

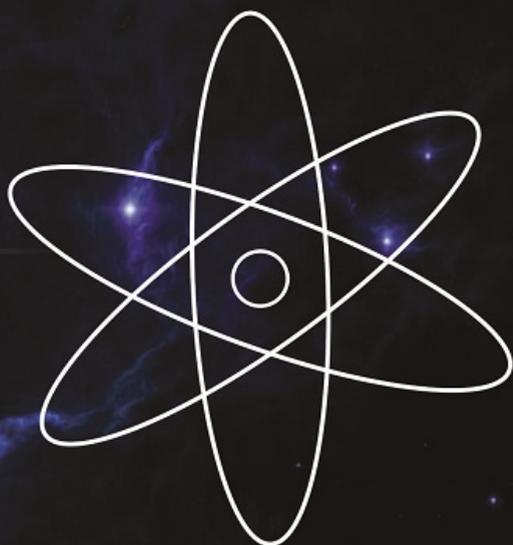
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# International Nuclear Order: Recent Trends and Implications for Strategic Stability

Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry

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Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad

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**Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry \***

**September 2018**

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## **Abstract**

*This article seeks to identify the recent trends in the international nuclear order, and their implications for strategic stability. Post-1945, the international community wanted to contain the spread of nuclear weapons while optimizing the use of nuclear technology for peaceful uses. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) represented a grand bargain whereby the possessors of nuclear weapons would disarm over time, others would not develop such weapons, and all parties would benefit from the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. That grand bargain has not been honored. Hence, the rising tensions over the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation, and arms control. The challenges to the international nuclear order are serious and ominous, including lack of political will to disarm, lingering uncertainties around the US-Russia strategic arrangements on arms control, and deadlock in the multilateral processes on arms control and non-proliferation. Regional dynamics in South Asia, Middle East, and East Asia are also negatively impacting nuclear stability. With the Trump presidency's announcement of its Nuclear Posture Review 2018, a new dynamic has been unleashed. The US seems to have embarked on "America First" approach which entails pursuit of "unmatched power" including modernization of its conventional and nuclear weapons. A new arms race is setting in, with a cascading negative effect on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and regional dynamics. In the midst of such uncertainty, Pakistan has done well in maintaining a robust nuclear deterrence capability to deter any aggression from our east. Our focus should remain on nuclear safety, nuclear security, exports controls, and command and control, and active participation in global debates on nuclear stability. This approach will not only protect our interest in the evolving global nuclear order, but also strengthen our status as a responsible nuclear state.*

## **Introduction**

There are serious tensions in the existing international nuclear order. At the heart of these tensions is a struggle between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' of nuclear technology and a deep disappointment

over the lack of progress in nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control. Major powers did not disarm their nuclear weapons stockpiles; instead, a new arms race of sorts is emerging. Multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament processes are largely deadlocked. Regional dynamics in South Asia, Middle East and East Asia are also negatively impacting nuclear stability and germinating renewed tensions.

The most glaring manifestation of the frustration with the existing nuclear order is the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (Ban Treaty) in July 2017.<sup>1</sup> However, the Ban Treaty has in actual effect not made any dent in the positions of the P-5 States and their allies (as well as other states possessing nuclear weapons), which have all opposed this treaty citing their security concerns. If anything, there has been a divisive and polarizing effect of these negotiations on the international community.

## **Historical Context**

To understand these tensions better, it is important to bear in mind that the global nuclear order stems from the global security environment. During the Cold War, the US and Soviet Union entered into an arms race of building strategic capabilities. But they also learnt of the serious risks of the race through events like the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The inception of nuclear technology since World War II has essentially posed two questions: how to contain the spread of nuclear weapons; and, how to optimize the benefits from the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

The existing international nuclear order that emerged since the 1950s gave special place to the earliest entrants of nuclear domain. The key arrangement negotiated by these powers and others was the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which

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<sup>1</sup> For the treaty overview, text and status see “Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons,” United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/tpnw/>

became the cornerstone of the existing international nuclear order. The NPT legitimized the possession of nuclear weapons by five states: China, France, Russia (then Soviet Union), the UK and the US, who all committed not to transfer the nuclear technology to other states. That the treaty was discriminatory and unequal in terms of access to nuclear technology was self-evident, and, as time showed, was used by the five nuclear states to perpetuate their international status and political power.

