FORGING UK-CHINA CONSENSUS ON A STRENGTHENED NPT REGIME

Edited by Andrea Berger and Malcolm Chalmers

OCCASIONAL PAPER
Forging UK-China Consensus on a Strengthened NPT Regime

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The views expressed in this paper are the authors’ own, and do not necessarily reflect those of RUSI or any other institutions with which the authors are associated.

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Introduction

Andrea Berger and Malcolm Chalmers

The 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference breathed fresh enthusiasm into collective efforts to strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Member states attending the conference were motivated by the memory of the 2005 conference, which failed to produce a final consensus document. This climate of concern fostered a broader desire to reinvigorate international efforts to buttress the three pillars of the NPT. With added impetus from a US administration committed to advancing the disarmament agenda, the Review Conference tackled many of the complex and controversial issues which had plagued discussion in 2005.

The 190 member states attending the Conference were able to establish unanimity on a final document. This included an ambitious action plan for both Nuclear Weapons States and Non-Nuclear Weapons States. At the 2014 Preparatory Committee meeting, states will expect to see meaningful progress by Nuclear Weapon States against the commitments outlined in the action plan, particularly those relating to disarmament. Should Non-Nuclear Weapon States perceive little movement, they may prove increasingly resistant to implementing stronger non-proliferation measures, including more comprehensive IAEA safeguards agreements as favoured in the final 2010 document.

The inter-Review Conference period is therefore critical for the non-proliferation regime as an opportunity to address areas of continued disagreement that were highlighted in the Conference. Productive P5 discussions will be an enabler for broader efforts to address the persistent and evolving threats that the NPT regime faces. Thousands of deployed nuclear weapons – many on high alert – continue to be central to the security policies of Nuclear Weapon States. Tensions over Iran continue to mount and spark fresh debates over the normative challenges of nuclear latency and the need for co-ordinated responses to non-compliance. There is a general conviction that the IAEA’s capabilities to detect non-compliance must be bolstered. The practicalities of doing so, however, are difficult; existing frameworks, including the Additional Protocol and even Comprehensive Safeguards Agreements, have seen globally asymmetric implementation. Iran itself was never mentioned in the 2010 NPT Review Conference final document – reflecting the notable disagreement that remains on this issue. Outside of the NPT, several nuclear-armed states continue to expand their arsenals and stockpiles of fissile material. This has perpetuated distrust and insecurity in key regions, and has made implementation of an FMCT an international priority.
Harnessing the momentum of 2010, the coming three years are an opportunity for Nuclear Weapon States to take strides towards meeting their action plan commitments individually and collectively. This will be a particular test for the UK and China, whose relationship on nuclear issues – though productive and growing – has been marred by areas of notable disagreement. Advancing understanding and agreement where it exists, while purposefully confronting areas of contention, is an exercise Beijing and London must undertake in the run-up to 2015.

The Project
It was therefore particularly gratifying, and in line with previous dialogue on the most pressing nuclear issues organised by RUSI, to confirm that important opportunities for UK-China co-operation do exist, and that Track-Two discussions can play a useful role in identifying where these lie. Preliminary meetings in Beijing in September 2011 highlighted issues which, though seen from different perspectives, might nevertheless be fruitful areas to explore how the UK and China might deepen existing areas of agreement.

On the basis of these discussions, RUSI then gathered three British and three Chinese experts for a workshop in London in January 2012. Issues highlighted during our preliminary visit to Beijing were grouped into three broad themes for discussion (prospects for nuclear stability amongst nuclear-armed states, potential for co-operative approaches to arms control and disarmament, and the future of non-proliferation regimes and norms), and each was assigned to one author from both the UK and China. At the outset of the workshop, the author pairs were asked to present short individual papers highlighting their national perspectives on the outlined topic. Each pair then took feedback and further refined their points in dialogue with each other. This was done with a view to eventually producing a jointly authored article highlighting areas of convergence and prospects for future UK-China collaboration.

On the first topic, Shi Yongming (China Institute of International Studies) and Professor Malcolm Chalmers (RUSI) were asked to assess the prospects for nuclear stability amongst existing nuclear-armed states. Included within this were considerations of the interplay between the conditions for nuclear stability on the one hand, and developments in missile defence, tactical nuclear weapons, and conventional forces on the other. Analysis of these issues provides a necessary starting point for the discussion of possible areas of common understanding ahead of the 2015 Review Conference.

Secondly, Guo Xiaobing (Institute of Security and Arms Control Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations) and Dr Nick Ritchie (University of York) sought to identify areas where the UK and China agree in their approach to nuclear arms control and disarmament. Under this umbrella fell discussions of the minimum deterrence postures championed
by both the UK and China. Can these postures act as a model for other nuclear-armed states, and how can the two countries support progress on arms control and disarmament at the P5 level and beyond?

Finally, Professor Shen Dingli (Fudan University) and Paul Schulte (Carnegie Europe) explored the potential to strengthen regimes and norms focused on nuclear non-proliferation. As Nuclear Weapons States within the NPT, the UK and China are key to international initiatives in this area. Their joint paper considered what mechanisms might best be used to address non-compliance, encourage NPT universality, and reinforce mechanisms such as the UN Security Council and IAEA.

Each of these three topics posed an important challenge for author pairs. Past Review Conferences have shown that while our governments concur on many aspects of these questions, total convergence remains elusive. Our own expert dialogue, held over two days in London, demonstrated that existing parameters of agreement and disagreement between the UK and China are pliable. With every session, day, and subsequent exchange of frank e-mails and draft papers, came improved understanding of one another’s positions and a corresponding willingness to explore areas in which UK-China collaboration might be possible.

This process offered encouraging signs that the spirit of the 2010 commitments still flourishes in dialogue between the China and the UK. Common approaches to the challenges that face the NPT in the inter-Review Conference period can be found at the Track-Two level. The papers that follow substantiate this fact.

**Key Themes**

Several key themes and recommendations for joint action were raised over the course of the London workshop and are captured in this report.

**P5 Stability**

The Nuclear Weapon States enjoy broad strategic stability. Though not without their areas of tension and distrust, generally stable relations between the P5 are highlighted in all three papers as an important basis for potential co-operation. Nuclear-armed states outside of the NPT pose a greater challenge to strategic stability. Rapid changes in nuclear posture and force developments within these countries could prompt divisions in P5 opinion on important non-proliferation and counter-proliferation issues, eroding trust among the Nuclear Weapon States in the process. Developments in ballistic missile defence – perceived by Russia and China as potentially threatening to their retaliatory capability and to the international strategic balance – could have comparable effects.
Minimum Deterrence
The UK and China view themselves as ‘reluctant’ nuclear states. In accordance with NPT Article VI, they support the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, leading them to champion ‘minimum deterrence’ postures until that goal becomes realisable. Their nuclear ownership – as noted by both Shi Yongming and Malcolm Chalmers, and Guo Xiaobing and Nick Ritchie – is predicated on the need to be able to inflict an unacceptably damaging retaliatory strike on an aggressor.

Managing Expectations for Disarmament
Maintaining arsenals in the low hundreds of warheads, the UK and China believe that the main onus is on Washington and Moscow to take a leadership role in disarmament. The scale of the arsenals of the two superpowers is a product of political dynamics, domestic and bilateral, rather than strategic requirements. Therefore, both the UK and China (though the latter particularly) prefer to wait and watch the larger Nuclear Weapon States before committing to further arms control and disarmament measures. A similar approach, in China’s case, hampers the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), where China has stated that it would ratify the Treaty only if the US does so. A regularised P5 interaction may prove crucial in fostering consensus on the steps needed to fulfil the commitments – including further disarmament and CTBT ratification – presented in the 2010 NPT Review Conference final document.

Negative Security Assurances and No-First Use
UK declaratory policy envisages a broader role for nuclear weapons than that espoused by China. Though Beijing has a more constrained definition of ‘minimum’ when it comes to deterrence, the UK’s nuclear posture (particularly in terms of stated Negative Security Assurances) has moved towards a more restrictive position over the past two decades. This is an encouraging indicator of converging priorities. Guo Xiaobing and Nick Ritchie suggest that further convergence should be encouraged within the framework of a multilateral treaty on Negative Security Assurances. However, adoption of a No-First Use (NFU) policy – which China insists is both declared as well as operationally implemented at the national level – remains unlikely so long as the UK’s deterrent is ordinarily committed to NATO.

Hedging against Uncertainty
It is clear that, despite the existence of general stability between the P5, each of the Nuclear Weapon States are watching closely the policy and nuclear force developments of the others. In a similar vein, Nuclear Weapon States are concerned that a new nuclear actor hostile to their national interests may arise (the DPRK or Iran, or from a Chinese viewpoint, India). The arsenals and posture of both the UK and China are, to a degree, hedges against such uncertainty. British hesitancy towards issuing a blanket NFU
declaration, mentioned in each of the papers, or Chinese stockpiling of fissile material, can be seen in this context. However, though the UK and China have adopted some hedging strategies of their own, Paul Schulte agrees that a world which also includes an array of Non-Nuclear Weapon States hedging through nuclear latency is broadly undesirable. London harbours serious worries over Iranian nuclear advances, while Shi Yongming and Malcolm Chalmers highlight China’s concerns over Japan’s threshold status.

Transparency
A perennial theme in discussion between Nuclear Weapon States, the need for transparency, is acknowledged by both the UK and China and is raised in two of the three joint papers. However, governments continue to differ in their opinion of what information on national nuclear forces is necessary to advance productive multilateral discussion and mutual confidence without reducing deterrent credibility. A P5 glossary of nuclear terms would be a significant starting point for common understanding of national transparency declarations and would mean that the information that is eventually disclosed can contribute to the progression of Nuclear Weapon State dialogue.

The P5 Forum as the Way Forward
Across the papers there is recognition that the P5 is the forum in which consensus must be reached if wider international efforts to strengthen both the disarmament and non-proliferation pillars of the NPT are to be successful. This argument permeates analysis on many of the other themes mentioned above. Even where the UN Security Council is cited as the necessary centre of authority for a specific problem – as Shen Dingli and Paul Schulte argue is the case for Iranian non-compliance with international obligations – securing P5 agreement is deemed essential. As these two authors suggest, if the P5 are unable to reach consensus by balancing national interests with the long-term importance of the NPT, ‘they could also undermine their own claim to be the ultimate arbiter on nuclear questions’. Like higher-level international diplomatic efforts, this project is intended as another step towards fostering the P5 leadership called for in the 2010 NPT Review Conference action plan.
Prospects for Nuclear Stability amongst Existing Nuclear-Armed States

Shi Yongming and Malcolm Chalmers

This paper starts by examining issues of international stability in a broader context, then moves on to examine more focused concepts of nuclear stability, together with the potentially disruptive role that missile defence could play in the future. It concludes by examining five critical relationships between nuclear-armed (or potentially nuclear-armed) states: Russia and the US; the US and China; India and Pakistan; India, Pakistan and China; and China’s concerns over Japan’s nuclear potential.

Context of Comprehensive Balance
The nuclear balance between the nuclear-armed states needs to be seen in a broad context, including the political and economic relations between them, the existence of a reasonable conventional balance, and ongoing concerns over each others’ domestic politics.

The starting point for a discussion of nuclear stability is the shared political and economic interest that all major powers have in avoiding war with each other. They have a particularly strong interest in preventing a repetition of all-out, large-scale war. Even without the use of nuclear weapons, such a scenario would lead to massive suffering and economic deprivation, out of all proportion to any possible gain from the conflict.

Fortunately, the chances of this type of war seem remote. Since the end of the Second World War, and especially since the end of the Cold War, many factors have helped secure and maintain the Long Peace between major industrialised powers. The international institutional order created in the aftermath of the Second World War has proven remarkably resilient. Efforts to change international borders by force have dwindled to negligible levels, with attempts to breach this norm (for example by Iraq in 1990) met by a vigorous response. With few exceptions, governments around the world now reject the idea that national objectives can be achieved through military domination over other states and peoples.

Yet concerns over possible changes in the policies of others mean that the nuclear-armed states continue to monitor the domestic politics of each other with interest, and sometimes with concern. The declining strength of militarist political ideologies, based on extreme nationalism, has helped to reduce worries that others are harbouring ambitions for aggression. But concern that such ideologies might be revived, often heightened by painful experiences in the past, remains a potential source of distrust and instability.
There is also concern that rapid shifts in international economic power, and/or the effects of economic crisis, could encourage a return to such ideologies.

**Conceptions of Nuclear Stability**

Relations between the world’s nuclear-armed states – with the exception of relations between the US, UK and France – have not yet reached the happy state of affairs in which conflict between them can be ruled out as a possibility. Until this is the case, analysts and policy-makers will need to consider what measures relating to military capabilities and deployments (if any) can be taken, in order to contribute to stability and war prevention.

