Strengthening and Renewing the Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty to Promote Global Nuclear Disarmament

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Introduction

In the 21st century, nuclear weaponization has become a prevalent issue feared throughout the world. Nations are disturbed by countries involved in the elevating nuclear arms race, which poses an immense threat to the global community. Therefore, an international agreement, Non-Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT), was created to limit the spread of nuclear weapons and promote a peaceful application of atomic energy in 1970. According to the United Nations (UN), among the 191 signatory states, there are five recognized nuclear-weapon states (NWS) including China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US. The rest are termed as non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS). In order to reach the nuclear disarmament goal, the NNWS has agreed to establish the safeguards system under the responsibility of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and restrain from further development or acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Although the overall nuclear arsenal has declined from 60 years ago, the non-signatory states who contains nuclear weapons still abstain from signing the treaty, resulting in ambiguity in carrying out security measurements associated with nuclear arms and failure in controlling terrorist organizations, nuclear black markets, and non-member nations of the NPT Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea who withdrew from the treaty in 2003, January 10th. Hence, strengthening and renewing the NPT is a step of paramount importance in order to promote global nuclear disarmament and prevent states from violating articles mentioned in the treaty. For instance, the situation in Iran is currently being scrutinized for the lack of trust in its peaceful application of nuclear energy which is a direct breach of the international agreement. Moreover, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the NWS inclined to maintain their nuclear power indefinitely. Therefore, although the NPT is one of the influential treaties in nuclear weaponization, it must be further fortified to strengthen its effectiveness.
Background

Since 1945, after the atomic bombs were detonated above Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nuclear weapons proliferation became an ominous threat to international security. Thus, in order to prevent the diversion of nuclear potential for weapon purposes, states initiated the discussions on creating an international system that allows nuclear technology to be accessible to all nations under appropriate safeguards. However, due to political differences between the most powerful states, the discussions failed to come to action in 1949. Several years later, in 1953, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed "Atoms for Peace" to the eighth session of the UN General Assembly, which resulted in the establishment of the IAEA in 1957 meant to be responsible for control and promotion of nuclear technology. The IAEA safeguard system has continuously been revised and strengthened to reach climax in effectiveness in 1997 with the approval of the Model Additional Protocol. Finally, in 1968, the final agreement for the formation of the international non-proliferation treaty was reached and enabled the cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear technology by states signing the agreement.

During the review and extension conference in 1995, the treaty was agreed upon extending indefinitely through continuing the review conferences every five years. During review conferences, the nations discuss such issues as the universality of the treaty, the effectiveness of the review process, measures to develop peaceful applications of nuclear technology, and solutions to nations' withdrawal from the treaty. It's known that the states got into consensus regarding the effectiveness of the conference and treaty; nevertheless, the parties couldn't agree upon every substantive outcome document, including the final document from the review conference in 2015 which signals the significance to strengthen further and renew the system of NPT. The main obstacle that led to the failure of the final consensus towards the documents was due to the lack of disarmament progress of 5 NWS and attainment of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East (WMDFZME) to name a few. Furthermore, continuous nuclear proliferation in Iran and DPRK which can't be controlled by IAEA entirely poses another barrier towards the unilateral agreement. Hence, it's significant to further strengthen and renew the IAEA safeguard system and the NPT itself during the NPT Review Conference in 2020 in order to promote complete nuclear disarmament and peaceful use of nuclear technology.

International Actions

The Success of the 2010 NPT Review Conference

After countries agreed to collaborate on the strengthening the NPT, the most noticeable and successful conference that led to the consensus of the final document action plan took place in the 2010 NPT Review Conference on May 28th. The success of the 2010 review conference was even more important since the 2005 NPT Review Conference failed to reach a consensus. The Conference succeeded in restating the importance of the NPT in the pursuit of international security,
reiterating the obligations made by all members to reinforce the treaty at the 1995 and 2000 Review Conferences, and agreeing on a future plan of actions based on strengthening IAEA safeguard system and disarmament plans such as bringing India and Pakistan into the process of reducing the risk of nuclear weapons possession. The final document was constituent of conclusions and recommendations for 64 follow actions, such as the implementation of the 1995 Resolution in the Middle East. The actions agreed upon would support the three pillars of the NPT, including non-proliferation, disarmament, and peaceful applications of nuclear energy, which could provide measurable accountability at the next review conferences. Despite these successes made during the conference, the final document does not renew the nonproliferation pillar of the treaty, such as bringing Iran and North Korea into compliance, guarding against treaty withdrawal from the NPT, and preventing illegal nuclear trade. Therefore, though the 2010 review conference did gain some significant achievements, there is still room to improve the NPT areas in future review conferences.

