

Editorial

The world witnessed the devastating effects of nuclear bombs on the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, today humanity continues to face the enormous challenge of controlling, limiting and eventually eliminating the most powerful weapons that can destroy its very existence. Since then the international community - nuclear and non-nuclear powers - have repeatedly sought to prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials through several initiatives, one of them being the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). However, its signatories continue to violate the stipulations of the treaty, while those nuclear nations who refuse to sign continue to enhance and modernize their nuclear arsenals. Signatories and non-signatories continue to site security concerns and argue that nuclear arsenals act as deterrents. This does not in itself constitute a reason for war and therefore safeguards their countries from being attacked. The post-cold war 1995 Review Conference of the NPT concluded with no substantive agreements except that it was extended indefinitely.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has passed several resolutions calling upon states in the Middle East to apply nuclear safeguards and engage in measures that will steer the region towards being a nuclear weapons free zone. The development and deployment of nuclear weapons can be especially destabilizing and contributes to the escalation of risk-based anxieties, pushing states to further procure and deploy nuclear facilities that can develop into a strategic crisis. In the Middle East the proliferation of nuclear weapons has been a long and deep-rooted anxiety in view of the levels of instability and volatility of the region. The Iraq war was initially waged to pre-empt it from using its unspecified Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), Israel takes an ambiguous stand with regard to its nuclear weapons capabilities, Iran says it is developing nuclear energy for peaceful means but reports suggest otherwise, and Syria is suspected of possessing nuclear capabilities. Also, the Post-Cold War transitions left nuclear facilities unguarded and therefore exposed to trafficking by clandestine networks. This introduced a new security concern that moves across borders and beyond inter-state disputes. Increasingly, countries seek to categorize and define the nebulous network of terrorists; they are difficult to target and therefore pose a greater threat to nations. Their ambiguity and disregard for the rule of law, it is rightly feared, will not deter them from using nuclear weapons if obtained.

Against this present scenario, this issue of ConflictINFOCUS, seeks to understand preventive dynamics and state conduct in relation to nuclear weapons programme. In 'Arms Control, Nonproliferation and Conflict Prevention in the Middle East', Emily Landau argues that the existence or the absence of weapons per se does not reduce conflicts or change security aspects, it is the behaviour of states and inter-state security relations that can assuage or increase conflicts and thus calls for improved inter-state relations and dialogue to diminish the threat value of nuclear weapons. Yasar Qatarneh contests the prevailing standards on WMD proliferation in 'The American Wisdom on WMD: A source of 'Conflict Prevention' or 'Conflict Invention'?' While illustrating that Iraq did not pose a serious threat to the US, he stresses the necessity for the US to understand the full range of reasons states seek to acquire WMD.

In lieu of the 60th Summit of the UN, and with the understanding that the EU is a voice in the UN, this issue of ConflictINFOCUS replaces the EU Monitoring space with 'The United Nations and its Achilles Heel', in which, Sabrina Sunderraj highlights the predicaments that the UN faces in its attempts to prevent war and the proliferation of nuclear weapons. ■

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THE UNITED NATIONS AND ITS ACHILLES HEEL

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The United Nations was founded sixty years ago, with 51 countries uniting to declare that they will save succeeding generations from the scourge of war; reasserting their faith in fundamental human rights and the equality of men and women and nations large and small; to establish justice and respect and adherence to treaties and international laws; and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.⁽¹⁾ Sixty years hence, the UN has grown to include 191 countries, instituted new organizations within the UN system and drafted and signed several more treaties and conventions to form an imposing body of normative structures in varied fields. Indeed, the very first resolution of the United Nations General Assembly called for the elimination of atomic weapons and weapons capable of inducing mass destruction from member countries military capabilities. Whilst having avoided another nuclear explosion, the UN has not been successful in saving succeeding generations from the “scourge of war”⁽²⁾, which continues to bring “untold sorrow to mankind”⁽³⁾.

Throughout its history we see the UN grappling with the increasing distance between the ideals it set out to achieve through its Charter and its failure to be effective at the implementation level. In some areas the UN has provided leadership and effectiveness while in others it has failed. The UN aware of its weaknesses, failed spectacles and loss of the trust of member countries launched on a drive to reform itself, which resulted in the UN Secretary General’s 2004 plan - ‘A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility’ a report based on the committee that produced Threats, Challenges and Change, yet at the last moment it was forced to thin down its initial bold steps⁽⁴⁾. The Secretary General also admitted that the World Summit was “a failure” with regard to disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. Why does this happen and what makes the UN - an impressive organization that allows for 191 countries to come together, to discuss, to formulate and push for policies and reforms - fail at the most crucial times?