Why did the majority of states designated in the NPT as Non-Nuclear Weapon States (NNWS) accept such an unequal arrangement? It can be argued that in the wake of the destruction witnessed in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, there was a keenness to find some mechanism to control the proliferation of military use of nuclear technology. The NPT represented that compromise, often called the grand bargain, whereby the possessors of nuclear weapons promised not to transfer their nuclear weapons to other states and to disarm their nuclear arsenal in due course.<sup>2</sup> In return, the non-NWS would cooperate by not developing nuclear weapons. All state parties agreed to facilitate access to peaceful uses of nuclear technology.<sup>3</sup> Has it all happened as was envisaged in that grand bargain? Certainly not. Hence, the tensions are continuing to simmer and frustrations continuing to mount.

## **Challenges to the International Nuclear Order**

Let us examine in detail four major reasons that can be identified as the main causes of the rising tensions in the existing international nuclear order.

### *I. Lack of Political Will*

Firstly, there has been a demonstrated lack of political will to implement the NPT grand bargain. Consequently, the gap between the ‘haves’ and have-nots’ of nuclear technology has accentuated. Many states feel that the structure and distribution of benefits of

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<sup>2</sup> Article I and Article VI, “Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,” UNODA, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt/text>

<sup>3</sup> Article IV, *ibid.*

nuclear technology were unjust to begin with<sup>4</sup>, and over the years, gave enhanced status and political power along with an impregnable defense based on nuclear deterrence to those who possessed nuclear weapons (whether inside or outside the NPT), while little progress has been made towards nuclear disarmament or global zero. The Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) have been dragging their feet in disarming their nuclear arsenal. Although significant attempts have been made to reduce arms and nuclear arsenal, these reductions are being offset by modernization through the development of new and advanced, more potent and precise nuclear weapons by the NWS. The language of Article VI of the NPT could not have been clearer. It stipulated:

*Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.*<sup>5</sup>

## II. Uncertainty Around the US-Russia Strategic Arrangements

Secondly, the arms control arrangements between the US and Russia are stalling, and both seem to be moving towards a new Cold War like situation:

- The 1987 Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty is under threat from a compliance dispute. The US has accused Russia of violations of the pact with the development of a new land-based cruise missile.<sup>6</sup> The Trump administration

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<sup>4</sup> Toby Dalton, Togzhan Kassenaova and Lauryn Williams, eds. *Perspective on the Evolving Nuclear order* (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: Washington D. C., 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Article I and Article VI, "Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons."

<sup>6</sup> "US and Russian Nuclear Arsenals Set to be Unchecked for First Time since 1972," *Guardian*, April 17, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/17/us-russian-nuclear-arsenals-treaty-expire-unconstrained>

has threatened to develop a similar weapon in response.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear if the compliance issues were raised at the Helsinki Summit on July 16, 2018. If INF collapses, it would end a landmark arms control arrangement, which could re-ignite the US-Russia arms race in intermediate range missiles and there could be heightened tensions between the US, Europe and Russia with repercussions for the entire arms control agenda.

- The 2010 New START Treaty, which limited the deployed strategic warheads and delivery systems of the US and Russia, is to expire in 2021.<sup>8</sup> If urgent steps are not taken to renew it, analysts have expressed concerns that the US and Russian nuclear arsenals could become unconstrained by any binding agreement for the first time since 1972.<sup>9</sup> It must be acknowledged here that notable progress had been made as Russia and the US have slashed their arsenals by roughly 75 per cent from 20,000 – 30,000 warheads to 7,000 – 8,000.<sup>10</sup> Although these reductions were off-set by modernization of their nuclear arsenal, the reductions were still a progress that could be at stake if a new arms race starts again.
- There are indications that the US and Russia may be headed towards another arms race as evidenced by the US Nuclear Posture Review 2018 (more about it later in this article), and the Russian announcement of new modern weapons. Some positive signs were seen at the July 16, 2018 Summit meeting at Helsinki between President Trump and President Putin. It was said that President Putin offered to extend New

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<sup>7</sup> “Warnings as Trump Administration Hardens Nuclear Policy against Russia,” *Guardian*, February 3, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/feb/03/trump-administration-hardens-nuclear-policy-against-russia>

<sup>8</sup> “US and Russian Nuclear Arsenals set to be Unchecked.”

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Evolving Nuclear Order: Implications for Proliferation, Arms Racing and Stability,” *Asia Policy* 19 (2015): 45-48, <https://muse.jhu.edu/>

START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty).<sup>11</sup> If this is followed up, that would be in the larger security interests of both states and the world.

