GREAT EXPECTATIONS
The P5 Process and the Non-Proliferation Treaty

Andrea Berger and Malcolm Chalmers

Royal United Services Institute

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Cover image: Representatives of the China, France, Russia, the UK and US at a P5 Conference Public Event, 27 June 2012. Photo courtesy of the US Department of State.
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Andrea Berger and Malcolm Chalmers
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Introduction

Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in 2006 warned students at Princeton University about the dangers of persistent gridlock in the non-proliferation regime. ‘Mutually assured destruction’, he concluded, ‘has been replaced by mutually assured paralysis’ – a situation in which the threat of nuclear weapons goes unaddressed and all parties lose.¹

Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) charge that the five recognised Nuclear-Weapon States (NWS) – China, France, Russia, the UK and the US – are too lackadaisical about their commitments to pursue disarmament in good faith, particularly since the international environment has changed so dramatically since the end of the Cold War. They complain that disarmament-relevant initiatives agreed to by the NWS in NPT meetings since the 1990s have progressed at little more than a snail’s pace. The NWS counter that they have substantially reduced their nuclear-weapons stockpiles in the past two decades and have accepted a responsibility to continue to pursue disarmament. Most recently, in the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan, the five NWS agreed to ‘accelerate concrete progress on the steps leading to nuclear disarmament’.²

In 2009, in a further effort to assuage NNWS concerns, the NWS took the unprecedented step of commencing a process of multilateral consultations and co-operation on disarmament-related issues. Although the NPT had already been in force for almost forty years, no previous attempt had been made to create a forum in which all five NWS would discuss collectively, and on a regular basis, how they would fulfil their unique responsibilities under the treaty. The very establishment of this ‘P5 process’, therefore, was an important step forward.

The P5 process was initially proposed by the UK,³ which was particularly interested in bringing the five NWS together to find methods and technologies for verification of nuclear warhead dismantlement. One result, it hoped, might be the creation of a ‘disarmament laboratory’.

Since its establishment, however, the P5 process has broadened in scope to cover a range of issues, from common nuclear terminology to arsenal transparency to a possible fissile-material production ban. Its potential to alleviate some of the tensions within the non-proliferation regime has therefore also grown, making NNWS increasingly interested in its activities. The key test of the process’s relevance will come in 2014, the point at which the NWS have committed themselves to collectively reporting on their disarmament progress to the NPT Preparatory Committee meeting.
Few details are publicly available about the P5 process efforts since 2009, largely as a result of the group’s own emphasis on opacity. As a result, this Whitehall Report is based on extensive interviews with officials and experts from the NWS and NNWS, conducted on a strictly not-for-attribution basis. Together these conversations shed some light on the major areas of consideration in this report: the P5’s work to date, the risks associated with its current trajectory, and opportunities for potentially productive future activity.

This report draws four main conclusions. First, that the P5’s work to date represents a modest, but important, start. Its value is contained primarily in the nature and composition of the process itself. Benefits are accrued from involving traditionally reticent NWS such as China in multilateral nuclear discussions with a disarmament orientation: it may create a normative precedent for Chinese participation and even leadership.

Second, in terms of outputs, progress has been slow – too slow to demonstrate many concrete outputs by the P5’s 2014 reporting deadline. Two of the core areas of work – nuclear transparency and the proposed glossary of common nuclear terms – have the potential to be highly significant in advancing the disarmament agenda, depending on their form and content. However, the glossary will not be complete until 2015, and transparency discussions have been said to be unlikely to yield fruit by 2014. It also remains highly possible that their content, when ultimately presented, may be a disappointment for many NNWS.

Third, the greatest risk to the relevance of the P5 process is insufficient ambition. The creation of the P5 process has not involved any change in the fundamentals of disarmament: the pace is still set by strategic relations between NWS and arms-control and deterrence debates within them. The views of China, Russia and even France on the role of their own nuclear arsenals, driven partly by strategic considerations, lead others to worry that their good-faith participation in the P5 process is tenuous. As a result, in order not to scare them into withdrawing, the P5 process has been geared towards ‘easy steps’. The US and UK shift towards more conservative policies has in turn made them less inclined to take a leadership role in the P5 and push for more ambitious endeavours. Should this pattern continue, it could erode confidence in the P5’s ability to make even a small but scalable contribution to the treaty.

Fourth, that to maintain relevance to the NPT after the 2015 Review Conference, the P5 process should begin to develop a programme of work that goes beyond the existing focus on ‘easy’ activities. An effort to develop quantitative standard reporting should, this report argues, become one of the explicit primary goals of the process. The group’s verification discussions
should be re-calibrated away from warhead dismantlement towards work of nearer-term relevance to Article VI commitments; and the five NWS should renew their consideration of proposals for work in the area of nuclear-weapon accident response. The P5 also require a more skilfully calibrated communications strategy for NNWS that includes a greater degree of procedural transparency.

Notes and References


3. This report uses the term ‘P5 process’ to refer to the group and its work or, on occasion, ‘the P5’ or ‘the Five’ when referring to the members collectively. Though many have criticised the NWS for labelling themselves in this way, and thus conflating their permanent Security Council membership with their disarmament obligations, the term is nevertheless widely used by both NWS and NNWS. For an example of the NWS’ self-labelling of their dialogue as the ‘P5 process’, please see Mission of the United States in Geneva, ‘Ambassador Laura E. Kennedy: All NPT Parties Have a Role to Play in Disarmament’, <http://geneva.usmission.gov/2012/05/03/npt-pre/>, accessed 7 February 2013.
I. First Steps

The NPT, it has been argued, is ‘in many ways an agreement as important as the UN Charter itself’. The treaty, which entered into force in 1970, was based on a groundbreaking bargain. States without nuclear weapons would gain the right to access peaceful nuclear energy technology in exchange for maintaining their non-nuclear status. States that had tested a nuclear weapon before 1 January 1967 would be permitted to retain them, but must actively ‘pursue negotiations in good faith’ with a view to stopping the nuclear arms race and making progress on ‘nuclear disarmament’. The latter, legally binding commitment was captured in Article VI of the NPT.

The NPT is now forty-three years old. It is the most widely ratified international security agreement, with 190 states party and only four (North Korea, India, Israel and Pakistan) remaining outside. As Michael Krepon observes, four of the five NWS have made impressive progress on disarmament since the end of the Cold War. They have ceased fissile-material production for weapons, ended nuclear-weapons testing, and cut their overall stockpile sizes and the number of warheads deployed. Together the US and Russia have slashed their stockpiles by over 40,000 warheads since 1990.

Despite the achievements made in this regard, the picture is not entirely positive. Since the NPT entered into force, states party have gathered every five years at review conferences to evaluate the treaty’s implementation and to agree on measures to further strengthen it. Through decades of discussion at these review sessions, the broadly articulated commitment to disarmament that was in the treaty’s original text has been considerably developed and clarified. Throughout that process of clarification, several concrete programmes of action on disarmament have been agreed to by NWS. Where they have fallen short is on implementation.

The first of these programmes of action was developed at the 1995 Review Conference. At the time, states had the difficult task of deciding whether or not the NPT should be extended; originally, the treaty was valid for a period of only twenty-five years. For indefinite extension to be universally palatable, a package deal was assembled. As part of it, the NWS agreed to a ‘programme of action’ on nuclear disarmament. Progress on a ban on the production of fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons (hereinafter, the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty or FMCT), a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the ‘determined pursuit’ of nuclear arms reductions by NWS were folded into this programme.

There was only marginal progress on this plan over the subsequent fifteen years. The proposed treaty on fissile materials has been at a standstill since the mid-1990s. Though the CTBT and its supporting mechanisms are in
place, the treaty has yet to enter force and two of the NPT NWS have still not ratified it – the United States and China. Despite making notable cuts in their arsenals since the end of the Cold War, the US and Russia maintain thousands of nuclear warheads each – an order of magnitude larger than the other NWS. China is believed by many to be increasing the size of its arsenal, thereby moving in the opposite direction of its Article VI commitments. Military transparency amongst the Five remains asymmetrical; China now reveals less about its nuclear arsenal than any of the other four NWS.

This perceived inertia remains the source of one of the most deep-seated tensions in the non-proliferation regime. Though some NWS have made notable strides with regard to their disarmament obligations during the NPT’s lifetime, many NNWS contend that the pace of disarmament has been too slow and efforts too patchy. By the mid-2000s, NNWS demands that disarmament be prioritised over non-proliferation could not be drowned out.

With this prospect clear, in 2007, Margaret Beckett, the UK’s then-secretary of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, gave a landmark speech to the Carnegie International Non-Proliferation Conference. In it, she noted that:

[T]he moderate majority of states – our natural and vital allies on non-proliferation – want [NWS] to do more ... But we’d be kidding ourselves if we thought that this was a problem of perception only – simply a failure to communicate. The sense of stagnation is real enough.

One of the UK’s proposed solutions to the evident tensions was to ‘engage with other members of the P5 on transparency and confidence building measures. Verification will be particularly key – any future verification regime for a world free of nuclear weapons will need to be tried and tested.’ More specifically, the UK should lead on efforts to establish a ‘disarmament laboratory’ that could engage in relevant practical work to this end. This was the first time a public proposal for collective P5 disarmament work had been made.

The then-British Defence Secretary Des Browne reiterated and elaborated upon the UK’s proposition the following year:

I am proposing to host a conference for technical experts from all recognised nuclear states, to develop technologies for the verification of nuclear disarmament. Such a conference, ahead of the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review in 2010, will enable the five recognised states to engage in a process of mutual confidence-building and trust.
Political will in other capitals quickly facilitated the realisation of the UK’s proposal. France had shown new interest in discussing military transparency, a subject which then-President Nicolas Sarkozy prioritised in his 2008 speech at Cherbourg. Furthermore, in 2009, US President Barack Obama laid out his vision for a nuclear-weapons-free world and pledged to more actively work to reduce the number and role of nuclear weapons.

Russia and China were reportedly more reluctant to sign on to the P5 process; disarmament discussions would have been particularly far outside of China’s comfort zone. The amount of effort allegedly exerted in order to convince China and Russia to sit at the table raised great, enduring concern that they might walk away.

The UK managed to convene the first P5 conference in London in 2009. Its agenda looked at broader disarmament-relevant confidence-building measures, but included verification discussions as an integral component. Further details of what was covered at the inaugural P5 conference will be provided later in this report, but the NWS were conscious that NNWS would demand a broader portfolio of activity at the rapidly approaching 2010 NPT Review Conference.

At that review conference, the same alignment of political will that helped to facilitate agreement on the need for a P5 conference catalysed agreement on the most extensive and specific programme of action for disarmament to date. Sixty-four points were put into the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan, which covered all three pillars of the NPT – non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Twenty-two pertain to disarmament. Of particular interest is Action 5, which spells out a mandate for the NWS specifically, calling upon them to:

[P]romptly engage with a view to, inter alia: (a) Rapidly moving towards an overall reduction in the global stockpile of all types of nuclear weapons...; (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.
A novel development in the 2010 Action Plan was the inclusion of a timeframe for NWS activity; in pursuing the above, the NWS committed to report their undertakings to the Preparatory Committee in 2014.\footnote{13}

The NWS have acknowledged that the P5 process is an ideal forum to work towards those commitments in the 2010 NPT Action Plan, thereby potentially alleviating some of the frustrations pervasive in NPT discussions. The five countries have continued to meet in recognition of the expectation that together they will report on their progress – however substantial or insubstantial – in 2014. As a result, the goals laid out in Action 5 are generally viewed as the primary standard by which P5 work should be judged.

Notes and References


7. Ibid.


12. Ibid.

13. Ibid.
II. P5 Work to Date

The P5 process has now been active for nearly five years. Its activities have evolved throughout that time, with a set of core and peripheral activities emerging.

‘Core issues’ include disarmament verification, nuclear arsenal transparency and a common nuclear glossary. All three issues are interrelated in terms of their potential utility in advancing nuclear disarmament, and the P5 have created corresponding initiatives to address them.

The first core initiative – verification – has been strongly supported by the UK, whose leadership was essential to its inclusion on the P5 agenda. However, notable variations in joint-statement language and the change in direction of verification discussions since the first conference highlight a downward trend in the relative priority attributed by the P5 to this issue.

The second – transparency in nuclear arsenals – has been a consistent feature of the P5’s work and an implicit acknowledgment of the demands of the NNWS.

The third – the project to develop a common glossary of nuclear terms – has, in terms of prioritisation, had an inverse trajectory to that of disarmament verification initiatives; though it took some time to get airborne, it is now being led by China and has risen in profile within the P5’s portfolio of activities. Both the glossary and transparency efforts would contribute to NWS obligations under Action 5(f) of the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan.

Importantly, the small nuclear states officially lead on the entire ‘core’ of the P5’s work: the UK on verification, France on transparency and China on the glossary. This makes sense. Though the US and Russia remain a key part of any multilateral discussion, the area in which they are called upon to demonstrate leadership most immediately is bilateral arms control. At the same time, both the US and Russia are increasingly aware of future links between their bilateral process and that involving the other three recognised NWS. If Washington and Moscow continue to reduce their nuclear arsenals, attention will eventually turn to how smaller nuclear states should be involved in disarmament efforts. For that reason, the collaborative format embodied by the P5 process carries substantial importance in the long term.