Repeatedly the UN has shown that the US is the Achilles heel of the UN with permanent members of the Security Council taking turns to act as its bulwark. When the UN did demonstrate its dissonance with the US and its allies, such as in the case of the war against Iraq, its veto was treated as a mere dictum. Two months after the invasion, on May 22nd 2003, the UN passed resolution 1483 recognising Britain and UK as the occupying powers (“The Authority”) calling on them to improve security and work promptly towards providing Iraqis the right

to determine their political future⁽⁵⁾. When the UN decided to act, its office was blown up. Tragically Special Representative Sergio de Mello along with 22 members of UN staff were killed. The UN in this context was seen as a tool for providing a legitimate cover for the US and British occupation of Iraq⁽⁶⁾. This puts to question UN neutrality, closely related to this neutrality is the current debate on Iran.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) was instituted in 1957 as the world’s “Atoms for Peace” organization within the UN, with a mandate to ensure peaceful nuclear technology, nuclear safety and security in member countries. The doubts about Iraq’s WMD programme submitted by the IAEA at the UN were overlooked and requests for more investigation time were ignored. A war was launched and the UN could not keep its promise to save us from the scourge of war. The Iraq war has thrown an already struggling region into further insecurity and instability. The present question is will UN history of falling short at crucial stages repeat itself in Iran?

Iran, today, faces a possible sanction for its nuclear programmes, which it maintains, is for civilian purposes. The IAEA press releases show that Iran has been generally compliant to inspections since 2004⁽⁷⁾, on 24th September 2005 the IAEA passed a resolution that censures Iran for its policy of concealment and requested further cooperation to “compensate for the confidence-deficit created”⁽⁸⁾. IAEA reports reveal that Iran possesses the capability to produce nuclear weapons. Iran has also signed a \$800 million deal with Russia to build a nuclear reactor. Strategic interests of nations in pushing for a referral to sanction Iran is illustrated in the present decision taken by India, a member of the non-aligned movement, to veto its long time ally and oil supplier, Iran. The South Asian nuclear power desires to demonstrate its commitment to being a “responsible” nuclear power

(1) The Preamble of the Charter of the United Nations - <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>

(2) *ibid.*

(3) *ibid.*

(4) Several news articles can be accessed for analyses of the “watering-down” of UN Reforms. See <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/09/13/13nations.html/> or

<http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/ay/031022/2003102223.html>

(5) <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/undocs/scres/2003/res1483.pdf>

(6) This is the view that most authors of the Middle East region express, for e.g. Hamdi, Tariq; When will the UN be a Just Organisation in Al Quds Al Arabi, 13th September 2005 (Arabic)

(7) <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2004/ebasp2004n006.html#iran>

(8) Implementation of the Safeguards Agreement in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Resolution adopted on 24th September 2005. <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2005/gov2005-77.pdf>

and thereby strengthen its newfound relationship with the US. China and Russia abstained - each having their countries' interests at stake⁽⁹⁾.

On the other hand, Israel possesses what is acknowledged to be one of the most ambiguous nuclear programmes in the world. The 'Israel Atomic Energy Commission' was established in 1952 and supervises research institutes and centers in Israel - including the Dimona nuclear center. By 1960s it was revealed that Israel possessed a nuclear reactor near Dimona - assisted by the French, by 1980's the Vanunu disclosures provided further confirmation. However, Israel never accepted any IAEA safeguards and continued to insist that it was developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes⁽¹⁰⁾. To date, Israel has never been confronted in the same manner as other nations who have come under suspicion of having nuclear capabilities for building WMDs. The least that they have been told by the UN nuclear watchdog IAEA is to sign the NPT and surrender its nuclear weapons to further peace in the Middle East⁽¹¹⁾. Indeed the UN, significantly, is aware that Israel does have a nuclear weapons programme, yet, there have been no calls for compliance and transparency of Israel's nuclear programme.