### *III. Multilateral Processes Largely Deadlocked*

Thirdly, multilateral arms control and disarmament processes are largely deadlocked.

- The traditional disarmament agenda and machinery like the Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament (CD) have largely remained deadlocked. Some progress can be cited like successful negotiations on Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). However, by and large, selective approaches have been pursued for deliberations on the four core issues on CD agenda: Nuclear Disarmament, Fissile Materials, Negative Security Assurances (NSAs), and Prevention of Arms Race in Outer Space (PAROS).<sup>12</sup>
- Nor is there any progress on the Comprehensive Nuclear-test Ban Treaty's (CTBT) entry into force or establishment of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East, the two pre-requisites that enabled the indefinite extension of NPT in 1995.<sup>13</sup> Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), India and Pakistan have not signed the CTBT. Whereas, China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the US have signed, but not ratified the CTBT. For the treaty to enter into force, all of these eight states are required to ratify it.<sup>14</sup> The US

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<sup>11</sup> "Russia Open to Extending Nuclear Arms Treaty with US," *United Press International (UPI)*, July 17, 2018, <https://www.upi.com/Russia-open-to-extending-nuclear-arms-treaty-with-US/2071531846834/>

<sup>12</sup> For conference documents, reports and other information see, "Conference on Disarmament," UNODA, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/publications/library/conference-on-disarmament/>

<sup>13</sup> "1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons," UNODA, <https://www.un.org/disarmament/wmd/nuclear/npt1995/>

<sup>14</sup> For status update of the treaty see, "Status of Signature and Ratification," Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-test-ban Treaty

under the Trump administration has moved further away from any commitment to the CTBT.

- Negotiations on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) are deadlocked over the issue whether the existing stockpiles of fissile material would be included in the purview of the treaty. Further, unlike Obama administration, the Trump administration appears to be far less focused on the FMCT.

#### *IV. Regional Security Dynamics*

Fourthly, the regional security dynamics are generating frustrations in South Asia and the Middle East and not inspiring any confidence in the present nuclear order. India is continuing to build up its strategic and conventional military capabilities, compelling Pakistan to take defensive counter measures. The US, which has lately augmented the Indo-US strategic partnership, is also continuing to favor India's mainstreaming as a nuclear weapon state by bending rules and carving waivers, disturbing the regional strategic balance by revising the non-proliferation regime in a discriminatory manner. In the Middle East, Israel continues to get a free pass as the Arab States, Iran and Turkey remain embroiled in turmoil in Syria and the region around it. The calls for a Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) free zone in the Middle East have also met with little success. North Korea's nuclear program remains an irritant for the US, South Korea and Japan. Iran's nuclear program is perceived with suspicion by the US, as well as, by Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States.

#### **Recent Developments Impacting the International Nuclear Order and Strategic Stability**

Amidst this chaotic and pessimistic scene, some new far-reaching developments have taken place, which will not only re-define the international nuclear order, but could also severely impact nuclear stability at the global and regional levels.

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Organization (CTBTO), <https://www.ctbto.org/the-treaty/status-of-signature-and-ratification/>

## *US Nuclear Posture Review 2018*

Of most significance is the Nuclear Posture Review 2018 (NPR 2018) announced by the US in February 2018, which flows from the National Security Strategy (NSS) of December 2017. The NPR holds China and Russia as competitors, and asserts that despite 85 percent reduction in the US nuclear stockpile, Russia and China are modernizing and expanding their nuclear weapons.<sup>15</sup> The US considers that Russia and China are trying to revise the post-Cold War international order. Accordingly, the US has decided to “maintain modern and effective” nuclear forces, as well as the infrastructure needed to support them.<sup>16</sup> The US has initiated a series of programs to “sustain and replace” its existing nuclear capabilities.<sup>17</sup> The US has moved away from the Obama era nuclear policies that viewed nuclear terrorism as the primary challenge. The shift in the US thinking from dealing with non-state actors to competing with state actors has brought back the perceived need in the US to strengthen its deterrence capabilities rather than lead the world in arms control. The NPR calls for low yield nuclear weapons which it regards as a ‘flexible’ nuclear option.<sup>18</sup> It calls for a modern nuclear armed sea launched cruise missile. The Review is in line with the thinking revealed by President Trump in his State of the Union address on January 30, 2018, that “unmatched power” is the surest means of defense.<sup>19</sup>

