Divisions and Doubts At the Third NPT PrepCom

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The states-parties to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) will undertake a full review of the treaty in April-May 2000, the first since 1995, when the accord was effectively made permanent. The third Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meeting for the 2000 review conference took place May 10-21 in New York amid deteriorating international relations, especially between the United States and Russia and the United States and China; a continuing stalemate over strategic nuclear arms reductions; and deadlock at the Geneva Conference on Disarmament (CD).

After a moderately successful first meeting in 1997, the PrepCom's second meeting in 1998 had ended in failure and recriminations, principally over the issues of nuclear disarmament and Israel's possession of nuclear weapons, viewed as a threat by Israel's neighbors in the Middle East. As more than 100 delegations met at the United Nations for the third PrepCom, there was anxiety that another failure could undermine the credibility of the non-proliferation regime. Just one year after India and Pakistan shocked the world with their underground nuclear tests, and amid continuing problems over non-compliance by Iraq and North Korea, the United States and others wanted to show the NPT as enduringly strong and relevant. The 1999 meeting was able to take the procedural decisions necessary for the 2000 review conference, but could not come to any agreements over recommendations on substantive issues, particularly nuclear disarmament and the Middle East.

A closer look at what happened in New York reveals deep schisms between the nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states that, if not addressed more constructively very soon, could mean deadlock for the 2000 review conference. The PrepComs' central message to the nuclear-weapon states is that they cannot have a credible non-proliferation regime while maintaining their own nuclear weapons and security doctrines, which place fundamental reliance on the potential use of nuclear arms. Although most of the nuclear powers have made considerable efforts to present better information on their actions to reduce arsenals and curtail testing and production over the past decade, it is clear from their positions at the third PrepCom that nuclear-weapon states do not anticipate having to transform the role assigned to nuclear weapons in their security thinking, let alone give up the weapons themselves.

Background to the Review Process

The NPT, which now has 187 members, is justifiably regarded as the cornerstone of the regime to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. Only five of the states-parties have nuclear weapons: the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China. These five had manufactured and tested nuclear weapons by January 1, 1967, the NPT cutoff date for the definition of a "nuclear-weapon state." As part of their NPT obligations, these "declared" nuclear-weapon states promised to "pursue negotiations in good faith" on nuclear disarmament.

Of the NPT's 182 non-nuclear-weapon states, several, including various European countries and, more recently, South Africa, Brazil and Argentina, had nuclear weapon programs at one time. In acceding to the NPT as non-nuclear-weapon states, these nations have abjured the acquisition of nuclear weapons for as long as the regime remains effective or until they formally withdraw from the treaty. Regrettably, over the past decade evidence has shown two NPT parties, Iraq and North Korea, to have violated their treaty obligations by seeking to develop nuclear weapons or by failing to

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comply fully with the safeguards regime administered by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Currently, only four countries remain outside the regime: India, Israel and Pakistan—all of which possess nuclear weapons capabilities—and Cuba. In May 1998, India and Pakistan rocked the non-proliferation regime by exploding nuclear devices in defiance of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which concluded but had not yet entered into force. India went on to demand recognition as a nuclear-weapon state, appearing to equate nuclear weapon possession with political and international status and privileges, which the NPT non-nuclear-weapon states are determined to reject.

The 1995 decision by NPT member-states to extend the treaty indefinitely—in effect, making it permanent—was hard fought. The United States, together with Britain, France, Russia and their allies in Europe, pushed hard for indefinite unconditional extension, gaining the support of over 100 states. Many governments, grouped in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), wanted a shorter or conditional extension of the NPT, arguing that the treaty should not be made permanent until the nuclear-weapon states had complied properly with their obligations regarding nuclear disarmament. Fourteen Arab League countries, led by Egypt, also insisted that since their security was threatened by Israel's nuclear capabilities, the treaty should not be permanently binding on them without Israel's accession to the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state.

In the end, the decision to extend the treaty was taken without a vote (by a consensus resolution, acknowledging that a majority of votes existed to make the NPT permanent if a vote were taken), accompanied by a resolution outlining 20 "Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament," a resolution on the Middle East and a resolution on strengthening the review process. The latter resolution encourages states-parties to meet in each of three years prior to the five-year review conferences to "consider principles, objectives and ways in order to promote the full implementation of the Treaty, as well as its universality...."