*Second-Strike Stability through Assured Retaliatory Destruction*

In a pre-nuclear world, an analysis of this question would focus in particular on whether it is possible to reduce the operational advantages which would accrue to any party from being the first to launch a military attack. Such incentives played an important contributory role in precipitating the First World War in Europe, and helped explain Japan’s decision to launch a pre-emptive attack on a much more economically powerful US in December 1941. Aggressor states, in such a scenario, may believe that they can make some territorial gains and then sue for peace, hoping to deter their opponents from continuing the conflict for fear of the costs that this would involve.

In a pre-nuclear world, therefore, offensive military doctrines and forces are key drivers of instability. And the solution, if there is one, is for states to adopt defensive doctrines and force postures, thereby seeking to make aggression so difficult and costly that a potential enemy will not undertake it. Both West Germany and Japan, arguably, adopted such ‘defensive defence’ postures during the Cold War, abjuring key elements of power-projection capability. While these postures may have reassured neighbours that neither state sought a capacity for independent aggression, some might argue that its wider applicability may have been limited by their close security alliance with a power (the US) which held power-projection capabilities in abundance.

Once nuclear weapons are introduced into the equation, however, a new – and contrasting – dimension is added to the relationship between military forces and international stability. For, it is argued, it is precisely the enormous offensive power of nuclear weapons that contributes most strongly to war prevention. When considering whether to take steps that might result in war with a nuclear-armed state, a potential opponent must calculate that its own homeland could suffer a level of damage comparable to that experienced by major cities in Europe and Asia in the Second World War, but on a much more compressed timescale. Even a small increase in the risk of such a catastrophe, it is argued, will make any ‘rational’ national leader desist from contemplating action that might lead to nuclear response.
Not all wars can be deterred by nuclear weapons. In what is often called the ‘stability/instability paradox’, the prevention of all-out conflict between nuclear-armed states as a result of the existence of nuclear weapons may make it more likely that these states engage in conflict at a lower level. The ‘umbrella’ of the strategic balance may protect against escalation. Both the US war in Vietnam and the Soviet war in Afghanistan are interesting cases in point, where long proxy wars were fought between the two superpowers, who ruled out some escalatory options, partially because of fears of triggering a nuclear confrontation. A similar phenomenon may be observed in Pakistan’s alleged sponsorship of groups (such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Afghan Taliban) in order to exert pressure on India and the US, respectively.

Insofar as the main impact of nuclear weapons is to displace violence between states to a more indirect level, however, their ability to ensure long-term security may be limited. States which are the object of such strategies will want to find other ways to respond, even if these involve some risk of provoking a nuclear response from the opposing state. Many conflicts fit somewhere between the extremes of an all-out war for national survival and a proxy conflict of limited scale. Given this, nuclear-armed states may be tempted to manipulate the possibility of escalation to the use of nuclear weapons, even when a conflict is not, in and of itself, about the survival of any of the states involved.

The missile crisis of October 1962, itself precipitated by the deployment of Soviet nuclear weapons to Cuba, is a paradigmatic example of such dangers. As the crisis worsened, both the US and the Soviet Union mobilised their nuclear forces (including those based in and around Cuba itself) and prepared for nuclear war. The eventual political settlement involved difficult compromises for both sides, and was by no means an inevitable outcome. But the possibility that future international crises between nuclear-armed states could escalate out of control, as the Cuban Missile Crisis almost did, remains at the centre of concerns for nuclear stability.

**Arms Race Stability: The Limited Incentives for Build-up**

A potential source of instability arises from the efforts of nuclear-armed states to limit the extent of their own vulnerability to nuclear attack. Throughout the Cold War, both the US and Soviet Union developed ‘counter-force’ options for their nuclear forces, giving them capabilities for destroying the nuclear arsenal of the other before it could be used. The primary element of such capabilities was the increasing accuracy of ballistic missiles. It has been complemented, however, by capabilities for strategic anti-submarine warfare and conventional strikes against enemy strategic forces. The development of missile defence systems (discussed below) is also widely seen to be part of this trend.
If nuclear-armed states come to believe that they can limit damage to themselves by striking first at an opponent’s nuclear forces, incentives for such a strike, in times of tension, would increase. This is similar to the problem created by offence-dominant conventional forces in the pre-nuclear age. Yet the extent to which the deployment of counter-force capabilities actually leads to instability may be limited by the reality that, even if a state could significantly reduce damage to itself by striking first, it would have far less confidence that it would still not suffer entirely unacceptable damage from a retaliatory strike. Just a handful of weapons on a country’s major cities would lead to human suffering, economic losses, and social disruption on a scale comparable to the devastation inflicted on Germany or the Soviet Union during the Second World War, and over a period of days rather than years. One can perhaps imagine that the most messianic and brutal leaders in history would be prepared to sacrifice millions of their own citizens, and impoverish tens of millions more, in order to have a chance for global domination. But no political leader today, or in the foreseeable future, in any of the nuclear-armed states would be prepared to initiate such a trade.

In principle, it is possible to imagine a scenario in which a state with a very small and vulnerable nuclear force – say five to ten, in known locations – might be attacked if there were (perhaps inaccurate) information available that it was preparing to launch. For there would be a real possibility that, by engaging in such pre-emption, an attacking state could greatly reduce the chances of a nuclear weapon exploding on its own territory. The attraction of pre-emption would be further increased were it possible to achieve it using conventional means.

But, even in this case, the risk of doing nothing (in terms of a credible risk of attack) would have to be high. Conversely, the risk of things going wrong (missing the targets) would have to be rather low for leaders to take the plunge. It is far from clear that such circumstances will ever exist. Even the world’s weakest ‘threshold’ states – such as North Korea and Iran – take measures to conceal their limited nuclear capabilities and deceive intelligence-gathering efforts by the US and others. Against even the smallest nuclear-armed states, therefore, pre-emption is an option fraught with problems.

The possession of just a small (but survivable) nuclear arsenal may therefore have a decisive role in deterring large-scale conventional offensives, and/or nuclear attacks, against a country’s national territory. Deterrent threats are also widely thought to have a credible role in deterring attacks – especially nuclear attacks – on states (including Japan and NATO member states) that enjoy strong security guarantees from the US.

By contrast, it is far more difficult to find clear-cut examples of cases where a nuclear-armed state has used its nuclear weapons as a successful instrument
of offensive coercion, against either a nuclear or non-nuclear state. The period since 1945 has seen many examples of nuclear-armed states using military force against non-nuclear states: the UK against Argentina, France against Côte d’Ivoire, China against India and Vietnam, the US against Iraq and Serbia, the Soviet Union against Hungary, Poland and Afghanistan, Russia against Georgia. But none of these cases involved the use of nuclear weapons as a means of coercion.

In contrast to the US and Russia, moreover, today’s smaller Nuclear Weapon States have shown little interest in building large nuclear arsenals, or in measuring their forces against those of others. The relatively small size of the arsenals of the UK and France may derive, in part, from the additional security provided by US extended deterrence. But China, the third ‘small’ nuclear power – despite arguably being on the receiving end of (unsuccessful) US and Soviet attempts at nuclear coercion during the 1950s and 1960s – also appears to have limited the size of its nuclear arsenal to a level comparable to those of the UK and France, and at lower levels of alert. For all three states, the maintenance of an ability to inflict unacceptable damage on an opponent in a retaliatory strike has been central to nuclear planning. And such a capability, all three appear to agree, requires a total arsenal amounting to no more than 300–400 deployed warheads.

There remains an important difference, however, between the capabilities of the five recognised Nuclear Weapon States and the three other states (India, Pakistan and Israel) that possess nuclear weapons. While the recognised nuclear powers have a genuine intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), able to strike at the heart of any of the other nuclear-armed states, the other three do not. The latter have, so far, focused their nuclear efforts on obtaining an ability to attack potential opponents in their immediate neighbourhood. Were this to change, and any of these powers were to seek an ability to strike the US in particular, it would not be viewed favourably, and could add a new and destabilising element to global nuclear relationships.

The Conventional Balance and Nuclear Stability
While differentials in the size of the arsenals of the nuclear-armed states do not appear to contribute to nuclear instability, differences in conventional offensive capabilities do have the potential to do so. This is perhaps seen most starkly in the case of Pakistan, which sees itself as increasingly vulnerable to an Indian offensive that could take advantage of its limited geographical depth and fragile domestic politics in order to deal a decisive blow against its very existence as a state. This perceived vulnerability has led Pakistan to place growing emphasis on short-range missiles, the deployment of which is in turn designed to add credibility to threats of early first use against an Indian invasion. A not dissimilar pattern is also evident in Russia, which fears being entirely outmatched by the US’s superior offensive conventional
capabilities. China and India, by contrast, appear to be more inclined to de-emphasise the role of nuclear weapons in their defence doctrines, aware that the conventional power balance (at least vis-à-vis the US and Pakistan, respectively) continues to move in their favour.

This tendency to war-aversion is reinforced in some cases by a reasonable conventional balance of forces between states. Where such a balance exists, concerns that others might be tempted to achieve rapid victory through conventional means are reduced. Where it does not, there can often be a tendency to increase reliance on nuclear weapons to deter major conventional attack, thereby jeopardising nuclear stability.

_Nuclear Stability and the Signals Sent by Nuclear Build-up_

Yet, to set against these positive trends, the world’s major powers are still spending considerable sums of money on military capabilities, including nuclear forces, whose primary operational purpose is to fight wars against other such states. These preparations are a result of a continuing belief, in all the major powers, that it is necessary to hedge against the prospect that such a conflict might still occur, even if it does not appear likely in the near future. But military planners often caution their political masters to construct their security policies around the capabilities, and not just the perceived intentions, of other states. In this context, a build-up of nuclear forces can often diminish mutual trust and increase fears that other states are seeking advantage, however difficult it may be in practice to convert nuclear ‘advantage’ into useable political currency.

_Missile Defences and Strategic Stability_

There is some concern, especially in the US, that North Korea and Iran are seeking an ICBM capability. The US has long accepted a state of mutual vulnerability with Russia, and for the most part accepts that the same is inevitable in its future relations with China. It is quite another matter, however, for the US to accept that it should leave itself open to a devastating nuclear attack from regimes as unstable, and potentially hostile, as those in Tehran and Pyongyang.

Given the difficulties involved in countering such threats through pre-emptive military action, the US has put increasing emphasis on the role that missile defence can play in deterring future nuclear threats (against itself and its allies) from Iran and North Korea. While ballistic missiles are not the only possible delivery mechanism for nuclear weapons, they are the most credible deterrent option available to powers that otherwise have limited power-projection capability. If this threat can be negated, it would be much more difficult (albeit not impossible) for these states to construct an alternative of comparable credibility.
As the US’s capabilities for defence against ballistic missiles grow, however, Russia has become increasingly concerned that they may begin to pose a threat to its own ICBM arsenal. Namely, they may undermine Russia’s second-strike capability in the event of a US surprise attack. China has similar concerns in relation to the future credibility of its own, much smaller, nuclear arsenal.

Russia and China are expressing legitimate concerns over the possible long-term consequences of unlimited development in US ballistic missile defence. Yet the near-term impact of missile defence on the nuclear balance should not be overstated. If US developments threaten the second-strike capability of either Russia or China, readily-affordable counter-measures are available that mean that either state should be able to overcome US ballistic missile defence for some time. As long ago as the 1970s, both France and the UK were able to develop a range of options (including penetration aids and variable trajectories) in order to confuse and overwhelm Soviet defences. More such options are available today. Russia and China could also take further measures to ensure the survivability of their forces against pre-emption, including deep bunkers, mobile missiles, and (if sanctuaries can be secured) submarine-basing. Not least, Russia and China could develop their own missile defence capabilities, further complicating US attempts to develop pre-emptive options to counter their strategic forces.

All of this would be quite expensive. Over the time that it is likely to take for the US to develop a serious strategic defensive capability against Russia and China, a range of counter-measures should not be unaffordable for countries with their levels of defence spending. Such an ‘arms race’, however, could make further reductions through arms control more difficult to achieve, thereby contributing to wider mutual distrust.

**Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Strategic Stability**

Tactical nuclear weapons (TNW) are defined as those weapons whose characteristics – especially range, but also associated doctrine and organisation – make them most suitable for use as a means for influencing the outcome of encounters between conventional military forces.