Aside from those initiatives that can be classed as ‘core’, other issues that have been addressed by the P5 include nuclear accident response, a prospective
fissile material cut-off treaty, non-proliferation, and the disarmament-relevant initiatives of NNWS.

The P5 process has the potential to be a meaningful contribution to the NPT. Traditionally reticent states such as China are on board and leading in a multilateral disarmament-focused forum; and all five are actively discussing details of their nuclear postures – something that they have never previously done in a regular and sustained fashion. Much of the P5’s present value is therefore found in the process, rather than in its specific activities.

Despite these merits, the analysis in this section suggests that it is unlikely that the group will have many concrete outputs before the 2014 reporting deadline set by the Action Plan. Their progress is notably slow. This is partly because broader strategic relations between the NWS remain complicated, making some reticent to alter their current policies towards deterrence and disarmament. The initially eager participants – the US and UK – thus feared that an over-ambitious agenda might scare the traditionally reticent China, France and Russia away. They accepted that easy steps should be pursued as a collaborative base upon which more difficult ones could be attempted. The group – including the US and UK – does not yet seem prepared to move past this.

The Structure of the Process
The P5 process since 2010 has consisted of high-level conferences, ambassadorial or expert-level working groups, and other ad-hoc meetings. As expected, the most public-facing component is the high-level conferences, and four have taken place since 2009. Though there is no formal charter or working procedure for these events, they are generally held annually, and the responsibility for hosting rotates between members by convention.1

Identifying a host for the P5 conference is a politicised affair. Of the five countries, all except China have hosted one of these events. Beijing is the subject of frequent criticism by other NWS and NNWS as it has tended to avoid assuming responsibilities in the non-proliferation regime that are concomitant to its rising global power. However, since hesitantly joining the P5 process, there are some clear signs that Beijing has transitioned from being an almost silent observer to a genuine player, and has taken the lead in developing a glossary of common nuclear terms. Getting Chinese buy-in to a regular multilateral process on nuclear issues can arguably be considered the P5’s greatest achievement to date.

Hosting a high-level conference would be a logical next step for Beijing. While the joint communiqué of the last P5 conference is unusually silent on the question of the next host, China is certainly wary of the reputational
implications of breaking the convention of host rotation, and will take up this role for the crucial 2014 P5 conference.²

**Table 1: Initiatives within the P5 Process.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative/Issue</th>
<th>Started In</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Format(s)</th>
<th>Led By</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transparency/ Common Reporting Form</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Core, ongoing</td>
<td>High-level conference topics</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verification</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Core, ongoing</td>
<td>High-level conference topics</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary of Nuclear Terms</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Core, ongoing</td>
<td>Working group</td>
<td>China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(proposed in 2009)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear-Weapons Accident Response</td>
<td>(Proposed in 2009)</td>
<td>Peripheral, failed</td>
<td>Working group</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMCT</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Peripheral, ongoing</td>
<td>’P5 plus’ (includes India and Pakistan)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High-level annual gatherings usually cover all of the P5’s core issues – verification, transparency and the glossary – as well as those described above as ‘peripheral’. Other subjects, such as the status of P5 ratification of protocols for nuclear-weapons-free zones, or implementation of unilateral or bilateral arms-control initiatives, also feature.

The five nations have opted on occasion to delegate some issues to subordinate working groups or ad-hoc meetings. For instance, efforts to develop a common glossary of nuclear terms are understandably being undertaken in a working group that has its own meeting schedule. The UK also hosted an ad-hoc experts meeting on warhead dismantlement verification in London in 2012.

Like the decision to host a P5 conference, leadership of these initiatives is politically symbolic and significant. Ad-hoc meetings, such as that hosted by the UK on its verification efforts with Norway in 2012, give an opportunity to a country to show leadership to its NWS counterparts and claim good faith to the NNWS. Leadership of working groups is regarded much more positively because of the investment of effort required to co-ordinate the work of experts and officials from the five nations and complete the task. For example, China has been lauded by both NWS and NNWS for its willingness to take forward the P5’s project to develop a common glossary of nuclear terms.
**Core Issues**

The P5 have identified three core areas for their work: disarmament verification, transparency in nuclear arsenals, and common nuclear terminology. They are highly interrelated in terms of their potential significance for nuclear disarmament. For example, the value of comparing transparency declarations is diminished in the absence of a shared understanding of the terms used in those declarations.

Topics have made their way into the P5’s portfolio for different reasons. China, France and the UK have each opted to be the official lead for one of them, their decisions also due to unique drivers.

However, there has been fluctuation in the relative priority ascribed to certain core issues – whether on disarmament verification or the glossary. These trends have raised concerns that the potential of the P5 process will go unfulfilled, possibly even further exacerbating disagreements in the NPT review cycle.

**Verification**

Exploring the technology needed to verify future warhead dismantlement was, from the UK perspective, one of the *raisons d’être* for the P5 process. At London’s behest, the issue is one consistently considered by the P5. However, interest in warhead-dismantlement verification is waning and the group’s discussions have yielded little fruit since 2009.

The subject has been promoted by the UK since its 1998 Strategic Defence Review, which asserted that the UK would develop ‘capabilities which could be used to verify reductions in nuclear weapons, drawing on the expertise of the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston. This will begin with a study lasting some eighteen months to identify the technologies, skills and techniques required and what is available in this country.’

Like other NWS, the UK has faced steady pressure from NNWS to demonstrate that it is actively and continuously fulfilling its commitment to pursue nuclear disarmament – not just when it sporadically declares unilateral nuclear reductions as part of a nuclear posture study. In addition, there is strong public pressure at home for the UK to show it is the most disarmament-oriented of the five recognised NWS, no matter which political party is in power. This narrative has been traditionally difficult to maintain in light of repeated decisions to retain and modernise a nuclear-armed submarine force. It was especially challenging to do so after the Labour government announced in December 2006 that it would renew the UK’s *Vanguard*-class ballistic-missile submarines.
One of the approaches that London believed could assist it in navigating these international and domestic pressures was to focus on work that would only become relevant some way down the disarmament road, thereby avoiding entanglement in more immediate arms-control controversies. Technology involved in warhead-dismantlement verification fit this description.

Over the coming years, the UK set out to expand its work in this area. The government sponsored a research study on the technical conditions – including verification – that would need to be met to abolish nuclear weapons. Furthermore, in 2006, the UK initiated a proposal with Norway to jointly explore warhead-dismantlement verification. It built upon previous verification-related undertakings and, like them, was to a significant extent a reaction to the perceived importance of demonstrating commitment to Article VI while maintaining a reliable nuclear deterrent. In 2007, representatives from the UK Ministry of Defence, the Atomic Weapons Establishment, several Norwegian laboratories and VERTIC, an NGO, began long-term efforts to develop methodologies and technologies that could be used to verify disarmament in future bilateral or multilateral treaties. Their efforts became known as the ‘UK-Norway Initiative on Warhead Dismantlement Verification’, or UKNI.

The specific approach embodied in the UKNI had two unique drivers. By taking a step that no other NWS was ready to undertake, along with a non-nuclear ally with good disarmament credentials and a respected NGO, it helped to cement the government’s image as being at the disarmament-oriented end of the NATO spectrum on nuclear issues. The UK also hoped that actively involving a NNWS in monitoring implementation of the Article VI commitments of a NWS, albeit only in an exercise, would help erode the impression that all of the NWS were seeking to insulate themselves from NNWS pressure.

As a result of these perceived benefits, the UK promotes the verification issue and its specific work with Norway at every possible juncture. Representatives of the UK government repeatedly brief P5 meetings and NPT Preparatory Committees. Similarly, in 2012, the Foreign Office hosted an ad-hoc conference of P5 experts on verification, at which the UKNI was the central feature.

Russia and China do not view the UKNI so favourably. When the UKNI was first presented to the P5 conference in 2009, Russia expressed great concern at the idea that it should allow a second party to observe dismantlement on its territory. Vladimir Kuznetsov of Rosatom (a member of the Russian delegation) told the group that involving a NNWS in this way would be especially intolerable, presumably because of the problems of managing proliferation-sensitive information. This implied that not only was the UKNI
undesirable, but any extension of it to a P5 context would be as well. He continued to say that the bilateral framework constructed for US-Russia arms control was far superior to the approach advocated by the UK. It has been suggested that Kuznetsov’s views are generally reflective of the wider Russian perspective on this issue.

China is also hesitant, though perhaps less vocally so. At the London P5 conference, it noted that its Academy of Engineering and Physics had spent a decade examining verification technologies. China said that it sees the merit of both the US-Russian approach to disarmament verification, which focuses on outcome, and the UK approach, which looks closely at process. However, Chinese experts suggest that in practice, they too would be wary of collaborating with a NNWS. Furthermore, Beijing may be irked by the UK’s efforts to be the ‘role model’ for the rest of the P5. In this respect, China may see the UKNI as direct competition to its own promotion of a model nuclear posture, which includes its no-first-use policy.

Russia’s and China’s qualms likely took the possibility of a similar P5 project on warhead-dismantlement verification off the table. For the duration of the P5 process’s life, the UK has therefore been leading on a verification file consisting only of its own work with Norway and general discussions at the annual conferences on the challenges of verifying compliance with treaties such as the CTBT. In other words, the P5’s ‘verification’ discussions have been twofold: warhead-dismantlement verification, with relevance much further in the future; and treaty-compliance verification (specifically in relation to the CTBT), which is much less innovative in focus, as technical structures for this verification are largely already in place.

Moreover, the P5’s emphasis on verification has generally declined in relation to its other areas of interest. In earlier P5 statements, verification was described as a crucial ‘challenge’ which must be addressed if the NWS are to make headway on disarmament, thereby increasing confidence that agreements are being honoured. This language has now vanished. The most recent P5 texts instead refer to verification as a subject on which they ‘shared information’ about national ‘experiences’. Verification does not appear to be an area considered by the group as a major priority.

One potential explanation is that others within the P5 (including France and the US) were discouraging a continued public focus on the work of just one member. Another is that, after a few years, the beneficial publicity for the UK from the UKNI may have been exhausted. A third possibility is that London’s verve for this and other disarmament-related projects has faded since 2010. This change may also be due to the change in government (the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties replaced Labour in 2010) and in part because,
after an initial period of high expectations, the Obama administration became less concerned with, or less able to, push the pace of disarmament.

With verification de-prioritised in general, and warhead-dismantlement verification research now very much on the sidelines of UK-led P5 verification discussions, the main element that appears to be left is the P5’s consideration of the challenges of verifying compliance with treaties such as the CTBT. Reportedly, the Five are now evaluating how they can collectively support the CTBT Organization’s (CTBTO) 2014 Integrated Field Exercise in Jordan, which will test and improve the organisation’s on-site inspection capabilities. The CTBTO plan for 2014 ‘also foresees a host of preceding smaller, directed exercises and other run-up activities’. The P5 could have a role in co-ordinating a smaller event of this kind; but with the US and China not having ratified the CTBT, P5 efforts to support the Integrated Field Exercise in Jordan will undoubtedly be perceived by NNWS as little more than a poor consolation prize.

Military Transparency and Common Reporting
‘Transparency’ is the public provision of information in relation to actions, capabilities and plans. It is increasingly perceived as an essential means of establishing legitimacy – an evolving liberal norm that has permeated the nuclear realm. Nuclear transparency therefore increases NNWS assurance that the NWS are fulfilling their NPT obligations. It can encourage further disarmament action, empowering those within NWS societies who want their governments to do more, and shine a spotlight on those who are less willing to make progress.

Recognising these important norms as early as the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the NWS responded to calls for greater transparency in their nuclear arsenals by agreeing to explore this area as a voluntary confidence-building measure.

Yet transparency is a more complex affair in the military sphere than in most non-security government activities. Military nuclear transparency is integrally connected to strategic realities and feelings of insecurity. The fact that the NWS hold on to their nuclear arsenals is testament to their belief that major war remains a real possibility at some time in the future. All five NWS are thus understandably keen to ensure that transparency measures do not undermine military effectiveness. Were a transparency agreement to make an opponent’s disarming first strike more credible, for example, this could increase rather than reduce the chances of escalation during a future war.

States with smaller nuclear arsenals (such as China) may also be more reluctant to provide data on their forces, especially if they are not fully confident in their ability to conceal locations during a future crisis. Even the UK and France, which both think of themselves as being significantly more
transparent than China, have insisted on maintaining at least one nuclear-missile-armed boat on patrol at all times in an unknown location.