The 1999 PrepCom

The third PrepCom needed to accomplish two main tasks and address several related questions. Most urgently, it needed to take the procedural decisions for organizing the 2000 review conference, including nominating a president and other officials, and finalizing the agenda, rules of procedure and background documentation. It was also expected to make recommendations to the review conference on strengthening the implementation of the treaty.

The first PrepCom had started the process of negotiating a "rolling text" of recommendations, but attempts to continue negotiations in 1998 ran into trouble and the second PrepCom was unable to adopt any working paper on the substantive issues. There were thus competing views about whether the third PrepCom should continue work on the basis of the 1997 chair's paper (the rolling text) or the rejected 1998 working paper, or start afresh and pull a new paper together.

Following proposals from Canada, South Africa, Egypt, Mexico and others at the first and second PrepComs, many wanted the third meeting to have a more thoroughgoing discussion of the purpose and objectives of the review process as a whole, including the role of the PrepComs. To assist planning for the 2000 review conference, some felt that it would help if the PrepCom could give some recommendations about what kind of documents or agreements the conference should aim to deliver.

The chair of the third PrepCom, Ambassador Camilo Reyes of Colombia, heeded the calls for a more focused discussion to clarify the aims and objectives of the review process by instigating a general debate at the beginning of the meeting. This was followed by informal sessions to discuss nuclear disarmament in general and practical terms; the fissile material cutoff negotiations now stalled at the CD; safeguards; nuclear-weapon-free zones; the 1995 resolution on the Middle East; and nuclear energy. The rest of the meeting was devoted to getting agreement on as many of the decisions and
recommendations as possible, with mixed success.

The United States had been blamed for much of the failure of the 1998 PrepCom, when it rigidly refused to countenance proposals from Egypt, Canada and South Africa on addressing the Middle East resolution and nuclear disarmament. Due to greater U.S. flexibility this year, procedural decisions for preparing for the 2000 conference were able to be finalized in good time. The United States appeared more willing to recognize the resolution on the Middle East as part of the package of decisions taken in 1995, and so agreed to the preparation of documentation on the resolution by the conference Secretariat. The United States and Russia also accepted South Africa's widely supported amendment to the rules of procedure to reflect the 1995 agreements authorizing review conferences to establish subsidiary bodies. The United States and Russia made clear, however, that they did not regard subsidiary bodies as having extra powers and that each application for establishing a subsidiary body would have to be considered on its merits.

The second important task for the PrepComs was to make recommendations to the review conference on "principles, objectives and ways" to promote full implementation of the treaty. The first PrepCom had produced a chair's paper containing some paragraphs that had been negotiated and agreed upon, and a section comprising various proposals from states-parties. The second PrepCom attempted to continue negotiations aimed at consensus language for the chair's paper, but was unable to get agreement beyond the lowest common denominator and, in the end, failed to adopt the chair's paper at all. By this time, the various paragraphs and proposals comprised over 60 pages, with much repetition and redundancy.

After the general and specific discussions and airing of national statements in New York, Reyes sought to summarize the issues that came up most frequently, including:

• The importance of the NPT and non-proliferation regime and the risks of undermining it by failing to implement the strengthened review process constructively;

• Concern about the impasse in the START process, the necessity for more effective progress on nuclear disarmament and suggestions for steps that could be undertaken, with frequent and specific mention of: the need to address and preferably remove all tactical nuclear weapons and taking nuclear weapons off alert; calls for the CD to address nuclear disarmament, even to negotiate a nuclear weapons convention; and calls on all five nuclear powers to engage in more practical negotiations;

• Condemnation of the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan a year ago;

• The importance of getting sufficient signatures and ratifications for the CTBT to enter into force;

• The bombing by NATO of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia and the effect of NATO's actions on future prospects for arms control;

• Concern about the destabilizing impact of U.S. missile defense plans;

• The importance of getting negotiations on a fissile material cutoff treaty underway;

• Security assurances;

• Universality and adherence to the NPT, especially the need to find ways to bring India, Israel and Pakistan into the regime as non-nuclear-weapon states, as well as compliance concerns involving Iraq and North Korea, and ways to prevent violations of the treaty;

• Nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in relation to the Middle East and Central Asia;

• Nuclear energy;

• Safeguards;
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- Nuclear safety and physical security; and

- Export controls.