Both the US and the Soviet Union deployed thousands of TNW during the Cold War, most of them in or around Central Europe. Since 1990, however, the numbers of such weapons have been reduced sharply, especially in the US. And doctrine – certainly in the US and NATO, as well as in China – now views this ‘tactical’ role for nuclear weapons as both unlikely and potentially dangerous (insofar as it risks turning a limited conventional encounter into a wider nuclear war). Both the UK and France have given up TNW capabilities. China has adopted a ‘No First Use’ policy, for which TNW are not relevant. And, while the US retains a force of 150–200 free-fall bombs in Europe that
are widely viewed as being TNW, their function is now primarily a symbolic one relating to alliance management, not a serious indication of commitment to a war-fighting role for nuclear weapons.

Not all nuclear-armed states appear to have reduced reliance on TNW as rapidly as NATO member states have done. Pakistan, in particular, has recently threatened that it might be willing to use TNW on its own territory in order to blunt an Indian conventional advance. Another example is Russia, whose navy remains committed to the use of TNW to counter US maritime superiority and protect Russia’s own ballistic missile submarines. In this latter case as in the case of Pakistan, forward deployment of TNW in times of crisis can contribute to deterrence by posing a credible risk that things may escalate if conventional offensive action is taken. Nuclear stability could therefore be improved were further steps taken to reduce the tactical roles still given to nuclear weapons. It remains to be seen, however, whether the states that rely on such systems are willing to give up the added deterrence which, they believe, these systems can provide.

The Strategic Balance between the US, China and Russia

The relationships between China, the US and Russia are likely to play a key role in shaping the global strategic balance and the future of international nuclear stability.

The Russia–US Balance

During the Cold War, both the US and the Soviet Union built massive arsenals (amounting to more than 20,000 warheads apiece), in an effort to avoid ceding nuclear ‘superiority’ to the other. Nuclear weapons were deployed on every possible platform, taking on a wide range of counter-force and war-fighting roles, as well as preparing to destroy every major industrial centre of the opposing superpower and its allies. Even today, after two decades of post-Cold War reductions, the US and Russia maintain more than 10,000 nuclear warheads between them. Both countries retain nuclear arsenals more than ten times larger than those that China, France and the UK are believed to possess.

Yet it is far from clear what additional advantage the US and Russia enjoy as a result of this ‘superiority’. The prospects for US success in Iraq and Afghanistan have been shaped by its diplomatic and conventional capabilities, not by its nuclear strength. And, while US possession of nuclear weapons would make a material difference in the event of a conflict with a nuclear-armed Iran or North Korea, it is far from clear why an arsenal of 5,000 would be a more effective deterrent to Iranian nuclear deployment than one of 500.

While there is broad strategic stability between the US and Russia at present, Russian leaders and analysts often express concern over the missile defence
and conventional-strike capabilities being developed by the US and NATO, and their potential for undermining Russia’s second-strike capabilities. These concerns are deepened because they take place within the context of Russia’s wider political concerns over its perceived ‘encirclement’ from the West (NATO), China, Japan and the south. Likely demographic decline, along with possible economic stagnation, could fuel such concerns in future. They may contribute to a more assertive security policy, including an increased emphasis on nuclear weapons. While the main focus for Russian security policy continues to be the possible threats posed by NATO and the US, the prospect of future growth in China’s conventional capabilities may cause concern over the security of Russia’s eastern borders. Strategic co-operation between Russia and China is therefore not only to the benefit of bilateral relations, but also in the wider interests of global nuclear stability.

The US–China Balance
Since the start of its domestic reform period in the late 1970s, China’s efforts to develop economically have been aided by a supportive international environment. The opening of global markets, including admission to the World Trade Organisation, has been critically important to China’s rapid economic development over the last three decades, while also catering to the economic interests of the US, Europe, and China’s Asia-Pacific neighbours. China’s economic interests have also been served by a relatively peaceful regional security environment, which allowed it (especially in the 1980s and 1990s) to reduce the share of its resources devoted to national defence. Today, the close economic interdependence between the China and the US gives both countries a strong interest in resolving any conflicts between them in a proportionate and peaceful fashion.

China’s economic prosperity, however, has led to rising government revenues, making it easier to spend more on the military without increasing the relative burden of defence spending on its economy. This has raised some concern in the US about the future direction of China’s security policy. These worries have been increased by the continuing existence of long-standing territorial disputes between China and its neighbours (Japan, the ASEAN states and India). Although China continues to state its commitment to resolving disputes peacefully there is unease surrounding China’s growing military capabilities, which it is felt may lead Beijing to pursue its territorial claims through the use of force.

At present, the US has responded to growing Chinese military capabilities by seeking to ‘hedge’ against the possibility of worsening relations, increasing the Asia-Pacific focus of its defence posture, and reinforcing its security ties with other countries in the region which also have concerns over China’s rise. At the same time, US leaders continue to believe that a co-operative relationship with Beijing remains both possible and likely, and that an
attempt to slow China’s economic rise would be both unworkable and counterproductive.

There is a risk that US reactions to the shifting military balance could lead to counter-action by China, especially if the latter were to perceive that a US policy of ‘hedging’ against Chinese aggression were beginning to turn into one that was more aggressive. If not reversed, the resulting growth in distrust could steadily undermine what has been one of the pillars of regional stability over the last three decades.

Even in a scenario of worsening relations, however, nuclear weapons would probably not play a central role in the military relationship between the two countries. The US’s 2010 Nuclear Posture Review stated that the primary purpose of the country’s nuclear forces was to deter the use of nuclear weapons by others; it committed the US to move towards a ‘Sole Purpose’ policy in future. China, for its part, has adopted a ‘No First Use’ policy, and is unlikely to reverse this, even in the event of a limited conventional conflict with the US. As long as China believes that it has the ability to retain a limited second-strike retaliatory capability against the US, nuclear stability between the two powers seems relatively assured.

**Geopolitical Balance in Asia and Nuclear Stability**

The possibility of conflict between some of Asia’s major powers further complicates efforts to ensure regional and global nuclear stability.

*The India-Pakistan Balance*

The difficult relationship between India and Pakistan continues to mean that the near-term risk of conflict between nuclear-armed states is probably greater here than anywhere else in the world. For example, a repetition of recent terrorist attacks on India, launched from Pakistani territory, could trigger a wider confrontation between the two countries, as it has done in the past. Nor can the possibility of a further weakening of the authority of the Pakistani state over its territory, even in its Punjab heartland, be ruled out.

There is a considerable risk that a possible conflict between India and Pakistan could involve threats to use, or actual use, of nuclear weapons. Any such conflict (in contrast, for example, to US-Russia or US-China conflicts) would be more likely to involve significant threats to the territorial integrity and existence of Pakistan as a state. Pakistan’s limited geographical depth, together with the relative weakness of its conventional forces, increases the risk that its leaders would seek to use the threat of nuclear escalation in order to deter Indian advances into its territory. These dynamics have formed the basis for mutual distrust, which could be further increased if plausible domestic political developments in either country encourage more assertive
behaviour. Both countries (in contrast to the five NPT-recognised Nuclear Weapon States) continue to produce fissile material for military purposes, and to increase the size of their warhead stockpiles.

While there is substantial political and arms race instability between India and Pakistan, however, neither country currently has the capability to prevent the other undertaking a devastating second strike against its neighbour. As long as such ‘second-strike stability’ is thought to exist, it will continue to contribute to the deterrence of major war between the two countries. But risks of miscalculation and escalation during a future crisis remain, making this relationship the most serious contemporary threat to nuclear stability.

The India-Pakistan-China Balance
Other nuclear-armed states (including the US and China) could be drawn into an India-Pakistan conflict, and not necessarily on the same side. China has particular concerns over some elements of India’s recent nuclear build-up that have been justified as part of an attempt to acquire the capability to strike a wide range of targets on China’s eastern seaboard, thereby creating a nuclear competition between the two countries. There is also some Chinese concern that a US-India nuclear alliance might in time develop. For its part, India remains worried by its ongoing territorial disputes with China, still unresolved half a century after the short war between the two countries. India is also worried by China’s close security relationship with Pakistan, as well as the potential for such links to develop further with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and other neighbours of India. There is a real risk, as a result of these concerns, that a perpetuation of the competitive nuclear build-up between India and Pakistan could draw China into this process. The implications of an India-China nuclear arms race are therefore significant, and its likelihood probably growing.

Japan’s Nuclear Potential
Clear security guarantees, provided by the US to Japan during the Cold War, played a vital role in preventing conflict, and also helped create conditions in which Japan could move decisively away from its militarist past. But the continuing existence of territorial disputes, mutual unease surrounding the possible future direction of each other’s security policy, together with unresolved historical disputes, have made it difficult to fully reconcile Japan and China with one another. In recent years, moreover, Japan has become increasingly concerned by the shift of the conventional military power balance towards China, fearing that this might over time erode the value of US security guarantees. China, for its part, is concerned that right-wing political forces might one day push Tokyo to construct its own nuclear weapons, as Japan already has the ability to do. Such an event could add a potentially dangerous new element of instability into the regional nuclear balance. A key objective of nuclear non-proliferation and conventional reassurance,
therefore, should be to further encourage Japan and China to resolve their territorial disputes peacefully and pursue strategic co-operation on regional stability.

Conclusion
It is possible that, one day, all the world’s major powers will have as much confidence in each others’ peaceful intentions as the US, UK and France now have in each other. Even if not all territorial disputes between them have been resolved, the states concerned would no longer worry that others will seek to resolve them by force. Close co-operation in tackling common concerns (such as weak states and piracy) could further build confidence between their armed forces.

Until that day comes, however, patient efforts must continue to be made to promote the peaceful management and resolution of conflicts between the major powers discussed here. An important element in that effort will be measures to promote nuclear stability between the nuclear-armed states.
The UK and China: Common Approaches to Nuclear Arms Control and Disarmament

Guo Xiaobing and Nick Ritchie

The purpose of this paper is to examine possible areas where the UK and China, as two of the three Nuclear Weapon States with small nuclear arsenals, agree in their approach to nuclear arms control and disarmament. The paper explores this theme in two parts: commonalities between UK and Chinese nuclear weapons policies, and commonalities between UK and Chinese nuclear arms control policies. The paper concludes with some suggestions about what other nuclear powers could learn from the practices of these two countries and may do together to promote nuclear arms control and disarmament, at a P5 or wider level.

Commonalities between UK and China Nuclear Weapons Policies

I. A Minimum Role for Nuclear Weapons

Both the UK and China can be viewed as ‘reluctant’ possessors of nuclear weapons. Both have long acknowledged the strategic importance of a world free of nuclear weapons, while remaining committed to retaining a nuclear capability until a negotiated process of verifiable, multilateral nuclear disarmament is underway. Both have also acknowledged that the advent of enormously destructive thermonuclear warheads, coupled with unstoppable ballistic missiles, means the number of weapons required to ensure the defeat of any enemy is comparatively small with little value in developing large-scale nuclear arsenals. Neither nuclear parity nor primacy is part of either country’s strategic calculus.