Which aspects of transparency could best build confidence and be productive for the broader international disarmament agenda is therefore not a straightforward question. However, it is a question that the NWS have begun to explore as part of the P5 process. The first UK-initiated conference in 2009 opened discussion on this subject, with the P5 reiterating their acceptance of the idea that ‘voluntary transparency and other measures’ would increase confidence between the NWS, and between the NWS and NNWS. The meeting then segued into briefings on how transparent each country considered itself to be in its military nuclear programme. Unsurprisingly, the US delegation reported home that China ‘was hesitant on the idea that more military transparency was achievable without first taking small trust-building steps.¹⁵

In the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan, the NWS again committed to ‘further enhance transparency’.¹⁶ Treatment of military transparency within the P5 forum became more substantial after the London conference. This was bolstered by an added request for the NWS to voluntarily structure their declaration of new disarmament-relevant information in a common reporting form:¹⁷

As a confidence-building measure, all the nuclear-weapon States are encouraged to agree as soon as possible on a standard reporting form and to determine appropriate reporting intervals for the purpose of voluntarily providing standard information without prejudice to national security.

The P5 statement issued the following year recognised the expectation that was captured in the Action Plan. It explicitly called transparency a ‘firm foundation’ for further disarmament, and announced that the NWS were pursuing their discussions in this area with a view to reporting at the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee.¹⁸

This was reiterated in 2012, with the added note that the P5 ‘considered proposals for a standard reporting form’. Shortly before the P5’s meeting that year, ten NNWS in the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI) sought to influence P5 deliberations over common transparency declarations and clearly communicated their own expectations for NWS reporting in 2014. To accomplish this, they submitted a draft reporting form to the P5.¹⁹ The template developed by the NPDI (whose signatories included five NATO members, as well as close US allies Australia, Japan and the UAE) includes sections for reporting on numbers of strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons, deployed – and non-deployed delivery vehicles, fissile-material stocks and qualitative progress in pursuing disarmament objectives and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in national doctrine.²⁰ Such a
comprehensive reporting form is currently beyond P5 consensus. So when the P5 declared in 2012 that they had ‘considered proposals for a standard reporting form’, it was a euphemism for ‘rejected’.

France now leads on the challenge of finding transparency steps that are agreeable to the NWS and that satisfy an aggravated NNWS constituency. From the outset, France has been the most vocal about the need for transparency in relation to nuclear capabilities. In March 2008, French President Nicolas Sarkozy declared that France would reduce the airborne component of its arsenal by one third, bringing the total stockpile to no more than 300 nuclear weapons. He continued to say that: ‘France could and should be more transparent with respect to its nuclear arsenal than anyone ever has been.’ This policy was announced at the time when the P5 process was standing up. Backed by fresh high-level interest, it should be no surprise that Paris made nuclear transparency its talking point of choice.

However, curiously, its leadership on the issue within the P5 process was only explicitly announced five years later in 2013. As a consequence, P5 reports of Paris’s newfound role in transparency discussions have met with a mixed response. France has only ever once made a new quantitative declaration about its nuclear holdings, though it reiterates the declaration frequently. Moreover, the presidency has changed since 2008. Some NNWS therefore remain highly suspicious of French commitment to the goal of greater military transparency. Some worry that it may be using its position of leadership to control forward progress and take cover under the label of leadership should further transparency measures prove elusive before 2014; few would point fingers at the leader of the P5 transparency efforts if talks do not bear fruit. Others see the opposite side of the coin – that French willingness to take leadership on this subject may in fact be a positive development from a state that is traditionally reticent on anything to do with nuclear disarmament.

Paris has publicly intertwined itself with one of the trickiest of all P5 issues. NNWS have high expectations for the P5 process in general; but their expectations are highest with regards to military transparency, evidenced by the NPDI’s unsolicited attempts to inject a draft common reporting form into the debate. Movement on the transparency issue, in principle, would have the greatest potential to satisfy concerned NNWS that the NWS take their Action Plan and broader NPT commitments seriously, and induce the necessary patience for further P5 progress to be realised. Yet collective moves forward seem unfeasible by 2014, given the lack of political commitment to do so on the part of most of the P5 states.

France, the UK and the US each declared a total number of stockpiled nuclear warheads towards the beginning of the P5 process: France in 2008, the US in 2010 in relation to its 2009 arsenal, and the UK most recently in 2010.
These declarations were hailed as positive steps towards broader nuclear transparency. Each has reiterated its declaration since, including at NPT Preparatory Committee meetings. All express disappointment that Russia and China have not made similar statements.

**Table 2: The Current State of Transparency on P5 Warhead Stockpiles.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Latest Date of New Declaration</th>
<th>Number Declared</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Nuclear stockpile, including both active and inactive warheads</td>
<td>May 2010&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt; 5,113 (excluding ‘several thousand’ retired and awaiting dismantlement)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Deployed strategic warheads</td>
<td>March 2013 1,654&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>Deployed strategic warheads</td>
<td>March 2013 1,480&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Total arsenal</td>
<td>March 2008 Ceiling of 300&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Overall nuclear warhead stockpile ceiling</td>
<td>October 2010 Not more than 225, to be reduced to not more than 180 by the mid-2020s&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Requirement for operationally available warheads</td>
<td>October 2010 Fewer than 160, to be reduced to no more than 120&lt;sup&gt;g&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Warhead stockpile</td>
<td>2004 Smaller than the other four NPT NWS&lt;sup&gt;h&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<sup>a</sup> Number declared by the US for September 2009.


<sup>c</sup> US Department of State, ‘New START Treaty Aggregate Numbers of Strategic Offensive Arms,’ 3 April 2013.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid.

<sup>e</sup> ‘Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, Presentation of Le Terrible in Cherbourg’.


<sup>g</sup> Ibid., p. 38.


However, none of the NATO NWS seems inclined to offer updated stockpile numbers or other new quantitative transparency measures because of both this lack of reciprocity and the reluctance of its security establishment to repeat even these limited steps. The exceptions are US and Russian declarations about their deployed strategic forces, which they are obliged to make as part of commitments under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty
Moscow provides no information other than that required under New START. For its part, China feels it has little incentive to become more transparent while US and Russian arsenals are still an order of magnitude larger than its own.

Against this backdrop, any new or updated measures regarding individual transparency made at the 2014 Preparatory Committee or 2015 Review Conference – declarations of US or Russian stockpile numbers, for instance – would be significant. Conversely, a US decision not to declare a stockpile number would also garner attention. Some would view the lack of US transparency beyond that required by New START as a failure to maintain the same standard of reporting it displayed at the 2010 Review Conference.

Unilateral quantitative declarations aside, there also seems to be collective disinterest. In interview, P5 officials suggested that it is unlikely that there will be any common quantitative reporting, particularly in a standard reporting form, at the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee. As a consequence, a qualitative P5 report may be all that can be hoped for at that time. Individual members might then unilaterally choose to update their existing transparency declarations or make new ones. However, many NNWS are unlikely to consider unilateral steps a success of the P5 process.

*The Glossary Working Group*

One further obstacle to developing a voluntary standard reporting form is the lack of a shared understanding of basic nuclear terms. Disagreement between the five NWS persists on the meaning of terms such as ‘fissile material’, and ‘active’ and ‘inactive’ warheads. Future multilateral transparency and arms-control arrangements – including a standard reporting form – would be meaningless and also impossible to conclude without agreement on definitions.

Differing understanding of key disarmament-relevant terms was flagged as an issue by the P5 at the first conference in London in 2009. At that meeting, Mariot Leslie, the director-general of defence and intelligence at the UK Foreign Office, privately noted that while ‘nuclear terminology [is] key to working together’, the P5 did not have a list of terms and definitions recognised by all. To rectify this, Leslie proposed that the P5 create a glossary as a step towards ‘confidence building and transparency and improved communication’.23 This became one of the few points of consensus at the London 2009 meeting. During the 2012 and 2013 Preparatory Committee meetings, the P5 appeared keener to talk about possible progress on the glossary project than on other initiatives.

As the P5 recognise, work on a glossary is not only useful for guiding future group discussions on arms-control initiatives; it also has procedural and intrinsic value in regularising P5 working-level interaction and dialogue on
nuclear posture and doctrine. Engagement of this kind is unprecedented. Encouraging China, in particular, to actively discuss its nuclear policies – however privately – is a step in the right direction.

In addition to the value of the process and output, the P5 see the creation of a common nuclear glossary as being ‘low on the ladder of easy-to-hard steps’. It is not surprising that the project would be viewed as an ideal starting point. A working group that involves regular interaction and co-operation between P5 experts and bureaucracies can create familiarity between individual officials and build commitment to the P5 process as a whole, reducing the fear that countries such as China will abandon it. In doing so, the cautious opening phases of the process might unlock opportunity for more expansive collaboration in the future.

With broad agreement on the desirability of a nuclear glossary working group, at the 2009 London meeting discussion turned to the question of leadership. Russia suggested that the UK – which initially proposed the project – or China should assume this role. Little took place until the next P5 meeting, when agreement to form a ‘dedicated working group’ was formalised. China’s leadership of the initiative was announced in 2012, though preparations were ongoing for some time before then.

Like France’s leadership of transparency efforts, China’s decision to lead the glossary project was carefully made. First, Beijing likely hopes that heading up the P5’s only working group will help to dispel the sentiment that it is intransigent and non-committal in the disarmament realm. Secondly, China agrees that this is an ‘easy’ first step. Finally, of all the projects that the P5 might propose, this is one that is particularly palatable to China. For many years, the Chinese Scientists Group on Arms Control of the Chinese People’s Association for Peace and Disarmament and the US National Academies Committee on International Security and Arms Control carried out joint discussions on arms control, non-proliferation, nuclear energy and broader security issues with a view to developing a bilingual glossary of terms. It was released in 2008 and included approximately 1,000 terms. One year later, at the first P5 conference, the National Academies glossary was raised as substantiation of China’s belief in the potential value of a P5 working group.

Ultimately, China’s leadership of the P5 glossary project is laudable. This is the first time that Beijing has assumed such a role in a multilateral nuclear-disarmament forum. Many P5 officials in interview affirmed that, as part of its involvement in the glossary project, China is required to actively discuss specifics of its own nuclear posture. Chinese leadership is not an explicit goal identified in Action 5 or elsewhere. However, an active China will be essential for unlocking any future multilateral arms-control or transparency agreements, including those with relevance under the Action Plan.
Work began on the glossary project in 2012. Pang Sen, the director general of the Department of Arms Control at the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, announced the date of the first working group meeting at the P5’s Washington conference. Experts – primarily officials, nuclear laboratory staff and some military personnel – gathered in Beijing in September 2012 to outline a work plan. Few details of this plan and the working group’s activity to date have been publicly presented by the P5. In the course of interviews with many of those involved, however, the authors have been able to piece together a quite detailed picture of the current state of play.

Stage one of the process began in late 2012 and involved each country proposing terms – in English only at this stage – which they would like to see included in the final glossary. The P5 agreed that terms submitted could relate to much more than just arms control and disarmament, for which they bear special responsibility under Article VI. The glossary should also cover non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and nuclear safety and security. This decision is highly controversial in the eyes of NNWS, and is discussed below. However, one driver might have been the possibility that more common ground could be found between the P5 on non-proliferation or peaceful-use terms, as many definitions are already available in International Atomic Energy Agency glossaries, for instance. With this broad scope, over 2,000 English terms were initially proposed by working group members.

Stage two began in early 2013. China, as working-group leader, created a shortlist of approximately 200–300 English terms. This list was then circulated to the officials of the other four states, who gave comments and suggestions for further refinement. France, the UK and the US reportedly aligned closely on their preferred final set of terms. Russia, on the other hand, had divergent views which required a second round of commentary before the list could be completed. These differences were apparently rectified in time for the 2013 NPT Preparatory Committee meeting in Geneva.

It is reported that the majority of terms on the shortlist are drawn from existing glossaries. If this is the case, it is possible that the working group of P5 experts could fail to make any progress in developing definitions for the terms necessary to facilitate future systems of standardised reporting or arms control (for an example of such terms, see Table 3 on p. 29). Yet only a small number of terms need to be agreed for this purpose, some of which (such as those related to nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles) have already been outlined by the US and Russia in the context of the New START and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaties. If the P5 are able to find agreement on these terms and include them in the published glossary, the project could be extremely valuable for facilitating discussions on future transparency, common reporting and arms control.
Stage three – the defining of short-listed terms in English – is now under way. This process is expected to take approximately one year. According to the working group’s present trajectory, this means that the English-only glossary should be completed in early 2014, though a degree of flexibility seems to have been built in to allow for any delay.

A major area of consideration for the working group is how to treat terms that could take on different meanings in different contexts. Another issue is how to treat terms for which no agreed-upon definition can be found. The first option is to include a variety of side-by-side interpretations in the document. For instance, the glossary might say that: ‘one country understood fissile material to be direct-use material that can be used for the manufacture of nuclear explosive devices without further enrichment or transmutation, including uranium with more than 20% U-235 or U-233, and plutonium with less than 80% Pu-238’, it could then continue to say: ‘another country understood fissile material as weapons-grade uranium with more than 90% U-235 and plutonium with more than 90% Pu-239’.