Reyes' first draft working paper on substance (dated May 14) comprised 31 paragraphs covering eight themes: universality, non-proliferation, nuclear disarmament, nuclear-weapon-free zones, security assurances, safeguards, the resolution on the Middle East, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In ensuing discussions, during which many delegations proposed amendments or alternative wording, it was clear that some found the chair's paper too weak, while others thought it was too strong, at least on some issues. While there was substantial agreement on the less controversial paragraphs relating to nuclear energy, safety and safeguards, there were strongly voiced objections to others, especially the paragraphs on nuclear disarmament and "sharing" nuclear weapons within alliances (a practice among NATO countries that was strongly criticized by Russia, China and more than 100 non-aligned countries, many of which argued that the practice was inconsistent with NPT Articles I and II). After listening to the discussion on the paper and taking into account, but not necessarily incorporating, the various proposals, Reyes issued a second draft on May 20.

The revised draft comprised 61 paragraphs on the same eight themes. Again, Reyes sought to include proposals or arguments that had a high degree of support, leaving out ones that had significant opposition. Under pressure of time, Reyes refused to enter into line-by-line negotiations on the text. Instead, he went through the paragraphs to see if there were any objections. In the end, around half were opposed, although in a few of the other cases delegations had expressed reservations. One or another of the nuclear-weapon states had objected to practically everything under nuclear disarmament. The United States resisted almost all the references to the Middle East, even those that did not single out Israel. South Africa and others objected to security assurances being framed as an issue for the CD rather than the NPT. Iran objected to mentions of the Middle East peace process. China disliked the wording on nuclear control regimes. And Iraq objected to mention of its own non-compliance with the NPT, even with its name omitted.

At times during the final few days, it looked as if the third PrepCom would also fail. There was talk of calling for a fourth PrepCom or suspending the third meeting and reconvening some months later. Such an outcome would have been messy, inconvenient and ultimately expensive, but the threat helped to focus attention on solution-building and compromise. Egypt nevertheless kept insisting that nothing could be agreed unless everything was agreed, causing anxiety that even the procedural decisions would be blocked if Egypt was not satisfied with the decisions on substance and what it was getting on the Middle East resolution.

After negotiations and much huddling in small groups on the last day, a proposal from Ireland and New Zealand offered a compromise for how to deal with the recommendations contained—but not fully agreed to—in the chair's paper. The final PrepCom report, enshrining all the procedural decisions, would describe the debates on substance and annex the two working papers (from May 14 and May 20), plus all the amendments that had been proposed to the first draft. This compromise enabled some delegations, such as the United States, Russia and France, to claim that the chair's papers have no more standing than other non-agreed proposals. Since the papers were substantially discussed and referred to in the PrepCom report, other delegations argued that they reflect the major issues that will have to be confronted before and during the 2000 review conference and must consequently be given serious attention.

Objectives for 2000

Participants at the New York PrepCom had been encouraged to put forward their views about what the objectives and outcome of the review process should be and to identify what kind of documents or agreements they sought from the 2000 conference ("products" in diplomatic parlance). It emerged that the majority thought the review conference should produce at least two kinds of agreements: one looking forward and providing a yardstick for measuring future progress, along the lines of the "principles and objectives" document adopted in 1995, which had given a target date to
complete the CTBT, for example; and another to review and assess progress over the past five years, similar to the “final document” of past review conferences. Divisions over how to characterize progress on nuclear disarmament had prevented agreement on such a document in 1995, as it had in 1980 and 1990.

Canada had additionally argued that the review conference should consider the functioning of the review process itself and might therefore need to consider a third document on “the further enhancement” of the strengthened review process. In 1998 and again in 1999, though without insisting on a decision this year, Canada had proposed that the PrepComs themselves should have an independent, substantive role, which could include issuing statements on contemporaneous events relevant to the NPT, such as START or nuclear testing. Similarly, if the review conferences were to replace the clustering of issues into the conferences’ three main committees with an article-by-article review, the change in approach might need to be reinforced with additional decisions.