China and the UK have attempted to square this circle by acting, and being seen to act, as ‘responsible’ nuclear-armed states committed to nuclear disarmament, while championing a ‘minimum’ form of nuclear deterrence.¹ This stipulates that so long as each country retains nuclear weapons, its policies and doctrine will limit the size and role of its nuclear forces to the ‘minimum’ acceptable for perceived national security requirements. The inherent tension in ‘running with the nuclear fox and riding with the disarmament hounds’ characterises both countries’ nuclear weapons policies; particularly the UK’s after the Cold War, but also for China’s throughout much of its nuclear history).² Minimum deterrence, in this sense, cannot be objectively defined. It ultimately rests on how a nuclear-armed state chooses to define it in order to legitimise its nuclear arsenal, policy and practice. The ‘minimum’ in contemporary British and Chinese nuclear policies is reflected in the scope of current nuclear missions, force size, operational posture, and declaratory policy.
In this context, the UK considers nuclear weapons an essential capability to counter a set of strategic threats that could emerge over the coming decades through the deterrent effect of a credible retaliatory nuclear strike. Four broad areas in which the logic of nuclear deterrence is judged to pertain were described in the Labour government’s 2006 White Paper on The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent:

- Deterrence of aggression towards British/NATO vital interests or nuclear coercion/blackmail by major powers with large nuclear arsenals (Russia and possibly China)\(^3\)
- Deterrence of aggression by ‘emerging nuclear states’ (‘rogue’ states such as Iran) to enable regional intervention, if necessary
- Deterrence of state-sponsored acts of nuclear terrorism. The ‘state-sponsored’ codicil is important and the UK acknowledges that its nuclear weapons are ‘not designed to deter non-state actors’ acting alone\(^4\)
- A general ‘residual’ deterrent as an essential ‘insurance’ against future strategic risk and a means of preserving peace and stability in an uncertain world.\(^5\)

China adheres to a purely self-defensive nuclear strategy.\(^6\) Compared with the UK, China has a more limited conception of the nuclear mission. The sole purpose of China’s nuclear weapons is to deter nuclear strikes.\(^7\) As Jiang Zemin noted in 1997, China’s nuclear arsenal ‘breaks the nuclear monopoly of big nuclear powers and helps prevent nuclear blackmail and nuclear wars’.\(^8\)

The UK’s rather expansive set of potential nuclear missions is curtailed by an increasingly restrictive declaratory policy that has moved closer to China’s longstanding commitment to No First Use (NFU) of nuclear weapons and no-use against Non-Nuclear Weapon States. Both China and the UK formally restricted the circumstances under which they would contemplate using nuclear weapons in their 1995 ‘Negative Security Assurances’ (NSA) noted in United Nations Security Council Resolution 984 (1995).\(^9\) The UK’s statement contained a number of caveats that were later retracted by the Coalition government in its 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR); UK policy now states that ‘the UK will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against Non-Nuclear Weapon States party to the NPT’, though it reserves the right to judge whether a state is in compliance with its NPT commitments and to revise current policy should a substantial chemical and/or biological weapons threat emerge.\(^10\)

China’s statement in 1995 insisted that it will ‘not be the first to use nuclear weapons at any time or under any circumstances’, or to ‘use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon States or nuclear-weapon-free zones at any time or under any circumstances’.\(^11\) This reflects some
special characteristics of China’s policy and a more restrictive conception of ‘minimum’ than the UK’s. First, nuclear weapons are not expected to compromise a potential adversary’s conventional advantage. With the world’s largest population, the third-largest territory and rich experiences in conventional wars, including long wars, China does not rely upon nuclear weapons to deter or counter a conventional attack. China enjoys a strategic depth that the UK manifestly lacks and this shapes nuclear policy in both countries. Second, nuclear weapons are not expected to deter threats from other WMD such as chemical and biological weapons. In contrast, both the UK and US used to maintain ‘calculated ambiguity’ on this issue. The US 2010 Nuclear Posture Review and the UK’s 2010 SDSR adjusted that policy while allowing for future revision ‘given the catastrophic potential of biological weapons and the rapid pace of bio-technology development’. Both the UK and US threatened Saddam Hussein with nuclear weapons to deter his use of chemical and biological weapons. China views such threats as a ‘paper tiger’ because the damage caused by nuclear weapons would be far greater than that caused by chemical and biological weapons. The disproportionate nature of the threat completely undermines its credibility.

In fact, Chinese thinking goes a step further and suggests that nuclear weapons will not be used against any NNWS, irrespective of whether they abide by the NPT. This rests on a historical judgement that nuclear threats or coercion usually increase rather than curtail the development of a nuclear weapons programme. Regimes that have been openly confronted by an adversary of overwhelming military superiority have tended to pursue or accelerate pursuit of a nuclear capability as a last resort against existential military threats.

China and the UK have legally codified their Negative Security Assurance for nearly 100 countries by ratifying the protocols annexed to the treaties establishing Nuclear Weapon-Free Zones in Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, and Africa.

The UK has also accepted the judgement of the 1996 International Court of Justice’s (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the ‘Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons’ that concluded that ‘the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law, and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law’ applicable in armed conflict because the destructive blast, incendiary and radiation effects of nuclear weapons cannot be contained either in space or time. The Advisory Opinion could not, however, ‘conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake’. The UK does not dispute that international humanitarian law applies to the use of
nuclear weapons and has incorporated the notion of ‘extreme circumstances’
of self-defence into its declaratory nuclear policy statements.\textsuperscript{16}

Each year since 1996, the UN General Assembly has passed a resolution
calling on all countries to immediately fulfil their disarmament obligations,
as articulated by the International Court of Justice, ‘by commencing
multilateral negotiations leading to an early conclusion of a nuclear weapons
convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment,
stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons and providing for their
elimination’. China is the only recognised nuclear power to have consistently
supported the resolution.\textsuperscript{17}

China also has a slightly different conception of nuclear use, reflected in its
declaratory policy above. The UK frames nuclear use as a ‘last resort’, when
the very survival of the state is at stake, but China simply states that it will
only use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear weapons against
it. China’s strategic depth enables a range of scenarios in which detonation
of nuclear weapons on its territory would not inevitably threaten the survival
of the state, thereby precluding the caveat of ‘last resort’. The UK’s size and
population density means that any detonation of nuclear weapons (in the
plural) on its soil would invariably threaten a societal collapse.

II. No First Use
China began to advocate for the total elimination of nuclear weapons before
its first nuclear test in 1964. Nevertheless, it pursued a nuclear capability
because, as Mao said, ‘without atomic and hydrogen bombs, others don’t
think what we say carries weight’.\textsuperscript{18} Immediately after its first test, the Chinese
government proposed to convene a world summit to discuss the issue of
complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{19} In
order to reconcile the contradiction between the ultimate goal of eliminating
nuclear weapons and the acquisition of nuclear weapons, China deliberately
adopted the NFU policy. A distinction can be drawn here between the UK and
China: the UK sought to reconcile the contradiction through a small nuclear
force with few restrictions on declaratory policy, whereas China embraced
not only a small force but also considerable declaratory constraints. This
reflects, in part, China’s enormous strategic depth compared to the UK and a
different conception of what constitutes a ‘credible’, and therefore effective,
nuclear deterrent threat.

In fact, the most controversial issue with NFU is its credibility. Revelations
of the former Soviet Union’s nuclear war plans, involving first use of nuclear
forces under the cover of a NFU pledge increased public concerns about the
credibility of such a policy. Admittedly, it is difficult to verify whether NFU
is just a declaratory policy or is actually reflected in operational practice.
Draft treaties on the NFU of nuclear weapons by independent experts and
think tanks choose to avoid developing verification measures.\textsuperscript{20} But it is still possible to identify some tangible indicators of the sincerity of declaratory policy and both Chinese and Western experts have made efforts to develop lists of such indicators.\textsuperscript{21} According to existing standards, China’s NFU policy is an operational one rather than simple rhetoric. In particular, China’s war planning and training of nuclear forces does not include the scenario of a first strike by China. Steven Miller suggests that ‘a genuine strategy of no-first use would need to be reflected in operational war plans. These would have to assume an entirely non-nuclear character and to extirpate all scenarios in which recourse is made to the first use of nuclear weapons.’\textsuperscript{22} A textbook published by China’s National Defense University assumes that China would launch nuclear attacks after absorbing a first nuclear strike.\textsuperscript{23} Research papers and articles rarely talk about plans for a first nuclear strike. A few passionate comments on this topic have attracted a lot of attention from international media, but are always immediately overwhelmed by the mainstream NFU argument in China. It is also clear that Beijing will not use nuclear weapons as a pre-emptive strike measure – they will only ever be used as a means of retaliation in the wake of a nuclear attack against China. Strategies of nuclear pre-emption are destabilising. They cause suspicion in the minds of potential nuclear adversaries and could generate incentives to launch a nuclear attack first.

The UK, in contrast, does not rule out the first use of nuclear weapons in a conflict. Britain’s nuclear forces are formally committed to NATO under the terms of the 1962 Nassau Agreement that facilitated the purchase of the US Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) system and subsequently Trident for the Royal Navy. This remains the case today: in 2006 Defence Secretary Desmond Browne stated that ‘a policy of no-first use of nuclear weapons would be incompatible with our and NATO’s doctrine of deterrence’\textsuperscript{24}

\textit{III. Minimum Development of Nuclear Arsenals}

China’s NFU policy also has important implications for the composition of its nuclear arsenal. As Steven Miller argues, ‘a purely deterrent force could be much smaller and simpler than the present arsenals of the larger nuclear powers’.\textsuperscript{25} Chinese scholars concur, stating that ‘the number of nuclear warheads used in retaliation to produce intolerable damage was estimated as hundreds’.\textsuperscript{26} The guiding principle for China’s Second Artillery, the component of the People’s Liberation Army that controls China’s nuclear and conventional ballistic missiles, is to be ‘lean and effective’. China has resisted temptations to procure and deploy a large and diverse nuclear force. It has not shown any interest in significantly expanding its nuclear arsenal despite rapid economic development in the last thirty years. The \textit{Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists} estimated in 2010 that China deploys approximately 175 warheads with perhaps sixty-five in reserve for a total stockpile of 240.\textsuperscript{27}
China has also eschewed tactical nuclear weapons. Tactical, non-strategic or sub-strategic nuclear weapons are generally designed to fulfil counter-force nuclear missions for battlefield nuclear ‘war-fighting’. China maintains that all nuclear weapons are strategic weapons and opposes development of low yield nuclear weapons for war-fighting purposes.

The UK has historically limited its strategic nuclear forces to around 200 operationally deployed weapons during the Cold War. The Trident system procured in the 1980s had the capacity to far exceed this figure but the warhead loading of the UK’s Trident submarines has been progressively curtailed: under John Major the Conservative government capped the Trident warhead arsenal at 300, with no more than sixty warheads per ballistic missile submarine (SSBN) in 1995; Labour’s 1998 Strategic Defence Review reduced this to 200 ‘operationally deployed’ warheads, with a further reduction to 160, with no more than forty-eight per SSBN, in the 2006 White Paper; and the Coalition’s October 2010 SDSR reduced the total stockpile to no more than 180, of which no more than 120 will be operationally deployed by the mid-2020s, with each submarine carrying no more than forty warheads. This steady post-Cold-War reduction in strategic forces has been accompanied by the consolidation and elimination of non-strategic nuclear weapons. By 2008 there were no US forward-deployed nuclear weapons in the UK, no US nuclear weapons under dual-key access for UK strike aircraft and no UK theatre nuclear forces at all: leaving the British Army and RAF denuclearised and the UK with one nuclear system in Trident, albeit a highly sophisticated one. The UK has also formally dropped the term ‘sub-strategic’ from its nuclear lexicon to reflect the contention that any use of nuclear weapons would inevitably be ‘strategic’, and that UK nuclear weapons are categorically not for war-fighting.

IV. Minimum Operation of Nuclear Arsenals

Both the UK and China state that their nuclear forces operate on low levels of alert. China’s No First Use policy means it is unnecessary for China to keep its nuclear force at high alert and it may take days for it to retaliate against a nuclear attack. Beijing’s White Paper, National Defense of China in 2008, stated that:

If China comes under a nuclear threat, the nuclear missile force of the Second Artillery Force will go into a state of alert, and get ready for a nuclear counterattack to deter the enemy from using nuclear weapons against China. If China comes under a nuclear attack, the nuclear missile force of the Second Artillery Force will use nuclear missiles to launch a resolute counterattack against the enemy either independently or together with the nuclear forces of other services.
According to a report by the Federation of American Scientists, ‘none of China’s long-range nuclear forces are believed to be on alert’.\(^{33}\) It is also reported that China does not mate nuclear warheads with launchers.\(^{34}\)

The UK also claims to operate its nuclear forces at a reduced level of alert. The UK insists that the credibility of its minimum nuclear capability rests on a submarine-based nuclear delivery system on continuous patrol – an operational posture labelled as ‘continuous-at-sea deterrence’ (CASD). Under a CASD posture at least one of the UK’s four SSBNs is at sea on operational patrol in the Atlantic at all times. During the Cold War the submarine on patrol was on Quick Reaction Alert ready to fire within fifteen minutes of an order.\(^{35}\) A second submarine was held in port at forty-seven hours notice to sail. In 1994 the UK reached an agreement with Russia to de-target its nuclear weapons to empty ocean zones to mitigate the consequences of accidental launch. The 1998 SDR stated that the alert status of the submarine on patrol was now at ‘several days “notice to fire”’, although this could be reduced considerably in a crisis.\(^{36}\) The Labour government considered more radical de-alerting postures during the SDR, such as taking submarines off deterrent patrol, removing warheads from their missiles and storing them separately ashore, but decided against them.\(^{37}\)

In addition, both countries do not deploy nuclear forces overseas. In 1998 the UK decommissioned its last WE-177 gravity bombs, withdrew the Tornado strike aircraft based at RAF Brüggen in Germany deactivated the nuclear weapons storage vaults (where up to 40 WE-177 bombs had been stored) and denuclearised the RAF.\(^{38}\) A distinction must be drawn, however, over support for the concept of extended deterrence. China is adamant that nuclear weapons will not be used for extended deterrence. Extended deterrence, it is argued, expands both the deployment of nuclear weapons geographically and scenarios for their use. For China, the ‘development of nuclear weapons has always been for the purpose of self-defense’.\(^{39}\) Some Western scholars suggest China provides a nuclear umbrella to North Korea under the 1961 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, but given the negative effects of extended deterrence and political realities, the Chinese government never seriously considers these suggestions.