**IAEA Achievement in case of India**

The IAEA safeguard system mainly serves to prevent the diversion of fissile materials into weapons and addresses the undeclared nuclear actions which can be detected during regular inspections of civil nuclear facilities and transportation of nuclear materials within them. One of the most noticeable achievement made by the IAEA was preventing India, a country with an active nuclear program, from further nuclear proliferation via excluding India from world trade led by Nuclear Supplier’s Group. After isolating India from nuclear international trade, in 2008, India finally agreed to accept the IAEA safeguard agreement in some of its reactor plus the Additional Protocol. Though India is still not part of the NPT, the agreement is similar to those between the IAEA and NNWS which restricted India from nuclear military proliferation. This treaty allowed India to regain the right to engage in nuclear trade in September 2008. Therefore, IAEA has played a significant role in bringing India under to control of IAEA safeguard system.

**Places of High Concern**

**Iran**

Iran is a member of the NPT from the beginning, and it agreed to the comprehensive safeguard compliance with the IAEA in 1974 as well as signed the Additional Protocol in 2003. However, Iran seems to commit a violation of the safety guidelines within the NPT. According to the IAEA, in 2003, Iran was suspected of potential misuse of the assembled nuclear reactor in the western city of Arak. IAEA inspectors found traces of enriched uranium from the centrifuges transported from Pakistan, which Iran denied having tested with uranium. In order to limit Iran’s nuclear program, there was a historic nuclear deal made on July 14, 2015, that enhanced monitoring in exchange for relief from UN, regional, and national nuclear sanctions settled by the P5 +1 and Iran. But there have been continuous accusations, particularly between the US and Iran, concerning the claim made by Iran to intend to use the nuclear reactor "peacefully." Due to the consequences of the UN security council actions against Iran’s NPT breaches and failures, there is a threat of Iran’s withdrawal from the NPT to become a non-signatory state. It's still a central debate on how to deal with Iran's nuclear development program.
DPRK

The NPT has posed a challenge to stop the nuclear proliferation of DPRK, a non-signatory state since 2003. After the declaration from the DPRK government regarding the possession of nuclear weapons in February 2005, North Korea conducted nuclear tests in 2006, 2009, and 2013 which disclosed their nuclear capabilities and threatened international security. Moreover, although the closed nature of the DPRK makes the information unclear, DPRK was known to already possess the centrifuged facility able to produce highly enriched uranium for weapons in 2010. Then in August 2013, DPRK, the Yongbyon heavy-water reactor, was restarted to extract plutonium, which known to be used for nuclear warheads. In order to negotiate the end to DPRK’s nuclear weapons and missile development program as well as export of ballistic missile technology, a number of diplomatic actions was initiated by the US and the global community such as the six-party talks, military cooperation with US allies, wide-ranging sanctions, and export controls as a part of the non-proliferation pillar of the NPT. However, these actions have continuously been ineffective. Lastly, the control of DPRK's nuclear development program and their compliance with the NPT and safeguards obligation has been the primary agenda which has not yet been resolved; hence, it poses a great threat to global security.

The Stance of the P5 Nations

United States of America

Known as one of the NWS, the USA has been proving to support the NPT unconditionally. The USA is determined to work together with the member states to reach the final nuclear disarmament goal. The US provides the ground for negotiations: organizing conferences in their own states and using their full determination to resolve the existing challenges. Particularly, the successes achieved in the 2010 Review Conference were possible due to the diplomatic leadership of President Obama and his team stemmed from the shift in US nuclear weapons policy. During the 65th Session of the UN General Assembly Address, Barak Obama stated, "The United States and the international community seek a resolution to our differences with Iran, and the door remains open to diplomacy should Iran choose to walk through it. But the Iranian government must demonstrate a clear and credible commitment and confirm to the world the peaceful intent of its nuclear program."

United Kingdom

UK is also known as one of the NWS that has remained committed to the NPT. During the UN 2015 Review Conference of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Baroness Anelay, Minister of State at the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said, "We
look to this Review Conference to build on the success of the 2010 Action Plan and strengthen the Treaty further... the United Kingdom remains firmly committed to step-by-step disarmament, and our obligations under Article Six." This statement was proven when the UK announced its reduction of warheads on each of ballistic missile submarines from 48 to 40 and operational missiles to 8. UK has expressed concerns toward DPRK's ongoing nuclear activities and Syria's failure to return back to compliance nation with the NPT. The UK government also supports the 1995 resolution on the goal of making the Middle East a weapons-free zone.