The US President has identified nuclear terrorism to be the biggest threat facing his country. The international community also recognises nuclear terrorism as a recent security concern. Here the danger is that there is no effective deterrent for a terrorist from exploding a nuclear device if obtained. Why are we facing these threats? The Cold War competition resulted in the US and Russia acquiring excessive levels of WMDs, with the end of the Cold War and the ensuing break up of the USSR fears that there are thousands of potential "loose nukes" that could fall into the hands of terrorists is palpable. In response to these fears the UN has opened for signature the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, which notes the fear that "acts of nuclear terrorism may result in the gravest consequences and may pose a threat to international peace"⁽¹²⁾. The UN Convention is a preventive strategy calling for countries to enhance existing legal provisions and to cooperate with each other in devising practical measures to prevent terrorism. This is a significant step, but can the UN ensure compliance of nations or will its statutes be disregarded?

What is clearly lacking in this whole issue of who should possess or not possess nuclear weapons is "We the peoples of the United Nations"⁽¹³⁾. No country should seek to possess a weapon that has the known potential to wreak absolute and irreparable destruction upon mankind. The nation that considers itself to be a "responsible" nuclear power has been the first to use it on people. The US has used atom bombs on not one but two cities - Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Prior to the Hiroshima Nagasaki bombings the cities of Tokyo

and Yokohama had already been subject to incendiary bombs and its victims were people. Was it of utmost and absolute necessity to use such a device? Was every possible avenue of diplomacy to ending the war sought? The debate is leaning heavily towards evidences that prove it could and should have been avoided⁽¹⁴⁾. Can we now effectively deter non-state actors from exploding a nuclear device? Who can we hold responsible?

The UN was born with Hiroshima-Nagasaki, 60 years hence the effects of nuclear radiation continue to affect the people⁽¹⁵⁾; 60 years hence we still face the fear of nuclear attacks. The ultimate point is not to lay blame but to comprehend that any nation possessing WMDs regardless of whether it is "responsible" or not is subject to the possibility of using them and not making concerted enough efforts in seeking for every possible means to avoid using them. And it is increasingly proven that the victims are the people of a nation. Can the UN support the peoples of the United Nations first or will it continue to trip on its Achilles heel? ■

(9) China buys oil from Iran, Russia has a deal with Iran to build an \$800 million nuclear reactor. Other non-aligned states vetoed the referral fearing that it might escalate Iran's will to build nuclear weapons rather than encourage them to curb it.

(10) Nashif N., Taysir; Nuclear Weapons in Israel, APH Publishing Corporation: New Delhi, 1996. The book draws from Arabic, English and Hebrew sources.

(11) <http://www.iaea.org>

(12) The International Convention for the Suppression of the Acts of Terrorism, September 2005, UN document.

(13) <http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/index.html>

(14) Several articles and books exist, see Alperovitz, Gar; The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb, Random House, NY, 1995.

(15) Yamazaki, James N., Children of the Atomic Bomb: An American Physician's memoir of Nagasaki, Hiroshima and the Marshall Islands, Duke University Press, 1995

THE AMERICAN WISDOM ON WMD: A SOURCE OF 'CONFLICT PREVENTION' OR 'CONFLICT INVENTION'?

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The issue of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is an extraordinarily critical one, thus, the constant and relentless, though dissonant in tone, drumbeat of American propaganda about how some countries have to 'come clean' with the world and stop conducting a secret nuclear weapons program. The latest is Washington's call for imposing conditions—a permanent ban on reprocessing uranium—that goes far beyond anything that the present international structure to monitor nuclear activities (Non-Proliferation Treaty) actually stipulates. In specific, the United States is demanding that countries voluntarily agree to American-imposed unilateral restrictions and submit to intrusive, unrestricted American inspections of its nuclear facilities, anywhere, anytime, anyplace, without any guarantees that these inspections will not be used to determine targets for a later (and, of course, illegal) US attack.

We all know that the NPT is seriously flawed in that it does allow parties to the treaty to develop all the crucial capacity to make nuclear weapons without effective constraint, and then to walk away from the treaty without effective penalty. Yet, has such unilateral approach replaced a multilateral preventive and supportive one? This paper argues, the Middle East in particular and the world in general, is doomed to face an increasing demand by some countries to acquire nuclear capabilities. Generally, aware that not only is the NPT flawed and obsolete, this paper suggests that the current pervasive American wisdom on WMD proliferation is flawed and needs to be readdressed differently as well. A major argument used by the proponents of the American wisdom is the imminent threat against the international community posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) held or being developed by 'some' countries. However, the question remains how credible is this line of argumentation?