The UK, however, remains deeply committed to NATO and its extended nuclear deterrence commitments, as well as NATO remaining a nuclear alliance. British nuclear weapons are assigned a role as a second centre of nuclear decision-making in NATO, in support of the North Atlantic Treaty’s Article V on collective defence of the Euro-Atlantic area and the extended nuclear deterrence guarantees NATO provides its non-nuclear member states. During the Cold War it was routinely argued that British nuclear weapons provided an essential second centre to complicate Soviet nuclear war planning.\(^{40}\) These arguments were reproduced in the 2006 White Paper,
which stated that ‘the UK’s nuclear deterrent supports collective security through NATO for the Euro-Atlantic area. Nuclear deterrence plays an important part in NATO’s overall defensive strategy, and the UK’s nuclear forces make a substantial contribution’ and that ‘an independent centre of nuclear decision-making enhances the overall deterrent effect of allied nuclear forces. Potential adversaries could gamble that the US or France might not put themselves at risk of a nuclear attack in order to deter an attack on the UK or our allies’. The 2010 SDSR reproduced these strategic deterrence rationales for nuclear retention, at times word-for-word. The US-UK Polaris Sales Agreement states that British nuclear forces will be assigned to and targeted in accordance with NATO plans, except in circumstances where the British government decides that its supreme national interests are at stake.

Commonalities between the UK and China’s Nuclear Disarmament and Arms Control Policies

I. Support for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World

Both the UK and China share a common commitment to the logic of nuclear disarmament and the importance of significant progress towards that goal. China has explicitly supported this objective since before it conducted its first nuclear test in 1964. Its public statements have routinely supported the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons and argued that the international community should develop a viable, long-term plan of phased disarmament, culminating in a convention on the total elimination of nuclear weapons. China stated in 2010 that ‘we are glad to see that the goal of establishing a world free of nuclear weapons has become widely embraced. The international community should seize this important opportunity and join hands to make unremitting efforts to gradually advance the international nuclear disarmament process.’

In the UK, Labour and Coalition governments have declared their full commitment to the goal of a nuclear weapons-free world and a desire to take an active leadership role in examining the practical steps and challenges involved. The Conservative Party’s 2009 Green Paper on National Security claimed that ‘Britain is unique among the nuclear weapons states in that we have reduced the UK’s nuclear deterrent capability to a single system – Trident. And we have led the way in transparency and accountability about our nuclear weapons. In the context of progress in nuclear disarmament and reduction, the UK must be prepared to take a rigorous look at whether we can take our excellent record in this area further forward’. Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett stated in 2008 that ‘when it comes to building this new impetus for global nuclear disarmament, I want the UK to be at the forefront of both the thinking and the practical work. To be, as it were, a “disarmament laboratory”’. Prime Minister Gordon Brown also stated in 2008: ‘I pledge that in the run-up to the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference in
2010 we will be at the forefront of the international campaign to accelerate disarmament amongst possessor states, to prevent proliferation to new states, and to ultimately achieve a world that is free from nuclear weapons’.  

Both countries also acknowledge the moral imperatives of decisive leadership on nuclear disarmament in the context of the NPT and long-term global nuclear order. As UK Ambassador John Duncan noted in 2009: ‘the Nuclear Weapon States can only exercise moral and political leadership in preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons if they demonstrate the same leadership on the question of disarmament’.  

II. Key Priorities

The UK and China regularly articulate their priorities for next steps on nuclear arms control and disarmament. The UK government outlined six key priorities at the 2009 NPT Preparatory Committee: bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force; US-Russia negotiations to agree substantial further reductions in their nuclear arsenals; stopping proliferation in those countries subject to UN Security Council resolutions; multilateral negotiations on a treaty to cut off production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons; working with the IAEA on proposals to internationalise the nuclear fuel cycle; working on measures to resolve the political, technical, military and institutional obstacles to nuclear disarmament.  

China’s own six priorities were repeated in its statement on nuclear disarmament at the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly First Committee in October 2011: drastic and substantive reductions in US and Russian nuclear stockpiles in a verifiable and irreversible manner; entry into force of the CTBT at an early date; negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT); adoption of an NFU policy by all nuclear weapon states; abandonment of missile defence systems that ‘disrupt global strategic stability’; development of further NWFZs.  

Four areas of common interest emerge: further US-Russia force reductions, CTBT, FMCT, and Negative Security Assurances.

Force reductions: both the UK and China continue to look to the US and Russia to negotiate a further nuclear arms reductions treaty after New START and will only consider including their own nuclear forces when further US-Russia reductions have been negotiated and implemented. China insists that ‘countries with the largest nuclear arsenals bear special and primary responsibilities, and should continue to take the lead in drastically reducing their nuclear arsenals in a verifiable, irreversible and legally binding way so as to create necessary conditions for achieving the ultimate goal of complete and thorough nuclear disarmament.’
**CTBT:** China has established a competent national agency to prepare for implementation of the CTBT and participated in the work of the CTBT Preparatory Commission and all Conferences on Facilitating the Entry into Force of the CTBT. China supports concerted efforts to facilitate its entry into force. As one of the earliest signatories of CTBT, China has been actively preparing for Treaty implementation in China by establishing national monitoring stations on its territory. China also actively participates in the provisional and trial operation of the International Monitoring System (IMS) and the International Data Center (IDC). After the Fukushima nuclear accident in Japan, China has, upon the request of the Provisional Technical Secretariat (PTS), transmitted relevant data on a daily basis, contributing to the relevant research and analysis.

The UK has signed and ratified the CTBT; it conducted its last nuclear test at the US Nevada Test Site in 1992, and in 1998 signed and ratified the CTBT that was successfully negotiated in 1996 to ban all explosive nuclear testing. By way of compensation it has since invested heavily in a suite of facilities under the Warhead Assurance Programme at the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) at Aldermaston to ensure the long-term safety, security, and reliability of its nuclear arsenal without explosive nuclear testing.

**FMCT:** the UK has declared a moratorium on the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons and has given full support to the negotiation on an FMCT in the Conference on Disarmament. China has dropped its longstanding linkage between the FMCT and a multilateral negotiation process to prevent the weaponisation of, and arms race in, outer space and agreed to hold separate talks in order to help start the FMCT negotiation. In recent years, some countries suggested beginning the negotiation of an FMCT outside the Conference on Disarmament (CD), in order to overcome the institution’s diplomatic deadlock that has prevented any substantive work on nuclear disarmament issues for well over a decade. China disagrees with this approach and holds that the CD remains ‘the sole appropriate forum for the negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty’. This position, generally shared by the UK, is that it will be meaningless to begin negotiations without all relevant parties involved. China has not declared a formal moratorium on production of fissile material for weapon purposes but it is widely suspected that such production has ceased. The 2010 International Panel on Fissile Materials Global Report, for example, states that ‘while China has not declared officially that it has ended HEU and plutonium production for weapons, it is believed to have done so after Beijing began to give priority to its economic and political reforms in 1978. China moved to reduce military HEU and plutonium production, switching some facilities to civilian purposes and closing others, finally stopping production of HEU in 1987 and of plutonium by about 1990.'
Negative Security Assurances and NWFZs: China gives strong support to the establishment of NWFZs. Establishment of such zones can set effective limits to the geographical proliferation of nuclear weapons. As noted above, China promises that it will ‘not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones.’ China recognises the importance of nuclear weapon-free zones and the Negative Security Assurances that accompany ratification of protocols of NWFZ treaties by the nuclear weapon states.

The UK also acknowledges the desire from Non-Nuclear Weapon States to receive multilateral guarantees from the Nuclear Weapon States that they will not be threatened or attacked with nuclear weapons. It argues that the best way of achieving such guarantees is through protocols annexed to treaties creating NWFZs and fully supports the development of additional zones.

III. Emphasis on Nuclear Transparency for Confidence-Building
Transparency has become an important motif in the nuclear disarmament discourse of both China and the UK, but it takes different forms in each case, reflecting the different paths to reconciling the tension between desires for nuclear disarmament, nuclear possession, and conceptions of credible nuclear practice.

China emphasises transparency of intention through its NFU policy and the unequivocal commitment to not using, or threatening to use, nuclear weapons against Non-Nuclear Weapon States and NWFZs. In 2011 China stated that ‘this open, unequivocal and transparent nuclear policy makes China unique among all nuclear-weapon states.’ The UK, in contrast, doubts the credibility of a NFU policy and insists on a degree of ‘strategic ambiguity’ as to the conditions under which it would or would not consider nuclear use. It is also constrained by NATO nuclear policy, as noted above.

The UK has sought to diffuse nuclear mistrust and build confidence through a number of transparency measures focused on force structure, notably a formal declaration of the size of the UK’s total warhead inventory and published accounts of its holdings and history of highly-enriched uranium and weapon-grade plutonium production. China has rejected calls for a comparable form of transparency on the basis that this would, when combined with its NFU policy, undermine the credibility of its nuclear deterrent, particularly given the absence of a nuclear alliance.

IV. Next Steps
In summary, the UK and China as two small nuclear powers that have adopted a series of self-restraint measures and ‘minimum’ conceptions of nuclear deterrence in policy and practice, have moved closest to the ultimate goal
of a nuclear weapon-free world. Despite the great difference between their ideologies, alliance strategies, sizes and geopolitical environments, they share similar views on a range of nuclear arms control issues. By listening to their suggestions and following their examples, the other nuclear powers could precipitate the realisation of global zero. In particular:

First: all nuclear powers should commit to the existing NWFZ agreements and protocols and help push forward the process of establishing a NWFZ in the Middle East.

Second: all nuclear powers should give a legally-binding Negative Security Assurance to Non-Nuclear Weapon States. From China’s perspective, the key to resolving the contradiction between possession and elimination of nuclear weapons is a commitment to NFU. While unilateral commitments might increase the security risk a country faces, a multilateral treaty will effectively enhance confidence between Nuclear Weapon States and Non-Nuclear Weapon States. In January 1994 China presented a draft text of the Treaty on the No-First-Use of Nuclear Weapons to the other four nuclear-weapon states, but was rejected by three of them. Only Russia chose to sign a NFU agreement with China. In recent years, NFU has gained more support from countries around the world. The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, co-sponsored by Australia and Japan, supported the idea of no-first use in their final report. The US 2010 NPR admitted the desirability of NFU by stating ‘the United States is therefore not prepared at the present time to adopt a universal policy that deterring nuclear attack is the sole purpose of nuclear weapons, but will work to establish conditions under which such a policy could be safely adopted.”62

An opportunity exists to promote the idea for progression from a unilateral to a bilateral level and then to a multilateral level. China and the UK can demonstrate leadership in this respect by signing a bilateral NFU agreement. The two countries can also co-operate to encourage other countries to join the related discussions. If at this point a NFU agreement is too difficult for other Nuclear Weapon States a first step could involve a multilateral treaty on negative security assurances.

Third: all nuclear powers should take measures to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategies and international politics. Such a process could expand future stages of the US-Russia START process beyond a central focus on quantitative reductions in delivery vehicles and warhead numbers and a fixation on nuclear parity to include other categories of measures that further restrict the practice of nuclear deterrence. This could centre on a package of measures, including:

• Further verifiable reductions in US and Russian nuclear arsenals and the much more challenging task of verifiable reductions in warhead numbers
• Reduced alert status of operationally-deployed nuclear forces
• Collective commitment to start FMCT negotiation as early as possible.

Fourth: the P5 should maintain a sustained process of expert-level discussion about nuclear arms control terminology. As delegates with different native languages meet together to talk about nuclear disarmament issues, it is important for them to agree on the meaning of the terms they use. The Chinese Scientists Group on Arms Control of the Chinese People’s Association for Peace and Disarmament and the Committee on International Security and Arms Control of the US National Academy of Sciences has already produced a glossary of Nuclear Security terms in 2008. A similar project has been launched within the framework of P5 talks. More resources and personnel should be invested in that project to lay ground for further multilateral talks.

Fifth: nuclear powers should launch talks on the security conditions required for further nuclear disarmament. The UK holds that ‘reducing and eliminating nuclear weapons without also addressing the balance of power in other respects could be dangerously destabilising. A global ban will need to be preceded or accompanied by developments in political and military relationships which no longer rely on nuclear weapons to deter.’ China also holds that eliminating nuclear weapons without also addressing the balance of power in other respects could be dangerously destabilising. Nuclear powers should start a project to study topics that have significant impact upon nuclear arms control, such as missile defence, space weaponisation and advanced conventional weapons.