However, publishing side-by-side definitions would counter the P5’s broader preference of maintaining a unified front, and instead focus NNWS attention on the P5’s divergent views. The second option would therefore be to include in the final glossary only those terms upon which there is consensus, further reducing the prospect that traditionally controversial terms will appear. Recent interviews by the authors point to this option as the working group’s likely course of action. One NWS official stated that ‘the task is not to negotiate unified definitions’.

After there is an agreement on what to include, the next step will involve translating the agreed-upon English definitions into Chinese, French and Russian. This translation and finalisation process will extend past the 2014 Preparatory Committee, meaning that the group will not present the glossary by the deadline for reporting on progress related to the Action Plan. Instead, the working group intends to submit a first draft of the resulting document at the 2015 Review Conference. Some NNWS diplomats have expressed sincere disappointment about this as they believe that the glossary project has been the self-nominated focal point of the P5’s work in recent years, and is one of the only undertakings that could have a concrete output. The lack of a finalised document for the 2014 reporting deadline will increase the pressure to deliver a useful glossary with disarmament-relevant terminology in 2015.

Though the current working plan culminates in presentation to the 2015 Review Conference, China is clear that it feels that the glossary project should not end there. It hopes to continue working on terms abandoned in earlier stages but reportedly added to a ‘back-up list’. This could be
a useful exercise, especially if it builds upon the first list of disarmament terminology and leads to further progress on mutual transparency. Should the P5 continue to concentrate exclusively on producing updated versions of the initial glossary after 2015, or focus subsequent versions on adding new non-proliferation and nuclear-security terms, however, the NNWS will be decreasingly impressed by subsequent revisions.

Three potential areas of tension relating to the glossary working group were identified throughout the authors’ interviews. The first is how the P5 plan to use any arms-control and disarmament-relevant definitions. Despite the need to agree on disarmament terminology before pursuing concrete arms-control arrangements, including a standard reporting form, the P5 insist that the final glossary will not necessarily be used as a reference text for any such agreements. Rather, they are adamant that a glossary may be used to ‘facilitate’ future P5 discussions, and that its true value lies in the process of collectively discussing doctrine and policy.

A second issue, increasingly raised by NNWS, is how definitions relating to other NPT pillars – non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy – intend to be used by the P5. They may draw their definitions from existing glossaries to which the NNWS also subscribe, perhaps in hopes of padding out the end product and injecting some more easily agreed terms. Some NNWS are understandably concerned that the P5 will avoid developing any glossary terms that could take forward the process of nuclear disarmament – rendering their efforts insignificant. Alternatively, if the P5 propose terms relevant to other pillars – or to nuclear security and safety, as they have said they will – they could be accused of seeking to ‘dictate’ NWS preferences to the NNWS without consultation. Doing so would ignore joint responsibility in these areas. Instead, the P5 might deploy new definitions of terms related to non-proliferation and peaceful use, taking advantage of the absence of NNWS from discussions. This fact may speak more to NNWS suspicions in relation to the P5 process than it does to any likely P5 behaviour. It does, nevertheless, point to the need for a greater degree of communication with the NNWS. It also alludes to the importance of the P5 being able to produce a concrete product from what will have been, by the time of the Review Conference, five years of deliberations.

The third issue concerns the lack of pressure felt by the P5 to risk discomfort and make concerted efforts to find agreement on glossary terms where none previously existed. The assertion by an NWS official that ‘the task is not to negotiate unified definitions’ is telling. If participating experts have not made significant efforts to reach agreement in new areas, and if their respective governments have put them under no pressure to do so, the resulting glossary will be unable to live up to the expectation that it will contribute to forward progress on transparency and disarmament.
Despite these worrying possibilities, efforts by the glossary working group may not be in vain. As the P5 have argued, the process is intrinsically valuable. China’s leadership is novel; and officials and experts are actively discussing the nuclear postures of China and others, even if the eventual conclusion is that agreement on a specific term remains elusive. This may not be an achievement that can be laid on the desks of representatives at the next NPT Review Conference, but it is real progress.

Substantial movement on transparency by the P5, perhaps through a standardised reporting system, could make some difference in countering the perception that there has been little or no disarmament progress since 2010. Even if a reporting system cannot be agreed by 2014 or 2015, agreement on a substantive and relevant glossary could be sold as a significant step in this direction, prefiguring the development of transparency measures during the 2015–20 review cycle.

**Other Activities**

In addition to the P5’s discussions regarding the core, interrelated issues of transparency, verification and the glossary, the forum has been used for other purposes relevant to arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation.

First, there was an unsuccessful attempt to promote co-operation on nuclear-weapons accident response. Second, the P5 have held informal talks on how to contribute to removing obstacles to the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty. Third, P5 public statements have included agreed positions on non-proliferation issues (such as Iran and North Korea) – though it is unlikely that the P5 process adds much to the work of other bodies that consider these issues (the E3+3, Six Party talks and UN Security Council). Finally, the P5 process appears to have been used as a mechanism for collectively deciding whether or not to take part in NPT-related events initiated by NNWS.

**Nuclear-Weapon Accident Response: The Failed Working Group**

Since the beginning of the P5 process, two working groups are known to have been proposed. The first is the glossary working group, addressed above. The second suggestion was a working group that would explore the possibility of joint exercises on nuclear-weapon accident response. Co-operation in this area already takes place outside of the P5 forum. At a 2002 meeting in The Hague, Russia proposed that the NATO-Russia Council host a series of exercises on responses to breaches in nuclear-weapons safety and security. Two years later, Russia invited fifty NATO-member experts to Murmansk to observe Exercise *Avaria*, which included scenarios of a terrorist attack on a nuclear-weapons convoy and railway nuclear-weapons transport. The UK, the US and France held similar exercises thereafter.
of the Russian Ministry of Defence discussed what he saw as the overwhelmingly successful results of those four NATO-Russia Council exercises at the first P5 conference in 2009. The other three countries that had held their own simulations as part of the programme echoed the Russian view that nuclear-weapons accident response remained an area of potentially productive activity.\textsuperscript{34}

UK representatives went further and proposed a P5 working group that would explore additional joint exercises and exercise reviews. However, Russia expressed immediate reservations at the proposal for \textit{joint} exercises, just as it had disapproved of the UKNI’s involvement of a ‘second party’ in warhead-dismantlement verification. The proposed joint exercises would be unlike those in the NATO-Russia Council format, in which one country hosts the exercise and others are invited to observe. Russia therefore does not appear to object to the \textit{subject} of these proposed exercises, but rather the \textit{format}.

China appeared averse to exploring accident response, preferring an accident prevention-oriented approach. Substantial systemic deficiencies in accident response could be difficult to conceal, and China may not be prepared to see them unearthed. China and Russia censored any mention of a possible working group on this issue in the inaugural P5 joint statement;\textsuperscript{35} approval from their respective capitals was necessary first. Though few details are available about the proceedings of P5 meetings after 2009, the fact that such a working group never manifested itself suggests the response from Moscow and Beijing was negative.

Nevertheless, the openness of France, Russia, the UK and the US to exploring methods for nuclear accident response implies that they may not be averse to all facets of the recent NNWS initiative to discuss the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. That initiative now has the formal backing of seventy-four countries and seeks to promote discussion on the disastrous environmental and humanitarian repercussions of nuclear-weapons accidents or use.\textsuperscript{36} Norway took leadership of this and held the first conference on the subject in Oslo in March 2013. None of the P5 attended, expressing reservations that the initiative diverged from a proven step-by-step approach to disarmament.\textsuperscript{37} However, internal P5 discussions about a potential accident-response working group indicate that, if approached individually by NNWS with an offer to discuss this narrow aspect of the subject of humanitarian consequences, at least some of the P5 might be more open to participating.

\textit{Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty}

A treaty that would ban the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons and other nuclear-explosive devices has long been recognised by
NPT signatories, and by successive Review Conferences, as an important step on the road to disarmament. If the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty would act as the ‘quality cap’ on nuclear weapons, it is argued, the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty would be the ‘quantity cap’, committing states not to generate more weapons-grade nuclear material that could be used for new bombs.\textsuperscript{38} Despite its importance, the FMCT initiative is in diplomatic purgatory in the consensus-based Conference on Disarmament. Disagreements over its scope persist, with Pakistan as lead antagonist. Islamabad publicly states that the proposed treaty should not be limited to a future cut-off in production, but should go further and address the fissile-material stockpiles that states already possess – a much more far-reaching arms-control step. More recently, it has also held the FMCT hostage on grounds of its disapproval of the 2008 US-India nuclear deal, which it sees as another step in the creation of an unacceptably discriminatory non-proliferation regime. Pakistan’s ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament has said his country will only acquiesce to FMCT negotiations when Pakistan has been granted the same access to nuclear trade as India.

Over a decade of FMCT stalemate in the Conference on Disarmament has frustrated some advocates of the proposed treaty to the point that they have publicly declared their willingness to explore other options for negotiations. In 2011, then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton famously threatened to abandon the Geneva-based forum, although Washington seems to have retreated from this position. From the NNWS side, countries like Canada, Norway, Austria and Mexico have become more firm in their desire to ‘prioritise functionality over forum’ and negotiate the FMCT elsewhere if necessary. In autumn 2011, they succeeded in convincing the UN General Assembly that it should have a debate on negotiating options during its autumn 2012 session.\textsuperscript{39}

The NWS vary in their enthusiasm about an FMCT. The US possesses much more usable fissile material than it is ever likely to need for its own military programme, even if there are no further reductions in its deployed stockpile. The UK and France also have more than enough available to meet their requirements, and neither is actively considering an increase in the size of its arsenal. Russia, for its part, no longer produces military fissile material, and has recently (with US financial assistance) down-blended 500 tonnes of its highly enriched uranium stockpile, selling the resulting low-enriched uranium to the US for power production.\textsuperscript{40} It still retains the world’s largest fissile-material stockpile.\textsuperscript{41}
Table 3: Fissile-Material Stockpiles by Country (Tonnes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Highly Enriched Uranium</th>
<th>Non-Civilian Plutonium</th>
<th>Civilian Plutonium</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>695.00</td>
<td>128.00</td>
<td>50.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>604.00</td>
<td>87.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>31.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>57.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>21.20</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>91.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>5.20</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
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<td>0.30</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>0.00</td>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>15.00</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>61.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: International Panel on Fissile Materials, accessed 30 August 2013, <www.fissilematerials.org>. ‘Numbers for weapon plutonium for the United States and United Kingdom are based on official data. Most numbers for civilian plutonium are based on declarations submitted to IAEA and reflect the status as of December 31, 2011. Other numbers are non-governmental estimates, often with large uncertainties. HEU amounts are 90% enriched HEU equivalent (with the exception of the number for non-nuclear weapon states). The totals are rounded.’

China, by contrast, is thought to have the smallest fissile-material stockpile of the P5. Many also believe that China does not yet see its security environment as stable enough to allow it to declare a voluntary moratorium on fissile-material production, still less a capping of its warhead stockpile at current numbers.\(^{42}\)

Despite these differences, all five agree that the way forward on an FMCT is not in the UN General Assembly, or in any other large-scale, non-consensus-based forum. Fissile-material producing states are those that would be most affected by a proposed treaty. Their threat perceptions of one another constitute the greatest obstacle to agreement and advancing an FMCT, and indeed other disarmament initiatives. As a result, they acknowledge that discussions between themselves – parallel to the Conference on Disarmament – are more likely to help build the strategic conditions that can make an FMCT mutually agreeable. Progress would be understandably slow, but could be more meaningful than in forums like the General Assembly.\(^{43}\)

Building upon this agreement, in 2011 the P5 began to pursue their own informal talks with select non-NPT countries – namely India and Pakistan. For nuclear-armed proponents of an FMCT, including the US, ‘P5 plus’ talks were desirable for two reasons: first, they might catalyse progress, however modest; and, second, their existence might encourage patience among those...
NNWS pushing to abandon the Conference on Disarmament. The motivations for participation on the part of India and Pakistan, both reportedly on board with ‘P5 plus’ talks by autumn 2012, largely align with the latter of these reasons. They appear to feel more comfortable in the opaque, open-ended P5 forum, in contrast to the more public – and, especially in Pakistan’s case, isolating – alternative of the General Assembly or other large-scale negotiating environment.

Other than the assumed objective of an FMCT, the P5 has not explicitly articulated an interim or long-term goal for these informal talks. Meetings take place approximately every two to three months at ambassadorial level, although officials at various levels within national bureaucracies also frequently participate. Like other P5 initiatives, these FMCT talks are highly opaque. Officials involved in the meetings argue that this closed format permits discussion on issues that nuclear-armed states would be hesitant to raise or address in the presence of NNWS; methodology for the verification of hybrid civil-military facilities was one example provided in interviews. States like China and Pakistan therefore reportedly feel more comfortable vocalising their concerns and participating in discussion only amongst other nuclear-armed states. A number of participants have attested to the frankness of ‘P5 plus’ talks on this issue.