The American Wisdom

The issue of proliferation, so far, has been addressed through the prism of regimes rather than actual behaviour. This means, justice is always at risk when the focus is on what people are rather than on what they do. At present, the essence of proliferation targets only 'closed-societies' with no effective internal opposition, those that lack internal checks on their power. It is not on more 'open-societies' that may as well behave equally badly. In principle, I have no difficulty with the notion that self-defence against any kind of threat to international peace and security should not necessarily be confined

to situations of actual or imminent attack. Yet, what I would strongly argue, instead, is that if an attack is not actual, and not imminent, then it certainly must be real. My own formula here (with which many may not disagree) is that the less imminent a threat, and the less available the evidence of its reality, the greater is the necessity for 'multilateral' support for any coercive action taken.

In America's recent war on Iraq, a major argument used by the adherents of the American wisdom is the imminent threat against the United States and its allies posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) held or being developed by Saddam Hussein. These weapons were thought to be deliverable at short notice and a specific threat to the United States and thus the global structure. The renowned political scientist Joseph Nye summarized this position well: "The third argument was the clearest and most widely accepted. It focused on preventing Saddam Hussein from possessing weapons of mass destruction. Most countries agreed that Saddam had defied UN Security Council resolutions for a dozen years. Moreover, Resolution 1441 unanimously put the burden of proof on him to demonstrate what had happened to weapons that UN inspectors had been concerned about before they left Iraq in 1998"⁽¹⁾. Fear of the use of WMD was a top priority for the US and a primary justification for the war. However, could this be regarded as credible threat?

This paper argues that the threat posed by Iraq's ability to challenge the United States or endanger global security directly is inconsistent with every established model of deterrence. Considering the Classical Deterrence theory, the likelihood of a nuclear attack by a nation exposed to massive retaliation is unlikely and can be deterred. This is the case in the relationship between Iraq and the United States. This long-established formal logic demonstrates that the likelihood of a nuclear attack initiated by Iraq against the United States was and continues to be minimal. Either in a best-case scenario where Iraq does not have nuclear weapons or a worst-case scenario where Iraq has limited nuclear capabilities the probability of war is minimal. In the cone of war the probability of a conventional war - similar to that waged by the United States - is high. In the 'Massive Retaliation' area, Iraq has a lower probability of initiating war against the United States than in any other region. Even under 'Mutually Assured Destruction', credited with preserving stability during the Cold War, the probability of war is higher. Thus, from the perspective of 'Classical Deterrence', had Iraq developed nuclear devices, and

(1) Joseph Nye, 'The Right War at the Wrong Time', *Boston Globe*, April 26, 2003

even had it developed primitive means of delivery similar to those of North Korea today, the likelihood of a nuclear attack by Iraq on the United States would be at its lowest level. The threat of use of WMD by a small nation against a nuclear giant is minimal. Altering this logic challenges all the other implications of deterrence that are still in place.

Iraq—even a nuclear Iraq—could not have challenged the United States because massive retaliation is a very stable condition regardless of the preferences of the opposing side⁽²⁾. The argument that WMD in the hands of Iraq could threaten the United States directly would require us to reject the very notion of global deterrence⁽³⁾. If the argument made by the United States today is true, any nation – like North Korea, Pakistan, Israel or Iran with minimal WMD capabilities cannot be deterred. Thus, if we were to differ substantively on issues, the United States is therefore exposed not only to the potential of an Iraq capability, but also to nuclear threat from Israel, Pakistan, North Korea, China, France, and even the United Kingdom. Against this backdrop, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) were never found in Iraq. Iraq was not a direct threat to the US and was unlikely to become one in the future. The argument made to support the war rejects many years of formal nuclear theory.

Against the backdrop of the Iraqi case the only principle that we all must follow is that military action is only justified in extreme and exceptional circumstances—where there is actual or immediately apprehended behaviour involving large-scale killing or ethnic cleansing. I can find no similarly circumscribed prescription in the current American wisdom. In other words, the emphasis should be on prevention by non-coercive means, only when these non-coercive measures have run their course, and there is still a perception that an ‘odious’ regime with no internal checks may be in the business of acquiring WMD, then all bets seem to be off. We must make huge efforts to formulate this principle, distinguishing it carefully from the “right to intervene” in a way that could become capable of winning, if not immediately, a broad international consensus.