Many analysts have questioned the validity of the assumptions underlying the NPR. For instance, the threat from Russia has been cited as a major motivation to modernize the US nuclear arsenal.<sup>20</sup> It

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<sup>15</sup> “Nuclear Posture Review: 2018” US Department of Defense, February 2018, <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> President Donald J. Trump’s State of the Union Address, *White House*, January 30, 2018, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/president-donald-j-trumps-state-union-address/>

<sup>20</sup> David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, “To Counter Russia, US Signals Nuclear Arms Are Back in a Big Way,” *New York Times*, February 4, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/04/us/politics/trump-nuclear-russia.html>

does not factor in the fact that the Russian rearmament has largely emanated as a reaction to expanding NATO toward the borders of the new Russia, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Likewise, the US decision to walk out of Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) left the Russians worried on how to maintain deterrence.

The other threat cited by NPR emerges from what it regards as China's nuclear development. By all estimates, China has far fewer nuclear warheads than the US and Russia. As such, this does not justify the US approach contained in NPR. The review also cites threats from North Korea and Iran. North Korea was committed to de-nuclearization, reiterated most recently in the Singapore summit in June 2018 between President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-Un.<sup>21</sup> The US sanctions imposed in 2002, triggered North Korea walking out of 6-party talks. The rest is history. Nevertheless, the recent interactions between the US and North Korea have kindled cautious optimism. The US pullout of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the grounds that limiting enrichment for 15 years is not enough has retarded the enormous progress made in containing Iran's nuclear program. It should have been recognized that the so-called threat perceived from Iran would be far less lethal under the JCPOA than to pull out of it and use it as a justification to modernize US nuclear arsenal to counter the so-called threat.

The most alarming aspect of the NPR is that it would trigger a new arms race based on state of the art technologies and weapon systems. There would be higher risks of use of nuclear weapons. Even the non-NWS would feel threatened as the NPR states that the US reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in the case of a strategic non-nuclear attack.<sup>22</sup> That means the understanding underpinning NSAs would be undermined. There could also be an increase in sub-nuclear conventional preventive wars or pre-emptive

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<sup>21</sup> "Kim-Trump summit highlights: US President meets North Korean leader in Singapore, commits to denuclearization of Korean Peninsula," *Hindustan Times*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/live-donald-trump-kim-jong-un-arrive-at-summit-venue-for-historic-us-north-korea-meeting/story-Wg01GENds2Ow3So50mPBwN.html>

<sup>22</sup> "Nuclear Posture Review: 2018."

wars. The danger of miscalculation of threat could lead to a nuclear conflict, disastrous for all.

### *Russian Responses*

Russia has also revealed its plans in March 2018 for a hypersonic Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM), which cannot be intercepted and a nuclear powered global range cruise missile and an underwater drone designed to strike coastal facilities with a heavy nuclear weapon.<sup>23</sup> The Russian president claims that this new weapon makes NATO's US-led missile defense useless.<sup>24</sup> This new arms race between the US and Russia could not only undermine the NPT in a major way, but severely impact nuclear stability. Not to mention, the message that would go out to several other states to develop their own nuclear capabilities as their faith in the global nuclear order would have faded.

### *Cascading Effect on Nuclear Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Regime*

The US thinking, as reflected in the NPR and the Russian responses are creating a cascading effect for the global nuclear order. The obvious question is if the major powers start building new types of nuclear weapons, then how would it impact the non-proliferation regime?

Already we have noticed growing impatience in a large body of international community on lack of satisfactory progress on global disarmament. The NPT Review Conference in 2015 failed to produce a consensus document. At the same time, the humanitarian initiative gathered momentum to carve a new path to disarmament by seeking a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons. This shows that

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<sup>23</sup> "Putin: New Weapons Will Maintain Russia's Might for Decades," *Voice of America* (VOA), May 15, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/putin-new-weapons-will-maintain-russia-s-might-for-decades/4395869.html>

<sup>24</sup> "Putin Claims New Nuclear Weapons Render NATO's US-led Missile Defenses Useless," *Star*, March 1, 2018, <https://www.thestar.com/news/world/2018/03/01/putin-claims-new-nuclear-weapons-render-natos-us-led-missile-defences-useless.html>

global non-proliferation regime that had successfully held back spread of nuclear weapons with some exceptions, is already under stress. A move by major powers to augment their deterrence capabilities would further create challenges for the success of next NPT Review Conference in 2020.