The attainability and effectiveness of any FMCT depends on having China, India and Pakistan on board and actively discussing issues related to the treaty; their nuclear programmes are intertwined with one another’s security calculations, as well as with those of the other NWS. Active participation by these three, particularly Pakistan, is something the stalled Conference on Disarmament has so far failed to achieve. However, the novelty of the ‘P5 plus’ format does not diminish the magnitude of the challenge of getting all nuclear-armed states to agree that they no longer need to produce additional fissile material. Although ‘P5 plus’ consultations on this subject are essential for attaining an FMCT, the likelihood for near-term tangible progress remains low.

Unfortunately, the P5 have not managed the expectations surrounding efforts on an FMCT particularly well. In autumn 2012, when the General Assembly was preparing to debate options for negotiating the FMCT outside of the Conference on Disarmament, the P5 loudly promoted their own work with India and Pakistan. Pursuing ‘P5 plus’ talks in parallel to the Conference on Disarmament may be more likely to achieve an effective FMCT with all the ‘key states’ on board than would a rash transfer of focus to the General Assembly or (even worse from a P5 point of view) a non-UN negotiating forum, as in the case of the Canadian-led Mine Ban Treaty. However, the Five also hoped that their approach would dissuade others from pursuing more serious change. P5 efforts to catalyse FMCT discussions ‘with other relevant parties’ have been written into several General Assembly resolutions as well as every P5 joint
Yet in campaigning against the push to find a new home for the FMCT, the P5 have directed attention to their opaque talks and seemingly raised unrealistically high expectations in some NNWS capitals.

While their public statements continue to make passing reference to the FMCT talks, in the conduct of daily diplomacy since the end of 2012, the P5 have placed much less emphasis on this initiative. Some officials have even insisted that this process (although still ongoing) is not related to the P5 process per se. It is hard to be definitive about whether or not these discussions are related to a process that has, in any case, a rather informal character. However, the P5’s reduced emphasis on its FMCT work with India and Pakistan, though perhaps reflective of its reasonably slow pace, does not align with the high expectations created by the nuclear-armed states in the midst of the 2012 General Assembly debate.

Nevertheless, the existence of this process is further confirmation of the growing importance of both India and Pakistan in discussions of how the NPT NWS can fulfil their Article VI obligations. On one current projection, Pakistan could have a nuclear stockpile of 150–200 weapons by around 2020, comparable to the planned total UK arsenal of no more than 180. India is also increasing its capabilities for both fissile-material production and delivery vehicles, which will allow it to add significantly to its current stockpile of 80–100 warheads. If the ‘P5 plus’ process can provide a means for including these two states in disarmament (or, at least, ‘pre-disarmament’) discussions, then it could provide a useful complement to NPT institutions that do not allow a formal place for participation by non-signatory states.

Talks amongst nuclear-armed states are thus crucial for addressing the political and strategic complexities obstructing agreement on an FMCT. The existence of a ‘P5 plus’ dialogue may have helped to deter others from abandoning the Conference on Disarmament. Nevertheless, fairly or not, this achievement may not be of much value in showing that the NWS are taking concrete action on disarmament in time for the 2014 Preparatory Committee.

**Non-Proliferation**

Despite the inclusion of non-proliferation terminology in the scope of work for the glossary project, non-proliferation issues more broadly do not appear to be P5 forum priorities. The P5 co-ordinate on acute problems of proliferation in other fora, such as the UN Security Council, the E3+3 process on Iran and the IAEA Board of Governors. It is unclear how extensively non-proliferation issues are treated behind the closed doors of the P5 conferences. The authors have found no evidence that the P5 process is used for more substantive work on non-proliferation issues, with the exception of the FMCT, which is discussed above.
Yet, occasionally, these issues are included in the group’s joint statements. Iran and North Korea were mentioned in the P5’s 2010, May 2012 and 2013 texts. It is likely not a coincidence that these same three statements were the only ones written specifically with an NPT review audience in mind: the 2010 Review Conference, and 2012 and 2013 Preparatory Committees, respectively. Three possible motivations exist for devoting more attention to non-proliferation issues in statements with an NPT readership. First, the standard format for NPT statements is to address all three treaty pillars – non-proliferation, disarmament and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. P5 representatives may be most comfortable with adhering to the template cemented by iteration over a period of decades. Secondly, Iran is listening when the P5 give statements to NPT meetings, offering yet another opportunity for the group to reiterate a common message. Finally, mentioning shared non-proliferation policies adds more substance to sometimes substantively slender P5 statements.

**P5 Co-ordination on Blocking Other Initiatives**

Aside from their own work, the P5 have recently garnered attention for their co-ordinated non-participation in other multilateral nuclear initiatives. The most prominent example was the Oslo conference on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons in which Norway has been leading efforts to bring attention to the disastrous repercussions of nuclear-weapons use.

Prior to the 2013 Oslo conference, Norway recognised that P5 involvement would increase the impact of discussions and thus urged the P5 to be present. Early indications from the UK Foreign Office suggested that the UK would indeed send representatives. However, London retracted this message closer to the time, and the P5 issued a statement declaring their belief that the humanitarian-consequences initiative contradicted any ‘step-by-step’ approach to disarmament by immediately seeking to de-legitimise nuclear weapons. They further emphasised their own unity and intention to collaborate on disarmament efforts. ‘P5 unity’ has since become a talking point in NPT Preparatory Committees and amongst those NNWS subscribing to the humanitarian-consequences initiative.

In late 2012, the UN General Assembly also passed a resolution mandating the creation of an open-ended working group on multilateral disarmament. Prior to the group’s first scheduled meetings in spring 2013, the P5 countries made clear that they would absent themselves from these discussions on the same grounds that they abstained from the Oslo humanitarian-consequences conference. Together, these examples appear to point to an emerging trend of close P5 co-ordination on any disarmament-related initiatives outside of the NPT review-cycle meetings, and a preference towards consensus participation or non-participation.
Such an approach might gain wider support outside the P5 were it driven primarily by a concern to avoid ‘forum confusion’, so as to allow more rapid progress on the nuclear-disarmament agenda within the mechanisms already established for facilitating this task. Yet this argument seems a double-standard, given that the P5 have started their own FMCT discussions with India and Pakistan parallel to the Conference on Disarmament – the official home for any FMCT negotiations. In addition, it is more likely to be seen as further evidence that even the most disarmament-oriented NWS are now resigned to maintaining, or indeed content to maintain, a lowest-common-denominator approach to nuclear disarmament. The prospects for future NWS–NNWS co-operation on disarmament-relevant issues, of which the UKNI was an early example, could in future be subordinated to the cause of P5 unity.

**A Measured Start**

An examination of the available details of P5 efforts suggests that, though the value of the process itself may be great, the prospect of achieving concrete progress against the Action Plan before the 2014 reporting deadline is now low. Presenting a glossary draft to the 2014 Preparatory Committee could provide some relief. A common reporting framework as a result of the transparency work being led by France, however unsophisticated, would similarly go a considerable way in satisfying the NNWS that the P5 process is being pursued with Article VI commitments in mind. Unfortunately, the current glossary working group is not expected to complete its activities until shortly before the 2015 Review Conference; and, even then, there are concerns that it will not contain arms-control terms on which there is newly reached agreement, and will therefore be an insufficient starting point for future transparency and disarmament processes. P5 undertakings other than the glossary and a common reporting form simply will not carry the same potential to reverse NNWS scepticism about NWS seriousness regarding their Article VI commitments.

The modest progress of the P5 to date can be simply explained: the fundamentals of the disarmament process, and therefore its pace, have not changed. First, strategic relations between the five NWS remain complicated. President Obama’s ambitious Prague agenda, a British Labour government interested in disarmament, the 2010 Action Plan and even the advent of the P5 process may have all created high hopes that the NPT was on the cusp of acceleration in nuclear disarmament. However, it is now clear that this was not the case. NWS threat perceptions, particularly those of China, Russia and the US, remain heavily intertwined, influencing decisions on the size and shape of their national nuclear arsenals. Efforts to chip away at nuclear-tinged mistrust between NWS – for instance, through US President Obama’s desired ‘reset’ with Russia – have not proven particularly successful. Roadblocks still pepper the near-term disarmament path. Moscow’s stated
disinterest in a subsequent round of bilateral arms control – especially if it includes non-strategic nuclear weapons and excludes ballistic-missile defence, as preferred by Washington – is a sobering reminder that strategic relations must still be untangled if progress on disarmament is to be made. Progress in this regard is slow.

Unsurprisingly, these complex strategic dynamics have restrained the P5’s work. They have made China and Russia reluctant to go beyond their comfort zones, and therefore less interested in the P5 process than others. This fact has in turn incited fear in the UK and US that others may abandon discussions early on in the P5 process. American and British officials argued that it was crucial not to ‘scare the horses’; in other words, to keep the French, Chinese and Russians on board by starting work in areas considered ‘easy steps’. So long as China and others appear to remain generally non-committal towards disarmament, however, convincing the US and UK to move past the fear of scaring the horses will be difficult; ‘easy steps’ could remain the only ones that the P5 are willing to take.

The P5’s modest pace has also been affected by persistent divisions even within the more disarmament-oriented Western NWS. Since the birth of the P5 process, more conservative elements have been ascendant in British and American debates, making both countries less able to push existing disarmament boundaries. In the US, excitement over President Obama’s ambitious Prague agenda was dampened by the fact that New START only narrowly passed through the Senate in 2010. Congressional opposition to further arms-control treaties appears even stronger, constraining the possibility of CTBT ratification (despite strong support on the part of the administration), and making it much more difficult to envisage a further bilateral arms-reduction treaty.

The UK has similarly de-prioritised disarmament since its 2010 general election brought the Conservative Party into a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats as junior partner. The government is now preoccupied with (and divided by) debate over the future of its own nuclear deterrent and, specifically, the recently released review of alternatives to current nuclear platforms and posture.

In short, temporary changes in tone around the disarmament debate in 2010 may have facilitated agreement on the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan, specifically Action 5, and the emergence of a P5 process. However, it did not upset the basic facts of multilateral disarmament: strategic relations between NWS, and political changes within them, are the key determinant of whether there is space for new P5 disarmament initiatives to be pursued. The outcome is a P5 process that, from the outside, seems sluggish.
Notes and References

1. The only exception to this pattern was after the first meeting of the P5 in London in September 2009 when difficulties in translating the UK’s initial leadership into a more sustained process of engagement resulted in delays. As a result, the second P5 conference took place in Paris from June to July 2011. The third was in Washington, DC in June 2012 and the fourth was in Geneva in April 2013.


11. ‘CTBTO Member States Take Test-Ban Verification to the Next Level’, press release, The Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization,


15. ‘UK-Hosted P5 Conference on Confidence Building Measures Towards Nuclear Disarmament, September 3–4, 2009 (Part One of Three)’.


19. The NPDI was established in September 2010 in order to work on the Action Plan agreed upon at the 2010 NPT Review Conference. The NPDI states are: Australia, Canada, Chile, Germany, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates. See Wilbert van der Zeijden and Susi Snyder, ‘NPDI Matters: Recommendations to States Parties of the Non Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative’, No Nukes – IKV Pax Christi, March 2013, p. 1.


21. ‘Speech by Nicolas Sarkozy, President of the French Republic, Presentation of Le Terrible in Cherbourg’.


24. ‘UK-Hosted P5 Conference on Confidence Building Measures Towards Nuclear Disarmament, September 3–4, 2009 (Part One of Three)’.


28. ‘UK-Hosted P5 Conference on Confidence Building Measures Towards Nuclear Disarmament, September 3–4, 2009 (Part One of Three)’.


34. ‘UK-Hosted P5 Conference on Confidence Building Measures towards Nuclear Disarmament, September 3–4, 2009 (Part One of Three)’.

35. ‘UK-Hosted P5 Conference on Confidence Building Measures Towards Nuclear Disarmament, September 3–4, 2009 (Part Two of Three)’.


The authors are grateful to Heather Williams for this point.

III. The Risks of the P5 Process

The P5 have made a modest but crucial start towards progress on the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. As the Five move forward they should recognise and mitigate three major risks: insufficient ambition to overcome inevitably difficult steps, an inappropriately calibrated communications strategy, and overplaying of the ‘P5 unity’ card. Measures can be taken by the NWS and by NNWS to avoid these potential pitfalls and encourage the P5 to propel themselves along a productive trajectory.

Insufficient Ambition

As discussed above, the fundamentals of disarmament, and therefore its pace, have not changed since the initiation of the P5 process. So long as this is the case, ‘easy steps’ will likely be the preferred course of P5 action for a majority of the NWS. While some of these measures may be seen as largely insignificant in advancing the disarmament agenda, including support for the CTBTO Integrated Field Exercise in 2014, the difficulty of a particular step is not always an indicator of its value against the Action Plan. Even steps the P5 consider ‘easy’ can be valuable if formed and used appropriately. A glossary with disarmament-relevant terminology is one example of potentially meaningful P5 work that can later be built upon.