These actions and initiatives could be discussed either within the P5 process, initiated by the UK or UN General Assembly. They could constitute a vital means of fostering consensus on fulfilment of the specific steps outlined in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Final Document ‘Action Plan’ that builds on the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament and the 2000 NPT Review Conference Final Document’s ‘13 Steps’. The statement issued by the P5 after the Paris conference in 2011 reported: a ‘determination to work together in pursuit of their shared goal of nuclear disarmament under article VI of the NPT, including engagement on the steps outlined in Action 5’, which states.

The nuclear-weapon States commit to accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament, contained in the Final Document of the 2000 Review Conference, in a way that promotes international stability, peace and undiminished and increased security. To that end, they are called upon to promptly engage with a view to, inter alia: (a) Rapidly moving towards an overall reduction in the global stockpile of all types of nuclear weapons, as identified in action 3; (b) Address the question of all
nuclear weapons regardless of their type or their location as an integral part of the general nuclear disarmament process; (c) To further diminish the role and significance of nuclear weapons in all military and security concepts, doctrines and policies; (d) Discuss policies that could prevent the use of nuclear weapons and eventually lead to their elimination, lessen the danger of nuclear war and contribute to the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons; (e) Consider the legitimate interest of non-nuclear-weapon States in further reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons systems in ways that promote international stability and security; (f) Reduce the risk of accidental use of nuclear weapons; and (g) Further enhance transparency and increase mutual confidence.

Common efforts by the P5 in the area of nuclear arms control and cumulative progress on agreed challenges are important to convince sceptical domestic audiences and Non-Nuclear Weapon States that the P5 are actively working towards fulfilment of political commitments made over successive NPT cycles through collaborative endeavour. As two Nuclear Weapon States that have long promoted nuclear disarmament and a minimum practice of nuclear deterrence, the UK and China have much to gain from concerted and co-ordinated leadership in various multilateral frameworks.

Notes and References

1. General Pan Zhenqiang makes the case that ‘China is the most responsible nuclear weapon state’, in ‘China Insistence on No-First Use of Nuclear Weapons’, China Security (Issue 1, Autumn 2005).


3. In a televised debate between Liberal Democrat Party leader Nick Clegg, Conservative Party leader David Cameron and Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown, David Cameron said ‘are we really happy to say that we’d give up our independent nuclear deterrent when we don’t know what is going to happen with Iran, we can’t be certain of the future in China, we don’t know exactly what our world will look like? I say we should always have the ultimate protection of our independent nuclear deterrent’. First Prime Ministerial Debate, 15 April 2010, BBC News Online transcript, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_04_10_firstdebate.pdf>, accessed 23 April 2010.


10. HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, Cm 7948 (London: The Stationery Office, October 2010), pp. 37–38. The assurance does not apply to states in material breach of NPT obligations and the assurance may be reviewed if states developing chemical or biological weapons directly threaten the UK.


14. ‘Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons’, Advisory Opinion at the request of the UN General Assembly (ICJ Reports, 8 July 1996), para 95.


16. See Defence Secretary Des Browne in *Hansard*, House of Commons debates, 12 March 2007, Col. 56W.

17. See the resolution in ‘Follow-up to the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons’, A/C.1/66/L.42, UN General Assembly First Committee, 17 October 2011. China has voted in favour of the resolution every year, except for 2008 when it abstained.


24. Hansard, House of Commons debates, 22 May 2006, Col. 1331W.

25. Miller, op. cit.


34. Zhenqiang, *op. cit.*


50. Ibid.

51. Statement of the Chinese Delegation at the Thematic Debate on Nuclear Disarmament at the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly First Committee, 13 October 2011.

52. Statement by the Chinese Delegation at Main Committee I of the 2010 Review Conference, op. cit. in note 45.


56. Statement by Counsellor Zhang Jun’an, op. cit. 44.


59. Duncan, op. cit. in note 49.

60. Jun’an, op. cit. in note 44.


The UK has taken a lead in establishing the embryonic P5 dialogue process beginning with the London Conference on Confidence Building Measures towards Nuclear Disarmament in September 2009, followed by a second gathering in Paris in July 2011 to consider progress on the commitments made at the NPT Review Conference in May 2010. Discussions have centred on nuclear weapons verification, transparency and confidence-building measures, non-proliferation, and exchanging information on nuclear doctrine and capabilities. The UK has subsequently offered to host discussions on verification at an expert-level meeting in London in early 2012 to be followed by a third P5 conference in the context of the next NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in May 2012. The process has generated a number of important outcomes, including establishment of a working group to develop an agreed glossary of key nuclear terms, a common position to renew P5 efforts to promote FMCT negotiations, and agreement on a process for P5 ratification of the Protocol to the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone (Treaty of Bangkok).


The Future of Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Shen Dingli and Paul Schulte

Chinese and British consideration of the urgent and far-reaching issue of nuclear non-proliferation should start from recognition of the two nations’ special responsibilities as members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and of the enormous global value, but increasing fragility, of the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Although global, the NPT has never attained true universality. Israel has remained outside of the regime and receives unyielding US protection against pressure to make the Middle East nuclear weapons-free, at least in the present environment, where regional hostility predominates and the verification of national nuclear activities cannot be effectively achieved. Since the end of the Cold War, a number of countries, including India, Pakistan and North Korea, have openly demonstrated their nuclear weapons capability through nuclear explosive tests. After technically benefiting from its membership, Pyongyang challenged the non-proliferation regime by withdrawing from the NPT in 2003 and carrying out two nuclear explosive tests soon after in 2006 and 2009, in spite of the process of ‘Six Party Talks’ since 2003 and further demonstrating its uranium enrichment capacity. Iran was revealed in the early 2000s to have initiated an undisclosed uranium enrichment programme and continues to reject International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and UNSC calls to suspend its enrichment activities.

The Non-Nuclear Weapon States have consistently criticised the five official Nuclear Weapons States recognised in the NPT for delays in nuclear disarmament. Although this did not prevent the successful conclusion of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the Conference insisted on preparation of an Action Plan. It included a pledge to convene a conference in 2012 on establishing the Middle East as a Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction (ZFWMD). This is now a high-profile expectation, but substantive progress is unlikely. Despite signing up to the Middle East ZFWMD concept, the US will be opposed to anything that would explicitly constrain Israel's nuclear option.

Deadlock over disarmament and arms control in the Middle East deepens the already existing sense of discrimination within the non-proliferation regime, although of course Iranian nuclear activities, which are causing genuine alarm in the Gulf, can now be labelled a major destabilising regional factor. US efforts to exempt India from being embargoed by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), while keeping Pakistan sanctioned, cannot increase either New Delhi’s or Islamabad’s interest in the success of global non-proliferation efforts. Military action against Iraq in 2003 and Libya in 2011 could intensify
beliefs in Pyongyang, Tehran and elsewhere about the importance of nuclear weapons in deterring external attack and regime change.

North Korea and Iran present the two most challenging cases of contemporary nuclear proliferation. All UNSC sanctions resolutions have so far failed to rein in North Korea. In addition to plutonium reprocessing, North Korea deliberately revealed that it has been simultaneously developing the uranium enrichment route. Similarly, Iran has so far treated all IAEA/UNSC calls to end its uranium enrichment with contempt. As Iran has enriched U-235 to twenty per cent already, and has recently increased its stockpile of centrifuges, it has brought itself much closer to nuclear breakout, should it aspire to enrich to weapons grade at ninety-three per cent in the future. Clearly, both countries’ behaviour poses challenges to the credibility of the United Nations and its specialist instrument in the nuclear field, the IAEA.

While these and other issues are easily raised in criticism of the NPT, the Treaty is certainly unrepeatable. If the NPT slowly collapses, it is unrealistic to expect any similarly wide-ranging and inclusive successor treaty. Production capability for nuclear weapons will spread to many more countries, creating the possibility of further cascades among anxious neighbours and rivals. A far larger and faster wave of nuclear weapons proliferation could be expected across much of the world because of the rising technical sophistication of ever larger numbers of nations and the nuclear renaissance in power production which will make it easier to disguise and supply military programmes.

More positively, the NPT was indefinitely extended at the 1995 Review Conference and the importance of the regime is now universally accepted, even by non-members. Indonesia ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) on 6 December 2011, leaving only eight countries listed in Annex II to ratify the treaty before making it effective. The New START Treaty has both re-set US-Russia relations and revived the prospect of deeper cuts in the two countries’ strategic nuclear weapons arsenals in the present decade, which are the indispensable precondition for further worldwide reductions. The US and UK military enforcement action against Iraq in 2003, though legally controversial, not only ended international suspicions about the continuation of prohibited Iraqi WMD, but incidentally induced Libya to terminate its own nuclear weapons efforts.

In regard to non-proliferation, the UNSC Summit on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, in September 2009, reasserted international cooperation on these issues. In addition, the outcome of the Nuclear Security Summits in Washington, DC in 2010 and in Seoul this year will continue to improve international arrangements for the security of nuclear facilities and fissile materials. Encouragingly, the Obama Administration also announced in the 2010 US Nuclear Posture Review that it will give negative security
assurances, for the first time, to Non-Nuclear Weapon State signatories of the NPT.

**Current Chinese and UK Non-Proliferation Policy**
Both the Chinese and UK governments can claim that they are, in different ways, global leaders over nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

*The People’s Republic of China*
China continues to do its part to thwart WMD proliferation. China has deliberately maintained one of the smallest nuclear arsenals in the world, despite the fact that threats from a nuclear superpower forced China to develop its own nuclear weapons. In addition, although the fact that this superpower still engages militarily in what China insists are its core national interests, Beijing has intentionally kept a minimum deterrence posture, restricting the role of its strategic deterrent to being purely retaliatory through its No-First Use (NFU) doctrine. At present, China is the only Nuclear Weapon State issuing such an unconditional negative security assurance to all Non-Nuclear Weapon States. This message is intended to de-emphasise the political role of nuclear weapons in contemporary international affairs and discourage nuclear proliferation.

Over time, China has significantly strengthened its non-proliferation export control systems. At State Council level, China has extended national regulations on export control over various dual-use items and technologies related to nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, as well as missile components. Some Chinese export control lists are more rigorous than those of the relevant international regimes. The central government has streamlined their effectiveness by creating an inter-agency mechanism to co-ordinate interdepartmental export control policies. Reportedly, China has worked with other members of the international community to stem efforts to ship sensitive materials from the country and to prevent the movement of sensitive material through China. Beijing supports UNSCR 1540 and understands the significance, and shares the goals, of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). However, it prefers to remain outside the PSI due to concerns over its compatibility with existing international law.

China has supported all IAEA and UNSC decisions on Iranian and North Korean nuclear development. It understands the two countries’ need for civilian nuclear development, but opposes their lack of transparency and accountability. In this context, China has joined other UNSC members seeking to uphold the non-proliferation regime. Beijing launched ‘Six-Party Talks’ in spring 2003, soon after North Korea had withdrawn from the NPT, making strenuous efforts to bring Pyongyang back to the nuclear discussion table. After the sinking of the Cheonan and Yeonpyeong shelling in 2010, China stepped up its efforts to revive the talks in partnership with other members
of the talks. Following the recent leadership succession in Pyongyang, China is again taking a leadership role to ensure the stability of the Korean Peninsula while pushing for the revival of the talks without preconditions. Given the recent improvement in relations between the US and North Korea, it is more hopeful that all parties will resume their talks in Beijing.

On Iran, China has supported all UNSCRs sanctioning Iran for violating its obligations under the IAEA Safeguards Agreement and its refusal to suspend uranium enrichment. China remains part of the ‘P5+1’ mechanism to settle Iran’s nuclear issue through diplomacy. After the IAEA released its report on Iran on 8 November 2011, the Chinese government issued a stern warning against further Iranian nuclear development. But China, like Russia, is unwilling to agree to additional sanctions against Iran, since existing sanctions have failed to prompt change. China has made clear its doubts about the effectiveness of sanctions in prompting fundamental change, but is well aware of the arguments from the EU and US. As a result, it has recently reduced its oil imports from Iran.