France and Iran wanted the review conference to go back to its previous pattern of negotiating and concluding only one document. Both agreed that this should contain both forward-looking and backward-looking aspects, in conformity with the 1995 decisions, but they had diametrically different reasons for preferring the review conference to have to negotiate a single set of agreements. By taking a position strongly opposed by a majority of European Union (EU) states, which favored separate documents, including a negotiated principles and objectives for 2000, France prevented a common EU position from being put forward. To the annoyance of Germany, which holds the EU presidency at present, France argued for a return to the pattern followed since 1985, with three reports generated by the main committees (nuclear disarmament, safeguards and nuclear energy), each looking both forward and backward. France also suggested there could be a common "chapeau" or synthesising document or introduction prepared by the conference chair, which might incorporate recommendations of some kind. France clearly did not want a further set of principles and objectives to be taken forward.

There was some speculation that France saw reverting to one document in 2000 as a way to return to pre-1995 patterns and expectations. France certainly wants to ensure that the progress made since 1995 is properly recorded and appreciated. Like the United States in 1998 and again in 1999, France, Britain and Russia this year presented the PrepCom with factsheets or brochures setting out their achievements in nuclear reductions and disarmament.

In a glossy brochure produced especially for the occasion, France proudly announced how it had ended nuclear testing and the production of fissile materials for weapons, and was now the first nuclear power to close and dismantle its test sites in the Pacific and its facilities at Marcoule and Pierrelatte for producing military plutonium and highly enriched uranium. During the 1990s, France withdrew all but two of its nuclear weapon systems, scaling down to four submarines (Triomphant-class ballistic missile submarines) and Super Étendard strike aircraft and, like the other nuclear states, has detargeted its weapons (although they can be retargeted in minutes).

In undertaking these steps, however, Paris may have gone as far as it is prepared to go. A new set of principles and objectives with a program of action as a yardstick for measuring progress after 2000 may therefore be the last thing France wants. It may be the last thing any of the nuclear powers want, but the others may not yet feel as exposed as France. The United States and Russia are still committed to further reductions, if they can overcome the obstacles to the START process, and Britain is more positive than France about further opportunities for transparency and confidence-building among the nuclear powers. China is habitually silent on such questions, letting others argue them out.

Iran contended that the review and program of action should be combined into a single document so that the review conference would have to stand or fall by whether it could reach agreement. Others, including Mexico and Egypt, shifted toward the Iranian position that a single document would provide greater leverage on the nuclear-weapon states. Iran's argument was based on the premise that the weapon states would not want to risk a total failure in 2000; two or more documents would allow them to pick and choose what they agreed to. They might present adoption of one document as a conference success even if others failed. Iran also seemed to want to avoid having dual-track negotiations, such as occurred in 2000, when the decisions on strengthening the review process
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were negotiated among about 25 key delegations under the chair’s auspices, while the rest pursued the review negotiations in the main committees. At that time, most considered the chair’s consultations to be the major game, relegating the committee work to secondary status. Some advocates of one document want to avoid institutionalizing a process of conducting the principal negotiations among a select group of states, and fear that this would happen if parallel negotiating tracks were set up. Mexico also argued that any objectives or forward-looking measures should arise from a thorough review and analysis of the treaty’s implementation to date, and could not therefore be separated out.

Agreement on recommendations on the products or outcome of the 2000 review conference slipped further away as the PrepCom progressed, so Reyes settled for consensus on a document that hedged the options and merely reinforced the 1995 decisions, in all their ambiguity. Once again, Egypt achieved a mention of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, together with the decisions on principles and objectives and strengthening the review process, reinforcing their validity as a package. South Africa, which will chair the 2000 conference, was disappointed that a more specific recommendation for two primary documents had not been made, as its delegation believed such a decision would have assisted its planning and structuring in 2000. In view of the strong opposition to two documents from France and the growing number of non-aligned states latching onto Iran’s position, the best that the third PrepCom could do was to air the options and arguments. By holding consultations over the next year, South Africa may be able to get agreement before the 2000 conference. If not, it will have to start with a flexible approach and steer the conference into making the required decisions, deciding as the review progresses whether to aim for one, two or more documents.