However, there are a limited number of easy, mutually agreeable projects; furthermore, as progress is made, subsequent steps may be increasingly difficult. For instance, common quantitative transparency declarations, however partial, may at some point be the easiest in a basket of options. Yet even with any preceding preparatory work that the P5 may have done, negotiating unprecedented common quantitative transparency declarations of any kind may be very difficult to accomplish.

Should the approach of the NWS towards one another and towards disarmament remain unchanged, there is a risk that, over the course of the next NPT review cycles, the P5 will run out of useful things to do. The UK and US – the original leaders of the P5 process – may continue to be fraught by domestic splits over disarmament; and without leadership of the process and fresh political willingness by all to step out of their comfort zones, the P5 process could wither and be dismissed as irrelevant to the NPT.

The most crucial time for the NNWS to begin to collectively galvanise the P5 is in the lead-up to the 2015 Review Conference. By that time, when the P5’s report on their Action Plan commitments will be available and NNWS will have had time to digest it, the P5 glossary will be at the printers. This is the ideal juncture at which to acknowledge the positive steps the P5 have taken and the value inherent to the process, while actively encouraging them to
build upon that foundation and take new, constructive and potentially more difficult next steps.

**Poor Communication**

The NNWS are as diverse in their NPT review-cycle priorities as they are in their expectations of the P5 process. Some are vocally sceptical about the P5, arguing that the process is of marginal value and, based on the limited information given by the group, too little is being done. Where initiatives have been publicly presented by the P5, they are deemed either too trivial or, according to some, even unrelated to the Action Plan. Others are more moderate in their assessment. They see the potential of the process, the achievements inherent to its standing up, but express concern at its slow pace and lack of emphasis on tangible output. Yet others are entirely ambivalent, focusing on unrelated NPT initiatives.

Managing the diverse expectations of the NNWS is challenging; indeed, it may be impossible to quell everyone’s concerns – yet the P5 have kept communication about their activities to an unnecessary minimum. Their justification for doing so rests on their belief that an opaque process is required in order to hold sensitive, and therefore productive, discussions. Confidentiality is especially important, it is argued, if reluctant states such as China are to feel comfortable with continuing the process.

This argument holds water in relation to the substance of P5 discussions. However, it is less valid when it comes to the question of whether or not procedural aspects of the P5’s work should be disclosed. A number of the details presented in this report have never appeared in P5 joint statements or the public speeches of any of its members. For instance, surprisingly little has been said in these formal statements about the glossary project. The most detailed description of the working group’s activities was featured in China’s statement to the 2013 NPT Preparatory Committee:

> So far, the P5 experts have reached a preliminary agreement on a list of key nuclear terms and will continue their work on defining these nuclear terms. The exchange of views on nuclear terms and definitions will promote mutual understanding and contribute to confidence building among five nuclear weapon states. The P5 have agreed to submit to the 2015 NPT Review Conference the text of glossary on nuclear terms in Chinese, English, French and Russian.

Details like a working plan for glossary development, short-listing procedures and scope of the glossary remain largely unavailable to NNWS. Moreover, the NWS have made little effort to explain to the NNWS how they intend to use the non-proliferation, nuclear-security, and nuclear-safety terms which are reportedly in the glossary shortlist. This is problematic, as NNWS have a
crucial role in these areas and they may feel their input is being circumvented by work on the glossary behind closed P5 doors.

Various other P5 initiatives, including an FMCT and support for the CTBTO Integrated Field Exercise, are similarly under-discussed. To a large extent, the P5’s public message can be summarised as ‘trust us’. Yet it is difficult to see how disclosing benign procedural information would compromise the group’s productivity or jeopardise the stability of the P5 process. Finding the middle ground for procedural transparency could help reverse the growing scepticism around the P5 process.

Over-Playing the ‘P5 Unity’ Card
The concept of P5 unity is not new. Previous NPT review conferences prompted the Five to co-ordinate their policies and to maintain a unified front. Indeed, it was precisely this approach that led Robert Einhorn, former special advisor on non-proliferation and arms control at the US State Department, to critically describe P5 involvement in previous review conferences as collective ‘damage-limiting exercises’.2

In the past, however, P5 unity was a concept largely referenced in private, not in explanations to others. It has since been deployed to justify non-participation in the Oslo humanitarian-consequences conference and the open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, playing the P5 unity card in open response to recent multilateral initiatives may be a means of concealing internal disagreement. Analysis of the P5’s activities since 2010 shows that there is disunity on most of the major areas on which work has been proposed or undertaken. In the process of short-listing terms for the glossary, it became evident that the views of some, especially Russia, seem to diverge from those of France, the UK and the US. Comparable splits probably exist with respect to quantitative declarations and military transparency. China, Russia and perhaps others are not keen on using the UKNI as the model for future verification activities.

Placing a high priority on unity in moving forward within the P5 process makes sense. In the 2010 Action Plan the Five committed to work collectively, rendering them a de-facto consensus body. By nature they therefore take lowest-common-denominator decisions. Yet the wisdom of maintaining consensus decision-making when looking at external initiatives (such as Norway’s humanitarian-impact conference), rather than the P5’s own internal dealings, is more questionable.

Part of the P5’s reluctance to participate in the Oslo conference or open-ended working group on disarmament may also stem from the concern of
‘scaring the horses’, as discussed above. Showing solidarity in any multilateral arms-control setting may be seen as a way of assuring those thought to be easily frightened away from the P5 process. If so, the specific concern that China or others could withdraw may no longer be warranted; the longer they participate in the P5 process, the greater the political costs of walking away. Nearly five years in, this concern should no longer serve as a trump card over the P5’s internal or external dealings.

The risk associated with the ‘P5 unity’ concept is thus two-fold. First, even where one or more NWS prefers not to participate in the disarmament discussions of others for separate reasons, it is able to use the need for ‘P5 unity’ as a catch-all excuse for non-participation. Secondly, this may create a precedent that individual NWS should seek the approval of others in the P5 before taking part in external multilateral arms-control projects. Such a process has already begun to exacerbate tensions between the NWS, and between the NWS and NNWS. Furthermore, it is also likely to reinforce perceptions that the P5 process is a tool for obstructing rather than advancing the disarmament agenda. Acting ‘all for one’ is not always a virtue.

For that reason, in promoting external initiatives and advocating NWS attendance, NNWS should endeavour to approach the NWS not as the P5 but as individual nations. If approached as the P5, they are more likely to resort to past practice and prioritise unity in a way they might not otherwise.

Notes and References


IV. Looking Beyond 2015

As the agreed outcome of the 2010 Review Conference reaffirmed, the five NWS share responsibility for making progress towards the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament – a commitment made under Article VI of the NPT. The NWS have also made a series of commitments for specific next steps, set out in the Action Plan agreed at the 2010 conference.

Commitments made by the NWS in the NPT context, however, should not be the only reason for making progress in this area. The NWS also have a joint interest in managing and reducing the potential for arms racing and conflict, especially nuclear conflict. During the Cold War, the US and the Soviet Union pursued measures of arms control and confidence-building primarily because of their joint interests in preventing nuclear war and reducing mutual tensions. Similarly, since the end of the Cold War, the US and Russia have agreed sharp reductions in their nuclear arsenals because of their mutual interest in doing so. These steps were consistent with the two states’ NPT obligations; but the primary drivers were the wider strategic considerations of the two countries. In the same way, progress towards P5 nuclear agreements will only be made if all five states believe that such agreements are in their wider shared interests.

With this dual purpose in mind, it will be important to have some easy, clear and agreed outputs from the P5 process, which can then be presented to the 2015 Review Conference. These could include an initial agreed glossary of nuclear terms with disarmament-relevant terminology or a report on co-operation on transparency and verification.

Since such outputs are likely to be relatively limited in ambition, however, it may be just as important that the P5 also provide an indication of where they want the process to go after 2015, for possible inclusion in the agreed outcome (and possibly revised Action Plan) of the 2015 Review Conference. There are therefore three possible areas in which the P5 might want to consider offering the possibility of progress during the next NPT review cycle: moving towards standard reporting; repositioning verification efforts; and response to nuclear accidents.

If it is not yet possible to achieve P5 consensus on these areas, this should not necessarily prevent individual NWS, or groups of NWS, from articulating their own support for elements of this agenda. This is common practice in relation to other aspects of nuclear arms control, where public discussion of differences of approach is often a precursor for later agreement. In the initial stages of the P5 process, there may have been a risk that open discussion of medium-term goals could have increased China’s reluctance
to engage, and perhaps even risk its defection. More than four years after the process started, however, this risk has fallen and the risks of stagnation have increased. Progress will still ultimately depend on finding P5 consensus on the way forward; but there may be increasing tactical value in having a broader discussion of possible ways forward. If one of the purposes of the P5 process is to assure the NNWS, after all, clear signals that at least some of the NWS are prepared to take further substantial steps to implement the Action Plan can be important even in the absence of P5 consensus.

**Moving towards Standard Reporting**

In Action 21 of the 2010 Action Plan, all NPT member states (including the P5) agreed that ‘the nuclear-weapon States are encouraged to agree as soon as possible on a standard reporting form’. If they decided to do so, the P5 could now move from ‘encouraging’ agreement on a standard reporting form to actually agreeing and stating the desirability of such a form.

The ongoing streams of P5 work on transparency, verification and glossary construction could build solid foundations for future efforts and show that the P5 process is a useful and pragmatic vehicle to ensure that Article VI commitments are being fulfilled. By 2015, however, the P5 will be under pressure to explain how it plans to bring these three strands together in order to continue to fulfil their joint obligation to make progress towards further nuclear disarmament.

One important element of such an approach could be to agree in principle to establish a system of regular standardised reporting on P5 nuclear capabilities, with a view to agreeing the details of that system by 2020. Such a commitment would help the NWS to demonstrate that they are making progress in response to Action 21 of the NPT Review Conference Action Plan, outlined above. It would also show that they have an ambition to tackle more difficult steps when appropriate.

As the experience with the UN Register of Conventional Arms suggests, agreement on definitions is one of the most important, and carefully discussed, elements of standard-reporting exercises. The UN Register of Conventional Arms already asks states to report on virtually all of the systems (combat aircraft, major warships and submarines, ballistic and cruise missiles with a range of more than 25 km) that are now used as delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons. At present, only a minority of states report on holdings of such systems (as distinct from exports and imports, on which all of the P5 now provide reports). They do so using the definitions agreed by successive UN Groups of Experts, and confirmed by the General Assembly.

For the purposes of a standard reporting form relevant to Action 21, the primary role in negotiating definitions might most usefully be played by those
states which would be providing non-zero returns: namely, the five NWS. On this model, one of the central purposes of standard reporting would be to complement US-Russia numerical reductions. With this in mind, an important element of the glossary discussion—both in the period leading up to 2015, and in subsequent discussions—might be whether it would be possible to adopt terms already being used by the US and Russia in bilateral arms-control agreements. The New START and INF treaties are of most relevance here.

Such a process—using definitions developed in a regional treaty as a starting point for developing a global transparency regime—was an important element in the development of the UN Register of Conventional Arms, which itself drew on definitions of ground and air systems from the CFE (Conventional Armed Forces in Europe) Treaty in the negotiation of its own standardised definitions. In the case of the UN register, however, further systems were then added (such as maritime and missile systems, and subsequently small arms). Similarly, while standard reporting on nuclear forces should almost certainly include the main elements subject to US-Russia information exchanges, it might add further elements to the picture (for example, in relation to stocks of fissile material). As the number of disarmament-relevant terms in the current glossary shortlist remains undisclosed, the NWS could in future versions draw on portions of the proposal made for a standard reporting form by the NPDI in 2012, as outlined in Table 4. Any gaps in terminology in the first glossary draft should be consciously filled in subsequent versions.

As US-Russia arms control has demonstrated, it is possible to make substantial progress in mutual nuclear transparency without (in the eyes of the two participating states) undermining necessary military secrecy. Both states welcome the predictability that such transparency provides, making it more difficult for the other to build up its forces without detection and, in the case of the INF Treaty ruling out any deployment of a particular weapon category. Military transparency between the P5 could provide a similar confidence-building function, reassuring the US and Russia that the smaller states are not building up as they reduce.