Furthermore, the lack of sufficient support for the CTBT in the US Senate, as well as a deeply polarized US political environment has further dampened hopes on taking further steps towards non-proliferation.

### *North Korea*

The US approaches to North Korea are yet to deliver any result. The Kim-Trump Summit has reaffirmed North Korea's commitment to denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.<sup>25</sup> However, it has not yielded any practical breakthrough in achieving irreversible denuclearization of the peninsula. In fact, tensions are re-surfacing. North Korea suspects and resents what it calls unilateral pressure from the US to abandon its nuclear weaponry.

### *Iran and the Middle East*

The US decision to walk out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, also known as JCPOA, has caused a major setback to diplomacy and the international non-proliferation regime. The EU-3 (France, Germany and UK), as well as China and Russia have reiterated their desire to continue the deal i.e., all parties except the US.<sup>26</sup> The Iranian

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<sup>25</sup> "Trump, Kim Exchange Summit Commitments," *VOA*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-north-korea-sign-agreement/4434921.html>

<sup>26</sup> "Joint Statement from Prime Minister May, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron following President Trump's statement on Iran," UK Government, Press Release, May 8, 2018, [https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-from-prime-minister-may-chancellor-merkel-and-president-macron-following-president-trumps-statement-on-iran?utm\\_source=a7071128-6af3-4426-9c69-72e20e09c492&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm\\_content=immediate](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/joint-statement-from-prime-minister-may-chancellor-merkel-and-president-macron-following-president-trumps-statement-on-iran?utm_source=a7071128-6af3-4426-9c69-72e20e09c492&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=govuk-notifications&utm_content=immediate), and "Russia, China to Continue Support Iran Nuclear Deal," *APN*, May 6, 2018, <http://www.apnlive.com/world-news/russia-china-continue-support-iran-nuclear-deal-42979>

leadership also remains committed to the deal. Europeans are trying to find a solution for the situation created by the US pull out. However, if that does not work and Tehran moves towards and succeeds in building its own nuclear option, other states in the region may follow suit. If Tehran does not or is unable to move in that direction, that would leave Israel as the only power in the region with a nuclear weapon.

The prospects of concluding an agreement on NWFZ in the Middle East are very slim. That puts into jeopardy even the NPT, whose indefinite extension was contingent on this. The NPT review conferences have remained deadlocked, inter-alia, on account of this issue.

### *South Asia*

In South Asia, the Indian actions are negatively impacting strategic stability. India is pursuing an active nuclear and missile development program, including the development of Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and naval leg of its nuclear triad. India is also modernizing and expanding its conventional capabilities and adopting war fighting doctrines like Cold Start. It is even becoming vague in its No-First Use (NFU) posture. India threatens Pakistan with pre-emptive strikes or first use to deny Pakistan any chance to use nuclear weapons, which is an alarmingly high-risk strategy. The US NPR would encourage rather than discourage the Indian idea of limited conflict or any pre-emptive strike. Pakistan is left with little choice but to counter India with a full spectrum credible minimum deterrence.

It is unfortunate that Pakistan and India have not concluded any new Confidence Building Measures (CBM) for nearly a decade and India is now building new strategic capabilities on the pretext of balancing China.

The growing US-India strategic partnership is emerging as another threat to strategic stability in South Asia. The US regards

India as an ‘indispensable’ major defense partner.<sup>27</sup> The two have concluded a Defense Technology Trade Initiative (DTTI) and Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).<sup>28</sup> This US tilt towards India seems to have emboldened the present Indian leadership to behave like an arrogant regional power, thus reducing the prospects of reaching any peaceful co-existence with its nuclear neighbor, Pakistan.

## Future Prospects

In these circumstances, there seems to be little scope for any breakthrough on multilateral arms control and nuclear disarmament. The US NPR aims to protect the US and its allies, which it believes is under threat from China and Russia. It alleges that the latter are modernizing and expanding their nuclear weapons. The US would increase its reliance on tactical nuclear weapons, and has again abandoned support for the CTBT’s entry into force. The US is also vague and indifferent towards the FMCT. Therefore, the prospect for negotiating any new WMD related treaty is almost non-existent. The traditional disarmament agenda and forums remain completely deadlocked. The Ban Treaty model of negotiations has proved ineffective and highly divisive. Also, non-representative and limited-membership bodies such as the “High-Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group” cannot facilitate progress towards contentious treaties that lack political support.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “US Congress Passes Bill Declaring India ‘Major Defence Partner,’” *Hindustan Times*, December 9, 2016, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/us-congress-passes-bill-declaring-india-major-defence-partner/story-ZQwVeTJg01mMecC4eAqf7J.html>