The Nuclear-Weapon States

The United States led the way in 1997 in providing more detailed information on what it was doing to control, reduce and dismantle nuclear weapons and deal with the weapons materials. The U.S. delegation provided a further factsheet to the third PrepCom, entitled "The U.S. Commitment to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons." Quoting statements by President Bill Clinton regarding the goal of nuclear disarmament, the factsheet outlined U.S. efforts in reducing strategic and tactical nuclear weapons and reducing the roles and risks associated with nuclear weapons, and presented its case on the CTBT, cessation of plutonium production and the disposition of fissile materials. Information was included on other initiatives, including U.S. efforts on the physical protection of nuclear material and U.S. support for strengthened IAEA safeguards.

However, a group of U.S.-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) challenged the factsheet’s claims. They provided information on nuclear weapon modernization programs and juxtaposed the statements of presidential commitment to "the ultimate goal" of nuclear disarmament with Presidential Decision Directive 60 and recent documents from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which affirm that the United States will continue to rely on nuclear arms as a cornerstone of its national security for the indefinite future, with provision for the use of nuclear weapons against chemical and biological threats. The NGOs also noted that the CTBT has yet to be ratified by the United States, and that the U.S. stockpile stewardship program was intended to compensate for the test ban by providing design capabilities greater than those available during the Cold War, thereby circumventing a primary objective of the nuclear test ban treaty.

Under pressure from the United States, Russia also provided more detail on its efforts to implement the CTBT, but noted that the government’s attempts to persuade the Duma to ratify START II had been severely hampered by the actions of NATO and the United States, including NATO expansion, the continued siting of U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe under NATO nuclear-sharing arrangements, and the alliance’s actions in bombing Yugoslavia. Russia also criticized U.S. determination to push ahead with missile defense programs and its cavalier attitude toward the ABM Treaty and other bilateral agreements and understandings.

Britain, having concluded its strategic defense review shortly after the second PrepCom in 1998, was
also keen to publicize the actions it has taken since 1995. Its delegation offered an information pack describing the decisions and policy underpinnings of the strategic defense review and recent policy statements from the secretary of state for defense, George Robertson. France, as discussed above, for the first time issued a glossy brochure with charts and figures. Only China did not heed U.S. exhortations for the nuclear-weapon states to pay more attention to public relations and the necessity of presenting their actions and reductions more effectively.

Following the bombing of its embassy in Yugoslavia, China’s delegation refused to participate in meetings with the other nuclear powers aimed at negotiating a collective statement to make to the PrepCom, as had been done in 1997 and 1998. Though these statements went barely further than rhetoric, they were regarded by some as symbolically important. In particular, the United States and Britain had hoped to persuade the other nuclear powers to pledge further efforts in transparency, something that China is particularly reluctant to offer. Beijing claims that the small size of its nuclear arsenal would make transparency too risky, increasing its vulnerability vis-à-vis the other nuclear powers or potential aggressors.

China’s main approach was to argue that its doctrine of no-first use, rejection of deterrence concepts, and restraint in the buildup of its arsenal over the years was proof of its commitment to the NPT. Other than that, China gave no information on its nuclear forces or any measures it had undertaken since 1995. Several of China’s interventions castigated “US-led NATO’s...gunboat policies” and attempts to gain international hegemony. China considered that the use of force in international relations and recent events, such as the bombing of Yugoslavia, were not conducive to international security and stability and jeopardized efforts to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Much of China’s policy approach had been laid out before the PrepCom in the speech by President Jiang Zemin to the CD in March. Though his statement covered the range of disarmament-related topics, it particularly raised concerns about programs for anti-missile systems and the weaponization of space, condemning the "research, development, deployment and proliferation of sophisticated anti-missile system[s]" and any attempts to revise or withdraw from the ABM Treaty, "on which global strategic equilibrium hinges." China is known to be concerned not only about U.S. plans, but about the likelihood of Japan and possibly Taiwan being assisted to develop national missile defense programs. Raising fears of "a new round of arms race in new areas," Jiang argued that the international community "should pay close attention to this and adopt the necessary measures to pre-empt such dangerous developments." Jiang had also emphasized that the indefinite extension of the NPT "has by no means given nuclear-weapon states the prerogative to permanently retain their nuclear weapons." He reiterated China’s long-held position on security assurances and no-first-use, and advocated negotiations on a "convention on the comprehensive ban of nuclear weapons." These positions were all emphasized during the PrepCom.