An expansion of bilateral, mutual nuclear transparency to include a five-power, or even seven-power, element does involve some political risks. It might, in some cases, give greater political salience to the relative size of nuclear forces than would be helpful for mutual restraint. Publication of the size of the total stockpiles of China, India and Pakistan might, for example, lead politicians in the country with the smallest arsenal of the three to demand parity with the others. Others could counter such arguments by reference to established doctrines of minimum credible deterrent. What this example illustrates, however, is that nuclear transparency is not a good in its own right. Its value depends, in large measure, on how it is used in practice.
Table 4: Possible Glossary Terms Relevant to a Standard Reporting Form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category from NPDI Reporting Form</th>
<th>Terms Requiring Common Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of nuclear warheads (in or under the control of the reporting state, including those awaiting dismantlement)</td>
<td>Warhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate number of nuclear warheads in stockpile (in service, deployed and reserved for active duty)</td>
<td>Dismantlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of strategic or non-strategic deployed nuclear warheads</td>
<td>Stockpile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of strategic or non-strategic non-deployed nuclear warheads</td>
<td>In service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reductions (in numbers) of nuclear warheads in 20xx</td>
<td>Deployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate number of nuclear warheads dismantled in 20xx</td>
<td>Non-deployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of nuclear-warhead delivery systems by type (missiles, aircraft, submarines, artillery, other)</td>
<td>Reserved for active duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction (in numbers) of delivery systems in 20xx</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate number of delivery systems dismantled in 20xx</td>
<td>Non-strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate amount of plutonium produced for national-security purposes (in metric tons)(^a)</td>
<td>Delivery system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate amount of highly enriched uranium produced for national-security purposes (in metric tons)(^b)</td>
<td>National security purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of fissile material declared excess for national-security purposes (in metric tons)</td>
<td>Fissile material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\) Defined as separated weapons-grade plutonium (Pu), neptunium (Np) or americium (Am).
\(^b\) Defined as uranium enriched to 20 per cent uranium-235 or greater.

Note: The proposed draft table also includes provision for qualitative variables such as nuclear disarmament since 1995, nuclear doctrine and nuclear-weapon-free-zone ratifications, nuclear testing, scheduled policy reviews, verification arrangements for fissile-material removal, and activities to promote disarmament and non-proliferation education. The table in this report only includes those provisions that would be especially relevant for the construction of a glossary of nuclear terms.


An extension of nuclear transparency and confidence-building to the P5 (or ‘P5 plus’) level would usefully reflect the change in global nuclear
dynamics over recent years. US-Russia nuclear negotiations, focused on further reductions in the arsenals that still account for the vast bulk of nuclear stockpiles, should remain a central strand in P5 efforts to show NPT compliance. However, nuclear relationships between the US and China, China and India, India and Pakistan, and Russia and China are all of increasing importance for future nuclear stability and restraint. One of the key challenges of using the P5 as a forum for nuclear confidence-building would be to determine how it could best sit alongside existing bilateral fora (which are well-developed for US-Russia, but more episodic for US-China and India-Pakistan). Bilateral discussions will continue to be the best way to discuss how to deal with issues of primary interest to the two parties on a case-by-case basis. Nevertheless, the wider process can play an important role in establishing agreed norms (for example, in relation to transparency) from which bilateral discussions can then build, as well as providing an important mechanism for dialogue with NNWS. Both levels are valuable, therefore, and one of the challenges of diplomacy will be to ensure they are mutually reinforcing and not contradictory.

Repositioning Verification Efforts
Despite changes in wording in P5 statements to downplay their work so far on verification, the five countries continue to recognise the importance of verification discussions in advancing the overall disarmament agenda.

Given this objective, however, the P5’s efforts in the verification arena have been inappropriately calibrated, focusing largely on issues of relevance for far into the future. Specifically, continuing discussions over the UKNI and warhead-dismantlement verification, while novel and laudable for their involvement of a NNWS, deal with a scenario (the approach to complete nuclear disarmament) that most politicians believe is unlikely to be achievable within their lifetimes (that is, within the next thirty to forty years). Such exercises, therefore, are of little more than marginal relevance to the more immediate priorities set out in the 2010 NPT Action Plan. Indeed, the political palatability of the UKNI exercises may derive in large part from the fact that they have little relevance to next-steps discussions. Symbolic gestures are easier to make when they do not generate a demand for concrete, and potentially difficult, follow-on actions.

Yet this emphasis on symbolism, while it may have been a useful conversation-starter for the P5, has now run its course. One could, in principle, envisage further similar exercises: bringing together scientists and students from the UK and Brazil, or the US and South Africa, for instance – each of which could have value in terms of education and raising awareness. Now that the first experiment has been done, however, it may now be time to move the focus of P5 work on to discussion of the verification measures that would be necessary to support the next steps in nuclear disarmament.
The P5 have already begun to consider how it might contribute to verifying compliance with the provisions of the CTBT. Although the treaty has not yet entered into force, all the five countries have signed on to its provisions. Furthermore, the International Monitoring System – the organisation and technical system for detecting nuclear explosions which might violate the CTBT – is already operational. Supporting the CTBTO and its Integrated Field Exercise in 2014 is seen as one example of how the P5’s work can involve more immediately relevant, albeit less novel, significant and politically sensitive verification technology and expertise. Agreeing to help improve CTBT verification may not gain much credit for the P5 among the NNWS, especially as long as two of their number (the US and China) have not yet ratified the treaty, almost seventeen years after their initial signatures.

As a further step, therefore, the P5 should also begin to explore what practical verification mechanisms might be required in order to complement and deepen wider processes of five-power nuclear restraint over the next decade. For example, the P5 could consider whether there are any New START and INF Treaty provisions on information exchange and verification that all five NWS might be prepared to accept. This might involve, for example, compiling inventories of the national systems of the UK, France and China that would fall under the New START and INF treaties if they were states party, and exchanging data on their maximum warhead loadings and range. The P5 could explore possible future provisions for information exchange and necessary verification of excess stocks of fissile material that they hold; and groups of NWS (perhaps the US and China, or Russia and the UK, or the three NATO NWS) could offer to conduct exercises to test some of these concepts in practice. Such bilateral exercises could also be conducted to evaluate possible methods for verifying an FMCT. The UK and France both insist that an FMCT would be verifiable – might make for suitable partners on this front.

**Coping with Nuclear-Weapon Accidents**

The possibility of using the P5 process as a mechanism for discussing nuclear-weapon accident response has already been discussed, and could usefully be considered again. This is an issue of considerable concern to many NNWS – as demonstrated by the humanitarian-consequences initiative – and in which (given the cross-border implications of such accidents) they would have a legitimate interest. For this reason, reviving proposals for P5 work on nuclear-weapon accident response could be a useful way of softening the antagonism between NWS and NNWS that was sparked by the P5’s abstention from the Oslo conference; and it could demonstrate to NNWS that they are responsible and safe stewards for these weapons. Furthermore, giving some priority to work in this area would usefully complement the work of the Nuclear Security Summit process, which was launched by the US in 2010.
When a proposal for carrying out exercises on nuclear-weapon accident response was first raised in the 2009 P5 conference, Russia expressed reservations at the characterisation of those exercises as *joint* (that is, involving the direct participation of more than one NWS). Together with China’s hesitation, this position was presumably sufficient to take the possibility of such exercises off the table. However, after four years of collaboration and familiarisation, and with continuing relevant work in the NATO-Russia Council, the potential for P5 agreement in this area may have increased.

Together, the five NWS could conduct joint accident-response exercises on scenarios such as an incident in international waters close to the territorial waters of another country. Or, if the proposal for joint exercises remains unpalatable, they could consider pursuing simulations that one NWS hosts, but to which it invites P5 – or potentially even NNWS – observers.

**Notes and References**


2. Since the Action Plan has decided to ask the UN secretary-general to provide a home for the ‘publicly accessible repository’, it might be possible to include non-NPT members of the United Nations (especially India and Pakistan, but possibly also Israel) as observers in this negotiation. Their involvement in this process could encourage them, at a later stage, to provide returns of their own to the secretary-general. Yet care should be taken with any formal extension of the role of India and Pakistan as full members of the P5 group, given the potential that this might create for further slowing. It would, moreover, not be appropriate to give them a veto in these discussions, given their lack of responsibility for Action Plan implementation. For the foreseeable future, it may make more sense to encourage confidence-building between the P5, India and Pakistan through distinct fora, such as the ‘P5 plus’ process already used for discussing the Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty.
Conclusion

The 2010 NPT Review Conference helped to restore some hope that the fundamental bargain underlying the NPT was intact and at the forefront of the minds of the NWS. A persuasive factor was the agreement by the NWS to the 2010 Action Plan, which included a clear set of disarmament-related tasks on which those with nuclear weapons were expected to make progress. A forum appropriate to advancing these tasks already existed: the P5, convened in 2009 at the UK’s request. Novel in format, the P5 process has the potential to be of considerable value to long-term NPT dynamics. Even traditionally reticent nuclear-armed nations such as China have become more familiar with a multilateral arms-control dialogue and are increasingly vocal participants.

However, though the P5 is a potentially significant vehicle for long-term disarmament, it is not itself revolutionary. The strategic and domestic constraints that affect the NWS outside of P5 meetings continue to constrain what they are willing to do when they enter these discussions. These concerns have led the group to begin work in those areas considered relatively easy, rather than risk fundamental divisions, and possibly a collapse of the process, while it is in its formative period.

Some of the easy projects in the P5’s current portfolio have greater potential value than others. In particular, if a glossary can be agreed that cements a consensus on the definition of key disarmament and arms-control terms, it would serve as a useful stepping stone to increased transparency in future. There is also a risk, however, that it could be dismissed by NNWS as largely irrelevant to the Action Plan. Were it to include new definitions that relate solely to other NPT pillars and nuclear security, as some have suggested, it could even be counterproductive in NPT terms. Sadly, the glossary is unlikely to be completed by 2014 and suggestions have been made that common quantitative transparency remains elusive for the five NWS. This leaves open the possibility that even the most tempered NNWS will be disappointed when the P5 present their report to the 2014 Preparatory Committee. Fuelled by continuing procedural opacity on the part of the P5 and perceived lack of change in the pace of disarmament, scepticism surrounding the utility of the process in the NPT context may be aggravated and entrenched.

This may not be the main factor jeopardising successful consensus at the 2015 Review Conference, with events in the Middle East perhaps at the top of delegates’ minds, but it will be a substantial complication. Credibility of the P5 in an NPT context – particularly those Western NWS that purport to be leaders in disarmament, verification or transparency – depends critically on being able to convince moderate NNWS that they take their commitments more seriously than in past review cycles.
If these potential pitfalls are to be avoided, the P5 need to begin thinking earnestly about the trajectory of the process post-2015. Charting this path is admittedly difficult, but possible. The group must maintain the political will that can keep all five on board, without overstating the risk of ‘scaring the horses’. At some point, obvious easy steps may no longer be available. As a result, they should focus on initiatives that can harness the value of previous activities, or that would themselves constitute useful stepping stones. Specifically, quantitative standard reporting should be a formal goal towards which the P5 agree to work. Verification discussions should be re-focused on initiatives with short- and medium-term relevance – possibly drawing upon the New START or INF Treaty models and exploring fissile-material verification. Furthermore, in carrying out any collective activities, a more skilfully calibrated communications strategy needs to be devised and deployed by the P5.

Aside from easing tensions within the NPT regime, a credible and developing P5 nuclear process would be viewed as an important signal that the world’s major powers are committed to working together on issues of global concern. As the founders of the UN recognised, global stability and peace depend both on a rules-based order and on recognition of the special responsibilities of the major powers. This remains true. A successful P5 nuclear process, embedded within a wider process of dialogue with the NNWS, could provide some assurance that this broader vision remains relevant today.
Annex

‘P5 Statement on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues’

4 September 2009, London

The P5 states (China, France, Russia, UK and US) met in London on 3-4 September for a conference on confidence building measures towards disarmament and non-proliferation issues. After the conference they issued a statement reaffirming their commitment to all objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

The conference was originally proposed by the UK Defence Secretary at the Conference on Disarmament in February 2008 and was referred to by the UK Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, in a speech on 17 March 2009.

The P5 reaffirmed their commitment to all objectives of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and that we should advance on all fronts to achieve them. They reiterated their enduring commitment to the fulfilment of their obligations under Article VI of the NPT and noted that these obligations apply to all NPT States Parties. They stressed their intention to work with all States Parties to the NPT in creating the conditions to enable further progress under Article VI. They called upon all non-NPT States to work towards the same objective.

In a wide-ranging discussion, the P5 considered the confidence-building, verification and compliance challenges associated with achieving further progress toward disarmament and non-proliferation, and steps to address those challenges. They looked at ways to increase mutual understanding by sharing definitions of nuclear terminology and information about their nuclear doctrines and capabilities. They made presentations on enhancing P5 strategic stability and building mutual confidence through voluntary transparency and other measures. They also considered the international challenges associated with responding to nuclear accidents and undertook to consider ways to co-operate to address these challenges.

‘Joint Statement on First P-5 Follow-up Meeting on Nonproliferation Treaty’

1 July 2011, Paris

The P-5 met in Paris on 30 June – 1 July for their first follow-up meeting to the NPT Review Conference, with a view to considering progress on the commitments they made at this Conference, as well as to following up on the London Conference on Confidence Building Measures towards Nuclear Disarmament in September 2009.

They reaffirmed their unconditional support for the NPT, which remains the cornerstone of the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the essential foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament, and for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. They also reaffirmed the recommendations set out in the balanced Action Plan agreed in the Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and called on all States Parties to the NPT to work together to advance its implementation.

They met with the 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, as well as reporting and other efforts called for in the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan. They called on all States, both States Parties and Non Parties, to contribute to this nuclear disarmament objective, including by ensuring that the international nuclear non-proliferation regime remains robust and reliable.