<sup>28</sup> *Government of India Ministry of Defence*, “INDO-US Logistics Exchange Memorandum OF Agreement,” Press Release, August 29, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=158196>

<sup>29</sup> In 2017, a High Level Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) Expert Preparatory Group was created to consider and make recommendations on substantial elements of a future non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices. For further details and country statements see, “High Level Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) Expert Preparatory Group,” UNODA, [https://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/\(httpPages\)/B8A3B48A3FB7185EC1257B280045DBE3?OpenDocument](https://www.unog.ch/80256EE600585943/(httpPages)/B8A3B48A3FB7185EC1257B280045DBE3?OpenDocument)

The international community is also concerned about several “new”, “contemporary” and “frontier” issues like cyber security, Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems (LAWS), bio-technology and the impact of developments in the field of science and technology on international security in a generic sense. The technology holders, primarily Western countries, which have an edge in these areas, do not favor the development of any regulations or prohibitions that would constrain their freedom of action. The situation can change when they have fully operationalized such weapon systems and their rivals are in a position to challenge them – in which case, the focus might shift towards non-proliferation and technology denial regimes.

The existing UN disarmament machinery including the CD is facing increasing criticism due to its longstanding stalemate. All militarily significant states are represented in the CD and protect their vital interests relying on the consensus rule, which grants them a virtual veto power, paralyzing the CD. Although it would be fallacious to attribute the existing impasse of the UN disarmament machinery to its working methods and procedures (since the ongoing impasse is squarely a function of the lack of political will and unpropitious global strategic circumstances), the voices demanding action are growing.

The overall picture that emerges is that the current international nuclear order has been impacted by weakening arms control regimes, lack of willingness by NWS to disarm their weapons, resort to exceptionalism in multilateral export control regimes like the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), a renewed arms race between the US and Russia, and the focus is on strengthening nuclear capabilities through modernization by building new types of nuclear weapons and delivery systems, including non-nuclear strategic weapons and missile defenses. The obvious result of this is that greater uncertainty now surrounds the current international security environment, creating high risks of nuclear instability and a more dangerous world.

Where do we go from here? In this age of growing major power competition, there is every risk of losing even what the world had

gained in the domain of arms control and WMD non-proliferation. There are two options. Either we go back to the basics, or, all states truly commit to respect the grand bargain of NPT. This looks highly implausible. The second option is to allow each state to devise its own deterrence strategy and let the chips fall as they may. It is argued that if everyone escalates, this creates enough deterrence for anyone engaging in a nuclear war. Escalate to de-escalate. There is one catch though. The risks of accidental nuclear war would grow manifold. It is clear that a bumpy road of nuclear instability lies ahead.

## **Pakistan and the Evolving International Nuclear Order**

Where is Pakistan placed in this evolving nuclear order?

For Pakistan, nuclear option is the ultimate deterrence against any aggression from India. The leadership and people of Pakistan are not ready to compromise on nuclear capability. However, Pakistan also wants to carry itself as a responsible nuclear state in the international nuclear order. Pakistan is, therefore, continuing to focus on nuclear safety, nuclear security, export controls and a robust command and control. Pakistan's programme is not status driven, but arose to counter the perennial security threat from its eastern neighbor. Pakistan should continue to maintain its efforts to have a robust deterrence capability, while also staying on course to seeking further integration into the mainstream of the global non-proliferation regime as a responsible nuclear weapon state

## **Conclusion**

As a whole, three trends are being noticed in the current nuclear order.

- i. Movement towards further arms control has stalled.
- ii. No significant initiative is currently being undertaken in the multilateral forums.

- iii. Nuclear energy remains relevant in a world with unpredictable oil prices.

However, the access to nuclear energy is being used as leverage for commercial and strategic interests.

In order to avoid a destabilizing impact of these trends, the following is important:

- i. Instead of building new nuclear weapons, the major powers should lead the world in reducing nuclear dangers.
- ii. Multilateral non-proliferation initiatives should not put countries facing nuclear and conventional threats at a disadvantage. Security should be for all and be indivisible.
- iii. There should be non-discriminatory criteria in providing access to peaceful uses of nuclear technology.
- iv. Conventional arms sales that create imbalances in regions possessing nuclear capabilities should be curtailed, as eventually these create serious risks for strategic stability.



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