The third PrepCom revealed fundamental schisms in how the nuclear powers and a growing group of non-nuclear-weapon states want nuclear disarmament to be addressed in the context of the NPT. Apart from their stated commitments to the CTBT (which the United States, Russia and China have yet to ratify) and to negotiating a ban on fissile material production at the CD, the nuclear-weapon states said little about further concrete steps they would be prepared to take or about how to move beyond the impasse in the START process. Almost echoing China’s points about conditions not being "conducive" to good progress, the United States commented that "external realities" such as "domestic and international policy factors, the global security environment, and...financial resources" were related to the process of arms control and disarmament.

The Non-Nuclear-Weapon States

During the New York meeting, a newly established grouping of states, spanning the traditional Cold War-era East/West/non-aligned blocs, emerged to play an important role at the third PrepCom. The New Agenda Coalition (NAC), originally formed in June 1998 by the foreign ministers of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Slovenia, South Africa and Sweden, combined hard-hitting calls for
nuclear disarmament with a more pragmatic strategic approach. The NAC presented a joint statement by 32 delegations that echoed the ideas from its resolution (53/77Y) to the UN General Assembly, which had garnered 114 votes in December 1998. The statement was followed up with a working paper cosponsored by 44 states.

After reviewing the arms control landscape, including the START process, the CTBT, nuclear testing in South Asia, failure to make progress on negotiating a fissile materials ban and security assurances, the NAC statement concluded that "the pace of efforts to implement all the obligations of the NPT is faltering." Concerned that the weapon states were reaffirming their nuclear doctrines and re-rationalizing the continued possession of nuclear weapons, the NAC accused them of not fulfilling their obligations with sufficient vigor and emphasized that "we must not enter the next millennium with the prospect that the retention of these weapons will be considered legitimate for the indefinite future."

The coalition called for mutually reinforcing bilateral, plurilateral (among the declared nuclear-weapon states) and multilateral efforts to be pursued in concert, including greater progress on deeper cuts and steps to de-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons in security strategies, including de-alerting and de-mating warheads from delivery vehicles and reducing reliance on non-strategic nuclear weapons, as well as transparency and confidence-building measures. Critical of NATO's recent affirmation of the central role played by nuclear weapons in the alliance's new "strategic concept," the NAC also called for "the early examination of measures to enhance strategic stability and to review strategic doctrines."

While not joining the NAC, Japan and Canada also proposed more far-reaching programs to accelerate progress on nuclear disarmament. Japan warned that unless the tasks of nuclear disarmament were "thoroughly addressed, the NPT could lose its credibility," with grave consequences. After emphasizing the importance of the START process, the CTBT and the CD's cutoff talks, Japan and Canada both called for direct engagement in disarmament talks by all five nuclear-weapon states "in the near future." Like many, Japan and Canada also underscored the importance of practical measures such as de-alerting and de-targeting, as well as assistance in dismantling nuclear weapons and managing and disposing of the resultant fissile materials.

Canada was also among a diverse group, including the NAC, Finland, Switzerland, Nigeria and the Kyrgyz Republic, to raise the problems of tactical nuclear weapons. Concerned that the role of non-strategic nuclear weapons could increase in importance again, these delegations advocated measures ranging from greater transparency and confidence-building to reductions and even elimination, preferably with verification arrangements. Russia, which has in recent months indicated a growing reliance on tactical nuclear weapons, hinting at the possibility of redeploying some weapon systems in Belarus with the consent of the Belarusan government. Referring to the 1991 Bush-Gorbachev initiative, Gregori Berdennikov nevertheless said Russia supported the implementation of "declared unilateral initiatives" on tactical nuclear weapons. China and Russia both supported calls for the U.S. tactical nuclear weapons currently stationed in seven NATO countries be withdrawn back to U.S. territory.

Meaning to deflate the NAC, Norman A. Wulf, head of the U.S. delegation to the third PrepCom, dismissed those "trying to identify a new agenda" for disarmament and said that "we have an existing agenda that remains to be completed." While many agreed that much more work needed to be done to fulfill the START process and commitments to negotiate a fissile materials production ban, calls for further measures came from across the board. The nuclear-weapon states may have found it easy to dismiss the familiar NAM proposals at the CD to negotiate a timetable for nuclear disarmament, but they found the more pragmatic arguments at the PrepCom more challenging.