The P-5 continued their previous discussions on the issues of transparency and mutual confidence, including nuclear doctrine and capabilities, and of verification, recognizing such measures are important for establishing a firm foundation for further disarmament efforts. In order to increase efficiency of P-5 nuclear consultation, they approved to continue working on an agreed glossary of definitions for key nuclear terms and established a dedicated working group.

The P-5 discussed the particular political and technical challenges associated with verification in achieving further progress towards disarmament and ensuring non-proliferation. They shared information on their respective bilateral and multilateral experiences in verification. They will continue their discussion of this issue later this year at an expert-level meeting in London.

As a follow-up to the 2010 NPT RevCon discussions, the P-5 shared their views on how to respond to notifications of withdrawal from the Treaty, while recognizing the provisions of Article X. They also stressed the need for strengthening IAEA safeguards, including through promoting the adoption
of the Additional Protocol and the reinforcement of IAEA’s resources and capabilities for deterring and detecting non-compliance.

The P-5 States recalled their commitment to promote and ensure the swift entry into force of the CTBT and its universalization. They called upon all States to uphold the moratorium on nuclear weapons-test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, and to refrain from acts that would defeat the objective and purpose of the treaty pending its entry into force. They reiterated their support for immediate commencement of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices, including verification provisions. In order to sustain the potential of negotiations in the CD, the P-5 will, prior to the next United Nations General Assembly, renew their efforts with other relevant partners to promote such negotiations.

The P-5 welcomed the steps taken by the U.S., Russia and the UK towards holding a Conference on a Middle East WMD Free Zone (MEWMDFZ) in 2012.

The P-5 will follow on their discussions and hold a third P-5 Conference in the context of the next NPT Preparatory Committee.

‘Joint Statement Issued by China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States of America at the conclusion of the Third P5 Conference: Implementing the NPT’

27–29 June 2012, Washington DC

The five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear-weapon states, or “P5,” met in Washington on June 27-29, 2012, in the wake of the 2009 London and 2011 Paris P5 conferences to review progress towards fulfilling the commitments made at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and to continue discussions on issues related to all three pillars of the NPT – non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and disarmament, including confidence-building, transparency, and verification experiences.

The P5 reaffirmed their commitment to the shared goal of nuclear disarmament and emphasized the importance of working together in implementing the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. The P5 reviewed significant developments in the context of the NPT since the 2011 Paris P5 Conference. In particular, the P5 reviewed the outcome of the 2012 Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, continued their discussion of how to report on their relevant activities, and shared views, across all three pillars of the NPT, on objectives for the 2013 Preparatory Committee and the intersessional period. The 2012 PrepCom outcome included issuance of a P5 statement comprehensively addressing issues in all three pillars (NPT/CONF.2015/PC.I/12).

The P5 continued their previous discussions on the issues of transparency, mutual confidence, and verification, and considered proposals for a standard reporting form. The P5 recognize the importance of establishing a firm foundation for mutual confidence and further disarmament efforts, and the P5 will continue their discussions in multiple ways within the P5, with a view to reporting to the 2014 PrepCom, consistent with their commitments under Actions 5, 20, and 21 of the 2010 RevCon final document.

Participants received a briefing from the United States on U.S. activities at the Nevada National Security Site. This was offered with a view to demonstrate ideas for additional approaches to transparency.

Another unilateral measure was a tour of the U.S. Nuclear Risk Reduction Center located at the U.S. Department of State, where the P5 representatives have observed how the United States maintains a communications center to simultaneously implement notification regimes, including under the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), Hague Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCOC), and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Vienna Document.
The P5 agreed on the work plan for a P5 working group led by China, assigned to develop a glossary of definitions for key nuclear terms that will increase P5 mutual understanding and facilitate further P5 discussions on nuclear matters.

The P5 again shared information on their respective bilateral and multilateral experiences in verification, including information on the P5 expert level meeting hosted by the UK in April, at which the UK shared the outcomes and lessons from the UK-Norway Initiative disarmament verification research project. The P5 heard presentations on lessons learned from New START Treaty implementation, were given an overview of U.S.-UK verification work, and agreed to consider attending a follow-up P5 briefing on this work to be hosted by the United States.

As a further follow-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the P5 shared their views on how to discourage abuse of the NPT withdrawal provision (Article X), and how to respond to notifications made consistent with the provisions of that article. The discussion included modalities under which NPT States Party could respond collectively and individually to a notification of withdrawal, including through arrangements regarding the disposition of equipment and materials acquired or derived under safeguards during NPT membership. The P5 agreed that states remain responsible under international law for violations of the Treaty committed prior to withdrawal.

The P5 underlined the fundamental importance of an effective International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system in preventing nuclear proliferation and facilitating cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The P5 discussed concrete proposals for strengthening IAEA safeguards, including through promoting the universal adoption of the Additional Protocol; and the reinforcement of the IAEA's resources and capabilities for effective safeguards implementation, including verification of declarations by States.

The P5 reiterated their commitment to promote and ensure the swift entry into force of the CTBT and its universalisation. The P5 reviewed progress in developing the CTBT's verification regime in all its aspects and efforts towards entry into force. Ways to enhance the momentum for completing the verification regime, including the on-site inspection component, were explored. The P5 called upon all States to uphold their national moratoria on nuclear weapons-test explosions or any other nuclear explosion, and to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty pending its entry into force. The moratoria, though important, are not substitutes for legally binding obligations under the CTBT.
The P5 discussed ways to advance a mutual goal of achieving a legally binding, verifiable international ban on the production of fissile material for use in nuclear weapons. The P5 reiterated their support for the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty encompassing such a ban in the Conference on Disarmament (CD), building on CD/1864, and exchanged perspectives on ways to break the current impasse in the CD, including by continuing their efforts with other relevant partners to promote such negotiations within the CD.

The P5 remain concerned about serious challenges to the non-proliferation regime and in this connection, recalled their joint statement of May 3 at the Preparatory Committee of the NPT.

An exchange of views on how to support a successful conference in 2012 on a Middle East zone free of weapons of mass destruction was continued.

The P5 agreed to continue to meet at all appropriate levels on nuclear issues to further promote dialogue and mutual confidence. The P5 will follow on their discussions and hold a fourth P5 conference in the context of the next NPT Preparatory Committee.

‘Joint Statement Issued by China, France, Great Britain, Russia and the United States at the conclusion of the Fourth P5 Conference: On the Way to the 2015 NPT Review Conference’

18–19 April 2012, Geneva

The five Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nuclear-weapon states, or “P5”, met in Geneva on April 18-19, 2013 under the chairmanship of the Russian Federation, to build on the 2009 London, 2011 Paris and 2012 Washington P5 conferences. The P5 reviewed progress towards fulfilling the commitments made at the 2010 NPT Review Conference, and continued discussions on issues related to all three pillars of the NPT – non-proliferation, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and disarmament, including confidence-building, transparency, and verification experiences. The P5 also had a positive exchange with representatives of civil society during the Geneva P5 Conference.

The P5 reaffirmed their commitment to the shared goal of nuclear disarmament and general and complete disarmament as provided for in Article VI of the NPT and emphasized the importance of continuing to work together in implementing the 2010 NPT Review Conference Action Plan. The P5 reviewed the outcome of the 2012 Preparatory Committee for the 2015 NPT Review Conference, and significant developments in the context of the NPT since the 2012 Washington P5 Conference. They assessed issues relating to strategic stability and international security, and exchanged views concerning prospects for further steps to promote dialogue and mutual confidence in this area, including in a multilateral format.

In addition the P5 welcomed a briefing by the Russian Federation and the United States on the ongoing implementation of the New START Treaty and its success to date. The P5 were also briefed by the Russian Federation and the United States on the joint 2012 inspection in Antarctica conducted pursuant to the Antarctic Treaty of 1959 and its Environmental Protocol. This joint inspection included verification that the international stations are implementing relevant environmental rules and that facilities are used only for peaceful purposes. The P5 shared views on objectives for the 2013 Preparatory Committee, the intersessional period thereafter, and looked ahead to the 2014 Preparatory Committee and 2015 Review Conference.

The P5 discussed the latest developments in the area of multilateral disarmament initiatives including the situation at the Conference on Disarmament. They expressed their shared disappointment that the Conference on Disarmament continues to be prevented from agreeing on a comprehensive program of work, including work on a legally binding, verifiable international ban on the production of fissile material (FMCT).
for use in nuclear weapons, and discussed efforts to find a way forward in the Conference on Disarmament, including by continuing their efforts with other relevant partners to promote such negotiations within the CD. The P5 reiterated their support for the immediate start of negotiations on a treaty encompassing such a ban in the Conference on Disarmament. They noted the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on FMCT, and expressed the hope that its work will help spur negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament. The P5 reaffirmed the historic contribution of the pragmatic, step-by-step process to nuclear disarmament and stressed the continued validity of this proven route. In this context, they also emphasized their shared understanding of the serious consequences of nuclear weapon use and that the P5 would continue to give the highest priority to avoiding such contingencies.

The P5 advanced their previous discussions of an approach to reporting on their relevant activities across all three pillars of the NPT Action Plan at the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee Meeting, consistent with the NPT Action Plan, and resolved to continue working on this issue under France’s leadership. They plan to continue their discussions in multiple ways within the P5, with a view to reporting to the 2014 PrepCom, consistent with their commitments under Actions 5, 20, and 21 of the 2010 RevCon Final Document. They welcomed the progress made on the development of the P5 glossary of key nuclear terms under China’s leadership and discussed next steps. They stressed the importance of this work, which will increase P5 mutual understanding and facilitate further P5 discussions on nuclear matters. The P5 reaffirmed their objective to submit a P5 glossary of key nuclear terms to the 2015 NPT Review Conference. The P5 are working toward the establishment of a firm foundation for mutual confidence and further disarmament efforts. They shared further information on their respective bilateral and multilateral experiences in verification and resolved to continue such exchanges.

The P5 recalled their Joint Statement of 3 May 2012 at the Preparatory Committee of the NPT Review Conference and pledged to continue their efforts in different formats and at various international fora to find peaceful diplomatic solutions to the outstanding problems faced by the non-proliferation regime. They reiterated their call on the states concerned to fulfill without delay their international obligations under the appropriate UN Security Council resolutions, undertakings with the IAEA and other appropriate international commitments. In the context of the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 12 February 2013 and the continued pursuit of certain nuclear activities by Iran, both contrary to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and IAEA Board of Governors resolutions, the P5 reaffirmed their concerns about these serious challenges to the non-proliferation regime.
The P5 underlined the fundamental importance of an effective International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system in preventing nuclear proliferation and facilitating cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The P5 stressed the need for strengthening IAEA safeguards including through the promotion of the universal adoption of the Additional Protocol and the development of approaches to IAEA safeguards implementation based on objective state factors. They also discussed the role of the P5 in assisting the IAEA in cases involving possible detection of nuclear weapon programs in non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS) in conformity with the provisions of the NPT.

The P5 continued their previous discussions of efforts to achieve the entry into force of the CTBT, and reviewed the recent UK-hosted P5 Experts Meeting on CTBT, at which the P5 identified a number of areas for future P5 collaboration and decided to pursue further intersessional work, in particular ahead of the Integrated Field Exercise in 2014. The P5 called upon all States to uphold their national moratoria on nuclear weapons-test explosions or any other nuclear explosions, and to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the Treaty pending its entry into force.

The P5 shared their views on how to prevent abuse of NPT withdrawal (Article X). The discussion included modalities under which NPT States Party could respond collectively and individually to a notification of withdrawal, including through arrangements regarding the disposition of equipment and materials acquired or derived under safeguards during NPT membership. They resolved to make efforts to broaden consensus among NPT States Party on the latter issue at the 2014 PrepCom, thus making a further contribution to the NPT Review Process.

The P5 reiterated the importance of the implementation of the 2010 NPT Review Conference decisions related to the 1995 Resolution on the Middle East, in particular those related to the convening of a conference, to be attended by all the States of the Middle East, on the establishment of the Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction, on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by the states of the region. They underlined their support for all States concerned making all efforts necessary for the preparation and convening of the Conference in the nearest future. They also reiterated their full support to the ongoing efforts of the facilitator.

The P5 reviewed their efforts to bring about the entry into force of the relevant legally binding protocols of nuclear-weapon-free zone treaties. They reaffirmed their view that establishment of such zones helps to build confidence between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, enhance regional and international security, and reinforce the NPT and the international
nuclear non-proliferation regime. They reaffirmed their readiness to sign the Protocol to the Treaty on the Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone as soon as possible. They underlined the importance of holding consultations, including on the margins of the Second PrepCom, with the States Party to the Treaty on a Nuclear Weapon-Free-Zone in Central Asia. They noted also the parallel declarations, adopted by the P5 and Mongolia, concerning Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free status, at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 17 September 2012.

The P5 pledged to continue to meet at all appropriate levels on nuclear issues to further promote dialogue and mutual confidence. The P5 plan to follow up their discussions and hold a fifth P5 conference in 2014.

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