An “Alternative” Wisdom

Against this background, I will present a detailed description of what policy measures are needed to address the problem of WMD proliferation, both on the supply and demand side. Thus, we have to say our preference is to opt for objective, or country-neutral, measures that are of general application – that do treat, at least as a matter of law, Switzerland and Iran the same. I don’t believe a serious commitment to the rule of law in international affairs allows any other course. What is necessary is to strengthen the rules as they presently exist, so that there are many more constraints than those existing at present, and to enforce them more effectively. None of this may be necessary in practice for Switzerland, which we assume ‘would not’ need the extra constraints

to behave appropriately. But there is every reason in principle why the good guys and less good guys must be subject to the same regime. For rules to stand a chance of universal acceptance, they must be universal in their scope as well.

We need to develop new and tougher universal rules that will prevent proliferation the old-fashioned way, through the hard diplomatic work of negotiating legal regimes and then putting appropriate resources into enforcing them. In specific, reducing the demand for WMD is a matter of effectively addressing the supply and demand sides of the equation. On the supply side, the kind of measures that need to be worked on include a tighter regulation of internal fuel cycle activities for member countries of the NPT. Moreover, prohibitions on painless withdrawal from the NPT must be added and asserted in addition to improving the multilateral intelligence capability of member countries. Furthermore, if one does not fear that others are acquiring capability, there is less reason for oneself to acquire it. But beyond that, it is not so much a matter of setting legal constraints as recognizing psychological needs. If large and proud states like Iran or Turkey feel that they are being condemned to permanent second-rate status, and to being the permanent beneficiaries of great power double standards, it is inevitable that they will seek to salvage some pride in other ways.

On the demand side, we need to fully understand the range of reasons states seek to acquire WMD, to acknowledge that more often than not the motivation is

(2) Jacek Kugler and Frank C. Zagare, ‘The Long-Term Stability of Deterrence’, *International Interactions*, Vo.15, no. 3-4, 1990

(3) A nuclear Iraq could pose a threat to regional security. In the regional context, particularly one as small as the Middle East, a very limited number of warheads permit a nation to achieve nuclear parity, thus MAD. In the regional context, therefore, the differences between the two schools of deterrence are telling. Classical deterrence, proposes that both Massive Retaliation and MAD conditions are stable. The Power Transition perspective argues on the other hand, that Massive Retaliation is stable but a dissatisfied nation could initiate nuclear war under parity and MAD. From a regional perspective nuclear weapons in the hands of a rogue nation like Iraq are dangerous because Israel or Iran can be challenged by Iraq with minimal nuclear capabilities. Because of this condition, we believe that a nuclear confrontation in the Middle East is likely. If Iraq had acquired nuclear weapons while remaining deeply dissatisfied with regional structures, and had there been a regional power transition, the threat of a nuclear war would have been very real. Moreover, the longer that conflict was delayed under conditions of dissatisfaction, the more intense that conflict would have become. The removal of Saddam Hussein was justified based on regional stability. If the interests of Israel or Iran – the likely targets of a challenge for regional dominance by Iraq – are paramount to US policy makers, then the actions taken in Iraq may have postponed a major regional war. With limited delivery capabilities and given the short warning time, nuclear parity with Israel would have allowed Iraq to challenge Israel for regional dominance. Power transition suggests that the prospects for escalation to a massive war under parity (MAD) are high. The same is true if the dissatisfied nation is preponderant.

not inherently aggressive, rather related to considerations like perceived defense security needs, national prestige and domestic political pressures; and for the “haves” to respond in ways that reduce the “have-nots” incentives to acquire⁽⁴⁾. This includes not only giving security assurances in appropriate cases but also not applying systematic double standards in accepting acquisition of WMD by some countries and not others, and also not applying double standards in condemning or reacting to proliferation activity. Furthermore, superpowers and nuclear countries must make a serious commitment to not test or further develop new classes of WMD.

In summary, the United States should abandon its habit of automatically assuming that some countries will do the right thing without the need of any collective constraint, legal fetter, political pressure or threat of coercion, while others are congenitally incapable of it. In other words, unless a preventive, supportive and collective approach is applied rather than a unilateral one, we are doomed to face a nuclear escalation. The American wisdom, despite its very good intentions, does seem to reflect quite a lot of ‘only’ the American view, and as such does not, I am

afraid, have an appeal outside the U.S. as it may have internally. Instead, the US must realize that it is more efficient to put down strategies that not only curb the supply of nuclear weapons and materials, but also the demand for them (in this context, for example, security assurances can be very useful). Meanwhile, in dealing with proliferation problems, Americans must recognize that there are multiple prudential criteria that have to be satisfied before military force is applied. Indeed, the use of force must be the last, not the first, resort. In other words, diplomatic pressure, economic measures and non-military coercive measures should always be considered before military force is contemplated. ■

(4) When Israel belligerently attacked and destroyed Iraq’s research reactors in 1981, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution equating such actions with a “nuclear attack” on a member state. That attack not only led to Iraq’s political determination to pursue a covert nuclear weapons program, but the same UN resolution failed to deter America’s attack on Iraq’s (hot) nuclear sites in the 1991 war, as it followed Israel’s example of ignoring any UN resolutions that do not suit its interests.