A Final Assessment

If measured by the limited criteria of preparing the procedural decisions for the 2000 NPT review conference, the third PrepCom was successful. Having held bilateral meetings with Egypt through

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much of the year, the United States showed itself much more prepared to seek compromise solutions. It allowed the Middle East resolution, which calls for full adherence to the NPT by all countries in the region, to be linked several times with the decisions taken in 1995, and agreed to have the UN secretariat prepare a factual document on the resolution as part of the background documentation for the 2000 conference. The United States was even prepared to have Israel named in calls for universality, together with India, Pakistan and Cuba, but would not let Israel be singled out in relation to the Middle East. The Egyptian delegation, which for a while appeared divided on whether to block adoption of the report and decisions if it did not get its way on centralizing the resolution on the Middle East and paving the way for further work in 2000 and beyond, also compromised at the end rather than jeopardize the agreements already obtained.

Nevertheless, even with a more constructive government now elected in Israel, the problems caused by that country's acquisition of nuclear weapons and U.S. attempts to shield it from censure will not go away. Though the United States may consider that the greater attention paid to the nuclear tests and ambitions of India and Pakistan can be used to distract attention from Israel, the reverse is likely to be true. A growing number of NPT parties want to find ways to exert more intense pressure on all three de facto nuclear-weapon states remaining outside the treaty. Though Egypt will continue to lead the Arab states in trying to use the NPT to highlight and condemn Israel's nuclear policies, the United States is probably correct in its present assumption that wider security calculations would prevent Egypt from threatening the credibility of the treaty altogether or withdrawing. It would be dangerously complacent, however, to assume that such calculations will last indefinitely.

The PrepCom was never only about procedural preparations, though planning for the next review conference was an important function. If placed against wider aspirations, the PrepCom largely failed to decide on any of the substantive, politically controversial questions with which it was faced. All the important proposals were shunted off for the states-parties to deal with at the 2000 review conference. Some might argue that this was inevitable, given that the review process, as set up in 1995, appears to leave all decision-making to the review conferences. The PrepComs were, however, assigned a more substantive role, and it was not expected that this would amount to a series of national monologues and endless negotiations over the wording on paragraphs destined only for the next meeting to consider, along with its own deliberations.

While it must be acknowledged that the PrepCom was taking place in difficult political circumstances, overshadowed by the war over Kosovo, the United States and China were right to relate the prospects for constructive arms control to political and international conditions. The policies of both, however, are contributing to the dismal forecasts. Russia's renewed assertion of the efficacy of nuclear weapons as a guarantee of security and political weight may be understandable, but is incompatible with nuclear non-proliferation and further progress on nuclear disarmament. Britain and France may have rationalized their nuclear forces at significantly lower levels over the past decade, but they will not be able to ignore the growing calls for them to engage in collective endeavors to facilitate qualitative as well as quantitative nuclear disarmament in the future. India's more public nuclear ambitions have exposed weaknesses in the way in which the non-proliferation regime had sought to turn a blind eye toward the capabilities of those outside the treaty. The division between the "declared" nuclear-weapon states and India, Israel and Pakistan is not as sharp as some would like. The regime needs to find more credible ways to address and contain the nuclear threats and risks posed by those outside the treaty, in the Middle East as well as South Asia. Double standards will undermine the regime, now more than ever. For such an approach to be effective it will need to be combined with an overall delegitimization and rejection of nuclear weapons.

Discussions over some of the paragraphs in the chair's working papers indicate the major issues likely to arise in 2000 and should serve as a warning of where pressure will come. In particular, something urgently needs to be done to bridge the fundamental differences between the approach of the weapon states, which see their obligations primarily in terms of presenting better information on their activities, and the majority of non-nuclear-weapon states, which will go to the 2000 review determined to get agreement on a more concrete program of action on nuclear disarmament, probably including de-alerting, restrictions on modernization and constraints or withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons.

Spurred on by the New Agenda Coalition, even if they do not join it, the non-nuclear-weapon states
are likely to be better organized in 2000 than they were in 1995. Unless the weapon states—and the United States in particular—recognize that their nuclear policies contradict their non-proliferation objectives, the NPT is in for a very rocky ride. If some states expect to retain significant nuclear arsenals and cling to security policies that continue to fuel other states' nuclear ambitions, the 2000 review conference is likely to be the arena for a large and messy clash of expectations, with a very high risk of deadlock and failure.

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