrophe (which can be caused even by limited and selective use of nuclear weapons) even in times of deep relationship crisis during the Cold War.

Definition of key terms

Arms control – a term for international restrictions upon the development, production, stockpiling, proliferation and usage of small arms, conventional weapons, and weapons of mass destruction. Arms control is typically exercised through the use of diplomacy which seeks to impose such limitations upon consenting participants through international treaties and

agreements, although it may also comprise efforts by a nation or group of nations to enforce limitations upon a non-consenting country.

Nuclear weapon – an explosive device that derives its destructive force from nuclear reactions, either fission (fission bomb) or from a combination of fission and fusion reactions (thermonuclear bomb). Both bomb types release large quantities of energy from relatively small amounts of matter. Nuclear weapons have been used twice in war, both times by the United States against Japan near the end of World War II. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons aims to reduce the spread of nuclear weapons, but its effectiveness has been questioned. Modernization of weapons continues to this day.

Cold War – the open yet restricted rivalry that developed after World War II between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies. The Cold War was waged on political, economic, and propaganda fronts and had only limited recourse to weapons.

Strategic nuclear weapon – a nuclear weapon which is designed to be used on targets often in settled territory far from the battlefield as part of a strategic plan.

Background information

The beginning of the international legal discussion of the problem of nuclear weapons began shortly after the end of the WWII.

In December 1945, at the meeting of foreign ministers of the USSR, the United States and Great Britain in Moscow, it was decided to propose the first session of the UN General Assembly to set up a commission on one of the most pressing post-war topics - atomic energy. The proposals of the USA and the USSR proceeded, of course, from their own interests. Under those conditions, the work of the UN Commission was inevitably doomed to fail, so the Atomic Energy Commission soon ceased to exist.

At the same time, the nuclear arms race unfolded between the USSR and the USA.

Since the end of the 1960s, the leading nuclear powers of the world — the USSR and the USA — have begun the negotiation process on limiting and reducing their strategic nuclear weapons. For several decades, the Soviet (Russian) - American treaty process of reducing nuclear weapons was not only at the center of bilateral relations, but also determined the state of international security. The positive results of the negotiations between Russia and the United States had an important impact on disarmament in other areas as well. At the same time, bilateral negotiation processes affected only a part of the nuclear systems - strategic offensive weapons and medium- and short-range missiles. The extensive class of

non-strategic (tactical) nuclear systems was not included into the treaties. The nuclear weapons of other official members of the «Nuclear Club» are also outside the international legal sphere, although according to the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons), all its participants «agree to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals». Current disarmament and non-proliferation mechanisms are not designed to respond effectively to new challenges to international security, including the possible merging of nuclear weapons and terrorism. Given these negative trends, many doubts have been expressed about the international legal arms control mechanisms under current conditions.

Major countries and organizations involved

Some notable arms control organizations:

1. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

It is an international organization that seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

2. Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization, or CTBTO Preparatory Commission

It is an international organization based in Vienna, Austria. Its main purpose is to promote the entry into force of the CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty), and to establish a global verification regime in preparation for the Treaty's entry into force.

3. Conference on Disarmament (CD)

It is a multilateral disarmament forum established by the international community to negotiate arms control and disarmament agreements based at the Palais des Nations in Geneva.

Some of the major countries involved:

1. United States

The United States developed the first nuclear weapons during World War II in collaboration with Britain and Canada as part of the Manhattan Project, fearing that Nazi Germany would develop them first. It tested the first nuclear weapon on July 16, 1945 ("Trinity"), and

remains the only country that have used nuclear weapons in war, devastating the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

2. Russian Federation (formerly part of the Soviet Union)

The Soviet Union tested its first nuclear weapon ("RDS-1") in 1949. The Soviet Union was the second country to develop and test nuclear weapon. The immediate motivation for developing Soviet weapons was to achieve a balance of power during the Cold War.