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ARMS CONTROL, NONPROLIFERATION AND CONFLICT PREVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Understanding the relation between attempts to control and/or stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and conflict management and prevention efforts, is not a trivial matter. A straightforward interpretation - which would draw on the commonplace view that nuclear weapons development is a threat to peace - would probably support the proposition that by eliminating nuclear weapons, states would be making a direct and positive contribution to interstate security and conflict reduction. And while this is indeed the logic behind the global treaties that seek to eliminate entire categories of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), this equation, which basically makes security and conflict reduction dependent on the presence or absence of certain weapons, is both superficial and somewhat problematic.

Such an equation sidesteps important questions regarding what it is that actually fuels international conflict, and why states go to war. When focusing on the Middle East, the answer to this question must also take into account features of the specific regional context. But, more importantly, issues such as the place of nuclear weapons on the security/threat axis, and the relation between these weapons and actual conflict, are neither simple nor straightforward. When states attempt to acquire nuclear weapons, are they primarily seeking an advantage in warfare, or a means to enhance their security and actually avoid war by strengthening their deterrence capability? Moreover, what is it that makes nuclear weapons a threat to other states - is it the very fact of their existence or the fact that they are in the hands of an enemy state? Finally, when we consider how to control nuclear proliferation, the cases of North Korea and Iran in particular, have demonstrated the difficulty of attempting to stop a determined proliferator solely by means of blocking weapons development and acquisition. While the elimination of nuclear weapons is desirable, in some cases it might prove to be an elusive goal.

When we think of the reasons behind international conflict, it is of course the states themselves, and not their weapons, that capture our attention and are the focus of our concern. States - with their various interests, perceptions, and fears - seek weapons as a means of dealing with the concerns and conflicts of interest that

they have vis-à-vis other states - sometimes through war, sometimes by means of deterrence. But the threat value attributed to the weapons themselves is primarily a function of whether a state is viewed as hostile or not. Of course, the precepts of neorealist thinking would have it that any weapon in the hands of any state is either a real or potential threat to all others. The logic behind this is that even if good relations exist at the present time, these relations can never be guaranteed over the long term. Hence, in light of the possibility that things could go sour, every state must look after its own self interest and be prepared to fend for itself. But, even in this view, the threatening nature of weapons is nevertheless still a function of the particular inter-state relations that exist - namely, whether states are friends or foes at any given point in time.

It has become commonplace to assume that in the realm of WMD the situation is different, due to the devastating and mass destructive potential of these weapons. Because WMDs are considered to be so deadly if used, it is generally accepted that they should be controlled and ultimately eliminated regardless of who acquires them. We find in fact that international treaties such as the NPT build on the assumption that all states will come to the conclusion that it is in their common interest to severely limit the amount of nuclear weapons that exist in the world. Non-nuclear weapons states will find that it is in their interest to remain in this status, especially as the nuclear states work toward disarmament.

But can this common interest really be assumed to exist across the board? Experience tells us that it cannot - for while many states adhere to the logic of collective security in the realm of WMD, others do not. In fact, the NPT itself supports a double message on this point - on the one hand it explicitly advocates and actively supports the proposition that nuclear weapons are dangerous for international security, but on the other hand, it (albeit implicitly) underscores the opposite message - that when facing certain threats, nuclear weapons can actually be conducive to ensuring state security. This is why the non-nuclear states are compensated by the treaty itself for their willingness to remain non-nuclear. In other words, it is implicitly recognized by the treaty that they are making a concession in security terms by foregoing the option of obtaining nuclear weapons - a concession for which they deserve to be compensated. Moreover, this is precisely the reason why the nuclear weapons states have been so slow to fulfill the commitment that they made - upon joining the NPT - to pursue the goal of disarmament.