**France**

France is one of the NWS and international export control regimes. By January 2013, France had successfully decreased the number of nuclear weapons to around 290 warheads after French President Sarkozy had declared the reduction of a nuclear arsenal in 2008. Although France exports nuclear expertise and facilities, they claim to limit the proliferation of hazardous materials and nuclear technologies via its membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the Zangger Committee (ZAC).

**China**

Though China is also one of the NWS, it has limited open-source information. It is known that they have currently around 280 nuclear warheads. Despite the fact that China does promote nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT, ironically, China is the only NWS where they increase the size of the nuclear weapons. On a larger scale, China is failing to promote the nuclear non-proliferation by denying signing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

**Russian Federation**

Russia is one of the NWS that contains around 7000 warheads in the total inventory. Russia has also remained committed to NPT and pursued global nuclear disarmament under Article VI of the NPT. Under the New Start treaty that formed in 2011 February 5th, both USA and Russia have agreed on reducing their deployed strategic warheads to less than 1550 each and their heavy bombers, Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), and Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) to less than 700 by 2018. However, Russia is not ready to take action on decreasing the number of nuclear weapons and is not willing to negotiate further non-strategic arms reductions. Similar to China, Russia is against the initiative of an open-ended working group (OEWG), which is adopted by the 67th UN General Assembly for having multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations to reach global nuclear non-proliferation.

**Possible Solutions**

As there are many aspects of this problem, many solutions can be proposed. Among the many problems that exist within this issue, the three of the most acute possible solutions are the following:

1. In order to strengthen the NPT to reach nuclear disarmament, the IAEA should make efforts to gain Additional Protocol ratification, a powerful verification tool that gives IAEA broader access to information about state's nuclear fuel cycle, and the universal
adherence to its main goal of eliminating weapons rather than proliferating them. Therefore, they should revise the inadequate steps in the action plan by fixing the non-voluntary signing of the Additional Protocol to a mandatory signing for every nation around the world.

2. Additionally, another way to strengthen the NPT is to focus more on limiting the spread of reprocessing and enrichment nuclear technologies, which can prevent further nuclear proliferation. Recently, states in the Middle East and Northeast Asia are spreading the enrichment and reprocessing technologies although they are not an NWS. Hence, the IAEA Board of Governors should cooperate with the Nuclear Suppliers Group and UN Security Council to further develop the multilateral fuel cycle initiatives, which will ensure that the nuclear fuel is supplied to countries for civilian purposes and provide back-up fuel supplies in case a state loses access to foreign suppliers. The organizations should reinforce the security process and establish specific guidelines for the enrichment and reprocessing technologies.

3. Last but not least, the NPT can be renewed and strengthened by strongly encouraging the NWS to declare their military fissile material stocks in total. Though the action plan encourages the states to reveal all fissile material stocks and place them under IAEA safeguards, it does not seem to apply to the NWS, which is continuously an obstacle for the world to reach global nuclear disarmament. Therefore, the UN should make NWS show transparency and place all its fissile material stocks under IAEA safeguards as well as convert fissile material production facilities, if necessary.

Glossary

Nuclear Weaponization: the act of producing and localizing nuclear weapons.

Nuclear Disarmament: the process of eliminating or reducing the number of nuclear weapons.

Model Additional Protocol: a legal document designed for all states that have concluded any of the three types of safeguards agreement with the IAEA.

Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs): a guided ballistic missile with a minimum range of 5,500 kilometers (3,400 mi) primarily designed for nuclear weapons delivery.

Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs): ballistic missile capable of being launched from submarines.

Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG): a group of nations that control the transfer of nuclear energy established in 1974. The main purpose of this group is to encourage the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons by strengthening safety and other standards.

Timeline
1945- The atomic bombs were detonated above Hiroshima and Nagasaki; thus, states initiated the discussions on creating an international system that allows nuclear technology to be accessible to all nations under appropriate safeguards.

1947- due to the political differences between the USA and the Soviet Union, the discussions failed to come to an action.

1953- the US President Dwight D. Eisenhower proposed "Atoms for Peace" to the eighth session of the UN General Assembly.

1957- the IAEA meant to be responsible for the control and promotion of nuclear technology was established.

1958 – Ireland proposes the first resolution to the UN to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

1961- the UN General Assembly unanimously approves Resolution 1665 (the idea from this Resolution formed the basis of the NPT).

1968- the UN General Assembly adopts Resolution 2373, a draft text of NPT. The final agreement for the formation of the international non-proliferation treaty was reached that enabled the cooperation on the peaceful use of nuclear technology by states signing the agreement.

Sources


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