3. United Kingdom

The United Kingdom tested its first nuclear weapon ("Hurricane") in 1952. Britain worked closely with the United States and Canada during the Manhattan Project, but had to develop its own method of making and detonating a bomb, as the secrecy of the United States increased after 1945. Britain was the third country in the world after the United States and Soviet Union to develop and test a nuclear weapon. Its programme was motivated to have an independent deterrent against the Soviet Union, while maintaining the status of a great power.

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The SALT-1 (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) agreement was signed simultaneously with the ABM Treaty (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) in Moscow on May 26, 1972, concluded for 5 years, and entered into force on October 3, 1972. This document was the first to put a real barrier to the growth of strategic offensive arms. The treaty between the USSR and the USA on the limitation of strategic offensive arms (the SALT-2 Treaty) was signed on June 18, 1979 in Vienna with a validity period of December 31, 1985. Despite the fact that the SALT-2 Treaty contained a significant number of restrictions, it did not allow to reduce the nuclear arsenals of two countries. The first agreement to ensure a real reduction of nuclear missile weapons was the Treaty between the USSR and the USA on the elimination of their medium-range and shorter-range missiles (the INF Treaty). If in previous agreements it was about curbing the growth of nuclear weapons, then this Treaty for the first time provided specific measures of disarmament. The positive practical results of the implementation of the INF Treaty stimulated a more rapid negotiation process in the field of arms limitation, and the experience gained during the implementation of the Treaty was reflected in subsequent agreements on nuclear disarmament. This applies primarily to the START-1 (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) Treaty. This treaty between the USSR and the USA on the reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms was signed on July 31, 1991 in Moscow with a validity of 15 years and could have been repeatedly extended for five-year terms. The

START-1 Treaty is unique in its level of detail and complexity of the problems solved in it. The START-2 Treaty was signed in Moscow on January 3, 1993, that is, just one and a half years after the signing of the START-1 Treaty and a year after the collapse of the USSR. The final fate of the START II Treaty was determined in 2002, after the United States withdrew from the ABM Treaty. The withdrawal of the United States from the ABM Treaty was attributed by the Federal Law on ratification of the START-2 Treaty to an exceptional circumstance giving Russia the right to withdraw from this Treaty. The START II Treaty thus ceased to exist. On May 24, 2002, a new START was signed in Moscow - the Treaty between the Russian Federation and the United States on Strategic Offensive Reductions (the Treaty on Strategic Offensive Reductions), which came into force on July 1, 2003 and should have been valid until December 31, 2012. New START is a nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and the Russian Federation with the formal name of Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms. It was signed on 8 April 2010 in Prague, and, after ratification, entered into force on 5 February 2011. It is expected to last at least until 2021. In addition to treaties focused primarily on stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons, there has been a recent movement to regulate the sale and trading of conventional weapons. As of December 2014, the United Nations is preparing for entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which has been ratified by 89 nations. However, it is currently missing ratification by key arms producers such as Russia and China, and while the United States has signed the treaty it has not yet ratified it.

Possible solutions

In modern conditions, joint actions are needed to strengthen the arms control regime, ensure that the arms reduction process (first of all nuclear) continues, and prevent the emergence of new areas of the arms race. Such work must be carried out at all levels - in international forums (primarily in the UN) and in the Conference on Disarmament. We must constantly be reminded of the catastrophic consequences of any use of nuclear weapons. This is especially important because in the states that play a leading role in the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, a new generation of political elite has come to power, which is not fully aware of the global destructive consequences of even the "limited" use of nuclear weapons. The creation of new zones free of nuclear weapons should continue to be supported. A significant incentive for this can be the strengthening of international and regional security, which can most effectively be achieved with the active support of Russia and the United States. It is important that the nuclear-weapon States implement the security assurances provided by the treaties and protocols on nuclear-weapon-free zones.

Useful links

IAEA: <https://www.iaea.org/>

CTBTO: <https://www.ctbto.org/>

Conference on Disarmament: <https://www.unog.ch/cd>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/arms-control>

<http://carnegie.ru/publications/60408>

https://www.armscontrol.org/events/20060325_Boese_NuclearDisaster

<https://www.un.org/disarmament/update/examining-the-role-of-conventional-arms-control-in-preventing-conflicts-and-building-peace/>