Two additional points should be borne in mind. The first is that nuclear weapons are generally sought after by states for their value as a deterrent. Thus, the issue for

these states is the security value inherent in acquiring the ultimate deterrent force in international relations. Secondly, it is a fact that nuclear weapons states have not proven to be inherently more dangerous and/or aggressive than states without nuclear weapons. The danger that any state poses to others is primarily a function of its record of international behavior, and the nature of the relations that it maintains with other states.

When states think about arms control in the nuclear realm in today's world, the emphasis is on stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional states. With the global rivalry of the Cold War years gone, and the new states of concern all signatories to the NPT, the problem has become framed almost exclusively in terms of ensuring non-proliferation. Significantly, non-proliferation efforts focus on weapons, and virtually ignore the attributes of the state. However, state interests in the security realm are always a function of how the state regards itself in relation to other states. Thus, it is very difficult to come to general principles for the control and/or elimination of weapons. The decisions of states in this realm are always context dependent. If a state feels secure in its relations with neighboring states, it will have less of a problem supporting the elimination of certain categories of weapons. But if this is not the case, and a state faces what it considers to be severe security threats, it may well perceive possession of nuclear weapons as the road to ensuring its security.

So when we face problems of nuclear proliferation, our primary challenge is state behavior and relations, not the weapons per se. If the determined proliferator is a state that stands in violation of a commitment that it made - namely, its commitment according to the NPT to remain non-nuclear - it has displayed problematic international behavior, which deserves to be confronted with severity. But, at the same time, as far as the logic of arms control is concerned, it must be recognized that if states join treaties that run counter to interests that they perceive of as being basic or paramount to their security, they are very likely to search for ways to circumvent the treaty in order to bring those interests to bear. While such behavior is in violation of the state's commitment, it nevertheless underscores that the problem that must be dealt with is the motivation of the state to acquire nuclear weapons - which goes back to the question of inter-state relations.

If security concerns drive states to acquire weapons, it makes sense that any attempt to control these weapons must take into consideration the concerns that fueled their acquisition. Ultimately, the fate of agreements to control weapons development and to stop proliferation will be a function of the interests of the relevant states to continue to uphold them over the long term. Thus the ultimate focus of attention must be on the state - its behavior, interests, concerns, and relations with other states. The real key to arms control is to be found in

the ability to alter (improve) inter-state relations, and thus to change the context within which weapons exist. One way to achieve this is through a process of regional security dialogue that builds on common interests and gradually enhances them.

So how does arms control nevertheless relate to conflict management and prevention? When we maintain that arms control is closely related to the nature of inter-state relations, we can appreciate that when inter-state relations improve for the better, the threat value of the weapons that remain is reduced. In fact, when arms control itself is understood as something focused not only on weapons and their elimination, but rather on security dialogue geared to improving security relations, we can advance the following proposition: when security dialogue and cooperation is initiated, inter-state relations can begin to improve; weapons gradually lose some of their threat value, and conflict management becomes easier. Dialogue and other forms of initial cooperation among states, that touch upon security relations and the control of arms, can thus in themselves help states advance the goal of conflict management and reduction. Assessments of the perceived dangers inherent in WMD can serve as a trigger for bringing states to the dialogue table in order to discuss their concerns, and begin finding common ground for initial cooperation and new rules of engagement for dealing with potential sources of conflict. Such dialogue and cooperation, sustained over time, can gradually have the effect of improving relations, and lowering the chance of conflict.

In the early 1990s, when the Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) talks were active in the Middle East, arms control in this region focused on the need to confront the issue of WMD through security dialogue. It was decided that at the forefront of these talks would be the effort to advance mutual understanding of security concerns and threat perceptions, and the conclusion of confidence building measures to stabilize and improve inter-state relations. In ACRS, emphasis was placed on context, and inter-state relations. Today, movement is away from arms control in this sense, and the problem of WMD is being treated as a problem of weapons development and acquisition only.

The situation in the Middle East demands attention to inter-state security relations. Of course, getting states to recognize the importance of regional dialogue is not an easy task. And once it is recognized that energy must be devoted to garnering support for such dialogue, this is only the very first step in what will no doubt be a very long process. As such, the international community should continue to strive in parallel to advance the goal of non-proliferation. But, it is essential to recognize not only the limitations that are inherent in non-proliferation efforts, but that the goal of conflict prevention will ultimately be best served by focusing on inter-state relations, and gearing arms control and regional security efforts to that goal. ■