The United Kingdom

As a long established and responsible Nuclear Weapon State, the UK has also been a consistently strong supporter of nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation. In 2006, its Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office jointly presented to Parliament a report entitled *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent*. The document proposed to maintain the UK nuclear deterrent while strengthening non-proliferation efforts. But the UK has adopted a determined sequence of unilateral reductions in its deterrent forces. It is the only Nuclear Weapon State to move to a single weapon system: the secure second-strike Trident submarine-launched ballistic missile with British manufactured nuclear warheads. It has also taken a global lead in transparency, providing detailed numbers of its progressively smaller nuclear holdings. Operationally available warheads have been reduced from a maximum of 200 in 1998, to 160 in 2006. An announcement by the new Coalition Government in 2010 stated that this number would be cut further to 120 within the next few years. The maximum number of warheads on a deployed submarine is to be reduced from forty-eight to forty. The total stockpile of UK nuclear weapons is due to fall from ‘not more than 225’ in 2010, to ‘not more than 180’ by the mid-2020s. In the area of non-proliferation, the UK government works closely within the IAEA to develop assurances of supply for nuclear fuels, providing energy security without the need for proliferation of sensitive enrichment technology. The UK has described itself as willing to act as a laboratory for arms control and is widely described by others as the most forward-leaning of the P5 on nuclear disarmament.
The UK and other P5 members plus Germany have forged a ‘P5+1’ international diplomatic effort to convince Iran to fully co-operate with the IAEA over international concerns about its nuclear programme. The UK government continues to support the creation of an effective and verifiable WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East. It was one of the leading proponents of UNSCR 1540, which established legally-binding obligations on all UN member states to take steps to combat WMD proliferation. The UK has also been actively involved in driving forward the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). It is a leading and active member of all WMD export control regimes and has committed to the G8 Global Partnership for Cooperative Threat Reduction and also the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), alongside China.

**Key Proliferation-Related Diplomatic Issues**

*The CTBT*

Since the CTBT opened for signature in 1996, 156 countries have joined and ratified the Treaty. However, of the forty-four countries listed in Annex II, eight are still required before the Treaty can enter into force: China, North Korea, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Pakistan and the US. China has indicated that it could ratify the Treaty if America does. Given current international circumstances, the CTBT may never come into force, as North Korea, India, and Pakistan will likely wish to keep their nuclear test options open. North Korea, typically, has more incentive to do so, given its suspicious attitude toward the rest of the world and the uncertainties associated with its succession politics. However, as part of its succession politics, North Korea has recently indicated that it will observe a moratorium on nuclear tests in order to improve relations with the US. Iran is unlikely to change its position while it continues its confrontation with the international community. With the Muslim Brotherhood’s successes in the recent Egyptian parliamentary election, the new Egyptian establishment could be more unlikely to revise Hosni Mubarak’s policy to refuse to ratify the CTBT, not least because of Israel. There is a strong case for the Security Council to look at ways in which obstacles to this almost universally desired treaty could be overcome.

*The Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty*

A Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) has been on the international agenda for nearly two decades. In 1993 President Clinton called for negotiation of a multilateral FMCT, banning the production of fissile materials outside international safeguards. However, little has happened since then as the Conference on Disarmament (CD) could not reach a unanimous decision, initially due to China and Russia’s linking of FMCT negotiations with the talks on Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS) and later US concerns about the verifiability of such a treaty. Though both China and the US have since dropped their objections, Pakistan has persistently blocked talks by citing its special national security concerns. Progress within the CD, with near
global consensus, is obviously desirable. But at some point, if the absolute stalemate in Geneva continues, it may be necessary for the international community to consider whether negotiations might be continued within some other framework.

*Special P5 Responsibilities for the NPT*

The P5 members of the Security Council have acknowledged their special responsibility to protect the NPT. The NPT regime is plagued by distrust, national special pleading, resentment at the nuclear bargain and double-dealing disguised as principled opposition. These particularly destructive political, ideological and military factors will intensify the entropy inherent within any ambitious international system. No such system, whether regulating trade, finance, intervention or weapons of mass destruction, can hold firm without continual additional inputs of energy, attention and political determination. Almost all states claim to support the NPT regime, but only the P5 can be expected to expend political resources, to refrain from seeking diplomatic or commercial advantage in the way they discharge their role in NPT compliance disputes and to subordinate national interests on a scale which matches the long-term importance of the Treaty. If they fail to do so, they could also undermine their own claim to be the ultimate arbiters on security questions.

To make the UNSC work as historically intended and globally expected, members need to forge trust with one another. This can only occur through full understanding of each other’s national and global concerns, achieved by exchanges of perspective about international security and strategy. In particular, P5 countries should work to enhance their co-operation and to assist each other in addressing crucial aspects of national interest. Co-operation and understanding in terms of non-proliferation cannot be divorced from co-operation and understanding on other issues, especially those regarded as core national interests. Each P5 member faces different, particularly sensitive, and difficult decisions over upholding the NPT. These should be appreciated, discussed and resultant disagreements resolved. But, if it is to maintain its credibility, the UNSC also needs to make clear that it will take action if its clearly announced red lines are crossed and will not be held hostage to prolonged internal disputes.

Recent authoritative reports such as the 2004 *Report of the Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change,*\(^2\) and the 2006 Blix WMD Commission’s final report *Weapons of Terror,*\(^3\) have repeatedly stressed the indispensable role of the UNSC in maintaining global governance of dangerous technologies. They were written with full awareness of the difficulties of the Iraqi and Iranian compliance crises.
Nuclear Hedging and the NPT Regime

It was clear from the initial negotiation of the NPT that its emphasis on national entitlement to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes would create a vulnerability to unscrupulous states who might wish to remain outwardly in compliance as members of the Treaty, while inwardly seeking to build a latent nuclear capability. The behaviour of Saddam’s Iraq, North Korea and now, particularly, Iran, indicate that ‘cheating within the Treaty’ is not a theoretical possibility but a major threat to the regime’s credibility. Even if such nations decide to hold back from nuclear testing and evident weaponisation, there is silent damage to international belief that restraint is worthwhile. In the kind of world which would be created by a spreading loss of confidence, nuclear hedging – ‘a national strategy of maintaining, or at least appearing to maintain, a viable option for the relatively rapid acquisition of nuclear weapons based on an indigenous technical capacity’⁴ – would become the standard security choice for a large number of nations. This cannot have been the expectation of those who drafted the NPT.

It must be the long-term goal of the UNSC and all other responsible states to create a global security environment where there is no need for nuclear hedging. In the meantime, the international community led by the P5 needs to take action, by means including sanctions, to prevent states hedging, in order that a more peaceful and nuclear weapons-free environment remains achievable. UNSC members, and indeed all NPT signatories, are committed to preserving the possibility of a world without nuclear weapons and this in turn cannot in the long term be compatible with policies which would accept arrangements leading to the emergence of more and more ‘threshold states’. Nor, in the light of recent experience, can it now be expected that peace and international harmony will be preserved by holding back from controversial enforcement measures against non-compliance with NPT commitments and necessary co-operation with the IAEA.

Events in Tehran have emphasised that, rather than accept openly hostile regimes shrugging off international criticism and moving towards nuclear weapons capability within the NPT, some states are resorting to measures such as assassination, kinetic sabotage and advanced cyber-attack; it is possible that there may also be direct military attacks on nuclear installations. Mentioning such responses as possibilities does not justify them. They are unquestionably dangerous, probably illegal and likely to lead to cycles of lasting resentment and deeper hostility. But if nothing effective is done within the legal parameters of the NPT and with all the authority of the UN, we may have to expect that profoundly destabilising consequences could emerge from other states acting without such authority.

For all these reasons, the question of possible courses of action to ensure the survival of the non-proliferation regime as NPT Non-Nuclear Weapon States
approach the technical capacity to produce nuclear weapons is of enormous importance to every P5 member. The Iran compliance crisis increases its urgency, but the problem is likely to recur elsewhere in the future, making it vital to examine the generic issues raised as dispassionately as possible.

Future Realities and Multilateral Approaches
There may now be little chance of reversing the nuclear ambitions of North Korea and Iran. Both countries are sovereign and their regimes probably judge nuclear weapons, or near nuclear-weapons capability, as important to their security as the legally defined Nuclear Weapon States do. With ‘Global Zero’ very far-off, these countries will attempt to hedge, or in North Korea’s case defiantly broadcast, their nuclear weapons capability. It should be noted that when China enjoyed the USSR’s defence protection in the 1950s under the Sino-Soviet military alliance, Beijing still proceeded with its own nuclear weapons programme. Although North Korea also currently enjoys China’s protection through their mutual-assistance treaty, it is similarly unlikely to bet on extended deterrence, rather than seeking to produce and build up its own independent source of ultimate security. Just as the UK, China, and the other NWS maintain their own national nuclear deterrents, North Korea and Iran are likely to want to build and keep their national nuclear capabilities unless new factors can be introduced to influence their calculations.

North Korea
As North Korean leaders’ political tenure outlasts their western counterparts, Pyongyang may continue to bet on the US changing its stance and coming to accept North Korea’s nuclear capabilities. There are certainly precedents for this. The US opposed Israel’s nuclear weapons development but came to excuse them. America imposed sanctions on India following New Delhi’s nuclear weapons tests, but soon lifted most of them for geopolitical and economic considerations. It removed all such sanctions on India and Pakistan after launching its War on Terror after 9/11 and even formed a non-NATO alliance partnership with Pakistan. No doubt in response to China’s rise, the US has even worked to lift the Nuclear Suppliers Group prohibitions on nuclear exports imposed on India. Consequently, a number of Western countries have revised their previous policy of not exporting uranium to India. Similarly, the length and intensity of hostilities between America and North Korea is unusual, but, given even a hint of change in the nature of the regime, it is not completely implausible that Washington might effectively tolerate a nuclear Pyongyang in the next decade.

While North Korea persists in such expectations (of which they may not be disabused by any statements that the US can make) there is little likelihood that the country will reverse its nuclear course. Nuclear weapons and missile delivery systems seem to provide it with a useful economic potential for blackmail or illicit trade. But this does not mean that the rest of the world
should leave North Korea unengaged. The ‘Six-Party Talks’ remain a collective and co-operative means to reduce nuclear tensions. With a new North Korean leader, it is imperative to maintain peninsular stability through dialogue and test a possible new window of opportunity for engagement. Commitment to nuclear non-proliferation needs to be balanced with a concern for regional stability. It is thus important to sustain diplomatic dialogue and to avoid a humanitarian crisis in North Korea. China lately exchanged views with the US, South Korea and Japan, and achieved consensus with them in this regard. Providing humanitarian aid, including necessary food, also remains an incentive for responsible North Korean behaviour. Indeed, North Korea and the US have reached a deal involving a nuclear moratorium in exchange for food aid.

There are arguments that the international community should reframe its strategy to de-nuclearise North Korea by shifting to a less ambitious approach of ‘capping, freezing, and reversing’, rather than demanding immediate, comprehensive, verifiable nuclear disarmament. The US and other western countries could normalise relations with Pyongyang as a way of incentivising abandonment of its nuclear weapons programme. The prospect of unfreezing entrenched hostilities could obviously be attractive, as long as the UN would not make concessions to North Korea if it still refuses to give up its nuclear weapons. Otherwise, there would be substantial implications for world order and the inevitable risk of setting a precedent. It would need to be deeply analysed and thoroughly debated.

Iran

Iran is following a previously successful nuclear proliferation strategy. Israel, India, and North Korea all built nuclear reactors, allegedly for peaceful power generation, to allow for the possibility of breaking out. All three cases had different security contexts. However, once they passed the nuclear threshold, none of them had their nuclear infrastructure attacked (although Arab states went to war with Israel in 1973). Pakistan is another example of successful breakout, albeit without an initial reactor.

Iran is challenging the NPT regime by openly violating IAEA/UNSC decisions, but apparently remains cautious in deciding exactly how far to proceed. It seems to be seeking to secure an independent ability to produce its own fissile materials, possibly to support a military nuclear programme under the guise of civilian nuclear energy and medical research. As emphasised elsewhere in this paper, ‘cheating within the treaty’ has become the most vulnerable aspect of the NPT. In an attempt to resolve the deadlock Turkey, endorsed by the UN Secretary-General, has proposed a fissile material swap with Iran. Though this is a compromise arrangement, it would not terminate Iran’s own programme of uranium enrichment.
The long Iranian compliance crisis is still reversible. If Iran were to come back into compliance with its obligations to the IAEA and implement the Additional Protocol it has signed to prove its intention to remain an authentic Non-Nuclear Weapon State, the Gulf could still maintain a fragile, if not precarious, nuclear stability. The path towards a WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East would also be less obviously blocked.

As the major powers are split, it is not clear what further leverage will be exerted through the latest instalment of oil sanctions on Iran. It has to be accepted that, even if all the P5 members (and others) acted together, Iran still might not change its nuclear policy. In other words, no incentive has been identified or devised, which is certain to induce the Iranian government to revert to compliance. In these circumstances, a realistic approach might be to avoid a repeat of North Korea’s withdrawal into completely unmonitored nuclear secrecy and to press for Iran to maintain its NPT status. Assuring continued access to Iran’s nuclear facilities would help the world to remain adequately informed before any critical decision had to be made by the UNSC or by individual UN Member States.

The IAEA and UNSC will unquestionably play a pivotal role in these two crises, which will in turn prove critical for the NPT’s future. As argued above, the IAEA should keep trying to monitor the status of North Korea’s nuclear programme, to determine whether its fissile stockpile has grown, regardless of its relations with the rest of the world. It will be similarly crucial to continue IAEA inspections at declared Iranian nuclear sites and to request and implement Challenge Inspections elsewhere when necessary. The international community – China and the UK included – should make every diplomatic effort (one such idea to discourage withdrawal from the NPT is outlined below) to help ensure that North Korea and Iran co-operate in these minimum efforts towards continuing transparency. Based on information and technical judgements by the IAEA, it will then be up to the UNSC to decide how to respond to challenges as they develop. Once again, trust-building among the P5 and major powers will remain vital to the UNSC’s ability to reach consensus on firm action.

Addressing Threats to the NPT: P5 and UNSC Leadership

In its deliberations, the UNSC should start by accepting that technological change should determine international regulatory practice. More nations will become highly sophisticated operators of nuclear power with the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons, as Japan could in a few weeks or months. What fundamentally distinguishes Japan from Iran is its behaviour: an absence of detected clandestine activity and a demonstrated record of willingness to accept safeguards, to allow access by inspectors and to answer technical enquiries directly. By contrast, Iran exemplifies quite the opposite position, upsetting the international community. It conducts extensive, highly
expensive secret acquisition and construction activities and, when they are
revealed, often refuses to answer questions about them and denounces the
evidence as ‘false’.

This form of state behaviour has the potential to undermine a transparent
and co-operative approach to international dispute resolution. If tolerated,
continuing refusal of the evidence or judgements of international bodies
staffed and supervised by the rest of the world would jeopardise the UNSC’s
ability to discharge its obligations to prevent international proliferation. It
is thus important that the UNSC should support the IAEA and its Board of
Governors in early identification and strong criticism of such behaviour, which
is not uniquely Iranian, but also familiar from North Korea, Syria, and Saddam’s
Iraq. It may also be necessary to question the easy resort to commercial
confidentiality used to justify refusals to give technical explanations. It is
not at all obvious that the economics of nuclear power generation are so
fiercely commercially competitive that these considerations should obstruct
reasonable enquiries from the IAEA.

Defining the Most Serious Proliferation Sensitive Nuclear Activities
If states do persist in ignoring the international rules which they have
accepted by membership of the NPT, what activities should be of greatest
concern to the UNSC? Given the objectives of the NPT, it must follow that
these will involve any evidence of a ‘possible military dimension’ (PMD),
but also those aspects of nuclear engineering which are most relevant to
the proliferation of nuclear weapons and least likely to be justified by the
technical or economic logic of civilian power production. For this, there is a
far-reaching precedent. The UNSC has already found it possible to reach and
maintain consensus in December 2006 in UNSCR 1737 and other resolutions
since, that enrichment-related and reprocessing activities and all heavy
water related projects are ‘proliferation sensitive nuclear activities’. This is
an authoritative, logical and easily explicable categorisation, and Iran was
consequently required to suspend such activities. If the Resolution and its
successors are not implemented the credibility of future UNSCRs in all fields
will be diminished.

There is a further useful precedent that might be borne in mind when
moderating the practical consequences of the firm measures necessary to
prevent hedging and breakout. Disputes over the right to Peaceful Uses of
Nuclear Explosions (PNEs) were eventually overcome by agreement that while
all states parties have the right to benefit from nuclear explosive technology,
this did not necessarily mean the right to possess that specific technology
themselves, though such a right has not yet been discounted outright. There
are obvious implications here for fuel banks and assured supply.
Necessary firmness by the Security Council might of course lead to decisions by threshold states to leave the NPT, as North Korea did in 2003, having previously benefited from access to materials, equipment and assistance. Although not prohibited by the Treaty itself, this represents a very serious and far-reaching abuse of international trust. Judging the right UNSC response will certainly present extremely difficult diplomatic choices. There is a detailed proposal, worthy of close study, by former IAEA Safeguards Director Pierre Goldschmidt, which would mitigate this problem by allowing the UNSC to take advantage of ‘automaticity’, binding itself in advance that all such cases would be handled in the same way:

The UNSC should adopt a Chapter VII generic resolution declaring that a notification of withdrawal from a NNWS that is in non-compliance with its NPT safeguards constitutes a threat to international peace and security. The resolution could specify a number of disincentives that would be automatically implemented in such a case. Another important measure would be to require that any proliferation sensitive nuclear fuel cycle facility located in NNWSs be subject to a facility specific INFCIRC/66-type safeguards agreement with the IAEA which, unlike a Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA), does not lapse if the state withdraws from the NPT. The Nuclear Suppliers Group should adopt this requirement as an export condition, starting with all material and equipment related to sensitive nuclear fuel cycle facilities.

The prospect of automaticity adds to deterrence, and the certainty of assured and unavoidable consequences would therefore make even reckless regimes think very carefully before leaving the NPT.

Debating, Setting and Communicating Generic Principles
But if agreement cannot be reached for this degree of automaticity, then P5 members should still discuss closely between them which nuclear activities they regard as the most serious threats to the integrity of the NPT and the measures which should be implemented in response. They should then agree on how these principles will be publicised and promulgated, as a warning and a commitment.

This discussion should set aside the specifics of individual cases insofar as possible, to avoid making collective judgments about nuclear developments in countries like Syria or Iran. Here, in the light of what is known – or uncertainly assessed – about regime intentions, political red lines and relative technical strengths, it may be necessary to judge which combination of activities are the least threatening. For example, to secure a prospective agreement, might it be better to allow enrichment to, perhaps, twenty per cent, under safeguards and with promises of cessation of weapons related research and improved access for inspectors? Or insist on a maximum five per cent with less overall verifiability? Or, given the officials concerned
and experience to date, would any attainable compromises give adequate assurance of adequately monitor-able future behaviour?

The judgements by P5 members of these trade-offs will be heavily influenced by their diplomatic and intelligence assessments of the country’s conditions, capabilities, personalities and motives, which will inevitably lead to a certain level of disagreement in individual cases. If there are such differences of judgement, it is essential that there will also be a willingness to move in a reasoned way towards common assessments built around evidence and a shared responsibility to maintain the non-proliferation regime.

**Enforcement**

It is evident that the P5 should collaboratively counter nuclear proliferation and promote co-operative nuclear threat reduction. But they, and the UNSC as a whole, need to establish whether suspected proliferants have legitimate explanations or reasonable concerns, and if so, whether there are suitable concessions, incentives, or inducements which could end disputes and modify their behaviour. The creation of internationally guaranteed fuel banks may be one such inducement. Where prolonged dialogue and detailed IAEA enquiries indicate that there are no credible excuses or legitimate concerns, the P5 will have the collective responsibility of devising and implementing calculated, effective responses to bring proliferants back into compliance.

Sanctions are likely to remain a primary mode of enforcement, but they need to be adjusted for individual circumstances in order to obtain maximum political effect. Sanctions are very often blunt instruments, but they can be tightened and focused on the officials and institutions most significantly linked with nuclear programmes. International co-operation will be necessary to achieve this without excessively damaging the economic prospects of the rest of the population. And the UNSC cannot function with the determination that the world has a right to expect if, among its members, Fred Ikle’s famous 1961 question about arms control cannot be honestly debated: ‘After Detection, What?’.

If not economic sanctions and diplomatic pressure, and if military action is to be excluded as we might all wish, then which other options can be proposed with any hope of eventual success?

**Consensus Building, Explanation, and Engagement**

While insisting that the UNSC must be the regulatory body ultimately responsible for the fate of the NPT and restraining the spread of nuclear danger in the world, it is of course also necessary to think of consensus, inducement and engagement as well as sanctions. It is vital that the P5 do not get trapped in an image of arrogant coercion. As the Blix Commission pointed out, ‘It is especially important that binding decisions should be preceded by effective consultation to ensure that they are supported by the membership of the UN and will be accepted and respected.’ No one should pretend
that the issues raised in the interpretation of the NPT are easy. Although it is possible to identify non-compliance, there is a need to explain as far as possible in advance the objective factors which prompt UNSC responses. It is also clear that, if the credibility of the institution is to be maintained, each of the P5 should contribute loyally and energetically to this diplomatic effort.

Regimes like those presently in Iran have taken populist advantage of high-temperature confrontations over WMD issues. They characteristically seek to improve their standing with sympathisers and co-religionists across the world by parading and broadcasting defiance. Lowering the temperature of compliance crises is therefore almost always desirable and in order to achieve the reversal of nuclear weapons ambitions it may be necessary to present it, not as enforcement but as a harmonious meeting of interests in a new compromise.

**Dialogue**
Regional tension and instability in South Asia, East Asia and the Middle East are strong drivers of nuclear proliferation. Reducing these wider regional tensions will help uphold the NPR and vice versa. The P5 can assist regional tension reduction in numerous ways. One of the most effective of these will be through the promotion of dialogue.

Dialogue on compliance issues is almost always desirable, except when it is an excuse for obstruction. Contemporary experience shows that, unaccompanied by creative rearrangement of positive and negative inducements, and without proof of concrete change, it may lead nowhere. But, as stated above, the Six Party Talks, for example, seem to have exercised some moderating influence over North Korea’s nuclear behaviour.

Dialogue might be improved by timely public commitments by P5 members and their close allies, promising military restraint. The negotiating atmosphere might be further enhanced by deliberately strengthened efforts at diplomatic communication with the non-compliant regime by all P5 members. But it should not be without consequences. If such attempts at improved dialogue were refused, or simply led to repetition of previously unsatisfactory – or straightforwardly false – assurances, then hard conclusions would have to be drawn.

**New Options Open to the UNSC**
It may, under special circumstances, be worth trying to emulate the success of the Technical Evaluation Meetings in Iraq run in 1998 by the UN to consider or disconfirm the plausibility of Iraqi statements. Although it would be important not to side-line the IAEA professional staff, there could be situations when deliberate reinforcement of this kind by the technical experts from all
UNSC members could enhance the international credibility of findings, as well as the significance of refusal to enter into focused technical questioning.

Finally, it is worth remembering the potential of the UNSC to intervene directly in the moral suasion of public opinion in states of concern. The Iranian government, for example, has not publicly attacked the NPT framework, but instead continually insists that its national activities are consistent with it. It would be possible for the UNSC to address the Iranian people and other publics in the same situation, to jointly emphasise several vital points: that their government’s statements had been closely and expertly examined but were not consistent with its real behaviour; that much was at stake, including the future security and prosperity of their children; and, that the world community earnestly wanted a realistic compromise. While that might not by itself reverse non-compliance and could not work with tightly controlled audiences like those in North Korea, governments there might be anxious to avoid such a focused and authoritative message.

The UNSC should not forget that, if intelligently and responsibly addressed, global civil society might be an important ally in raising the prospective costs of proliferation. There are millions of citizens who would understand that sometimes the UNSC does have to accept controversy and denunciation, in order to act with well-informed determination in the wider human interest.

Notes and References


2. Recommendation 28. ‘The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) should recognize the Model Additional Protocol as today’s standard for IAEA safeguards, and the Security Council should be prepared to act in cases of serious concern over non-compliance with non-proliferation and safeguards standards.’ (p. 129)

3. ‘Biological and Chemical Arms Disarmament and non-proliferation are best pursued through a cooperative rule-based international order, applied and enforced through effective multilateral institutions, with the UN Security Council as the ultimate global authority.

The Security Council—in close contact with the members of the UN—should be the focal point for the world’s efforts to reduce the threats posed by existing and future WMD, and to help harmonize, supplement and enforce the many efforts that are made. (Weapons of Terror, 57)

Recommendation 60: The United Nations Security Council should make greater use of its potential to reduce and eliminate threats of weapons of mass destruction—whether
they are linked to existing arsenals, proliferation or terrorists. It should take up for consideration any withdrawal from or breach of an obligation not to acquire weapons of mass destruction. Making use of its authority under the Charter to take decisions with binding effect for all members, the Council may, inter alia:

- require individual states to accept effective and comprehensive monitoring, inspection and verification
- require member states to enact legislation to secure global implementation of specific rules measures; and
- decide, as instance of last resort, on the use of economic or military enforcement measures.’


7. Recommendation 60.


9. This suggestion was originated by Mr Paul Ingram of the British American Security Information Council, who appears regularly on Iranian television.
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