



**NONPROLIFERATION
AND DISARMAMENT:
WHY THE DEBATE
GOES AROUND
IN CIRCLES**

DR SHIREEN M MAZARI

Nonproliferation and Disarmament: Why the Debate Goes Around in Circles

Dr. Shireen M Mazari



STRATEGIC STUDIES
INSTITUTE ISLAMABAD

Journal of Strategic Affairs

Winter 2017

Copyright © 2017 Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission of the Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad.

Disclaimer:

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are solely those of the authors and do not represent in any way the official policy or position of Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad.

Author

Dr. Shireen M Mazari is DG/CEO of the Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad Pvt (SSII) – a private research centre she helped set up in January 2013. Previously, she was Director General, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, from August 2000 to May 2008. Her previous professional assignments include: Consultant on Defense and Security, 1999-2000; Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of PULSE Weekly (1993-1999); Chairperson/Associate Professor, Department of Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad (1988-1993); Guest lecturer, National Defense College, Islamabad. While at Quaid-i-Azam University, Dr Mazari was elected as Secretary and then President of the Academic Staff Association and in these capacities she also served as Secretary and President of the Federation of All Pakistan University Academic Staff Associations (FAPUASA).

Dr. Mazari has been a regular columnist for the main English dailies of Pakistan and was Editor of The Nation – a leading English Daily, from 2009 to 2010. She has written extensively on issues of defense and security. Dr. Mazari has also authored a book titled “The Kargil Conflict 1999: Separating Fact from Fiction”. The book is a ground breaking study of the Kargil Conflict from a Pakistani perspective.

Nonproliferation and Disarmament: Why the Debate Goes Around in Circles

Dr. Shireen M Mazari

At the 2017 EU Non Proliferation and Disarmament Conference in Brussels on 12-13 December 2017, the same arguments put forward decades earlier came forth on the same issues. The perspectives remain the same, as do the arguments, although some new issues have come centre-stage now. For instance, North Korea has now also demonstrated categorically that it is an overt nuclear weapon state and no longer a signatory to the NPT; while in July 2015 Iran reaffirmed its intent not to move towards nuclear weapons acquisition by first agreeing to negotiate and then signing the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with the P5 plus 1 (the EU). Then we have President Trump's efforts to have the US scuttle this critical agreement.

So it was good to see a plenary discussion on the JCPOA in which effectively the EU, the Russians and the Chinese made it clear that they would not allow Trump to destroy the whole agreement. The European speakers agreed that it was also evident that Iran's missile production was not a violation of the JCPOA; and that Iran had to undergo inspections not only through the JCPOA agreement but also through the Safeguards Additional Protocol signed by Iran – so the two were complementing each other in terms of inspections access.

The Iranian Speaker, Saeed Khatibzadeh made clear that if Iran were denied the benefits of the JCPOA then all voluntary measures under the Additional Safeguards Protocol would be suspended by Iran. As he pointed out,

the JCPOA was deliberately kept limited to nonproliferation purpose and sanctions relief. Although the EU states were trying to keep a united front on the JCPOA, clearly some were struggling to do so in the wake of the Trump position.

There was also a discussion on the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention and the challenges confronting it as the norms against biological and chemical weapons are being eroded by states and non-state actors as well as by the challenges posed by science and technology. The problems raised by the verification procedures and the differences between the US and European approaches to verifications were also pointed out.

Interestingly, there was also a major focus on how Russia was supposedly violating the INF Treaty. The discussion that ensued was in line with the new US National Security Strategy thinking of Russia and China being revisionist powers seeking to undermine US power and influence globally that was introduced by President Trump a week later.

However, at the end of the day, when discussions focused on nuclear nonproliferation, the same perspectives came to the fore that have dominated these discussions for decades – ever since the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) came into force – although the situation on the ground has been altering rapidly. Pakistan and India have been overt nuclear weapon powers since 1998; the US and other nuclear exporters have violated their Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) commitments under Articles I and II, by signing civil nuclear deals with India, a non-signatory to the NPT; and the US has been attempting to delink India from Pakistan on the nuclear issue by pushing for India's membership of the Nuclear Suppliers' Group (NSG).

Perhaps the longest continuing shortcoming – in fact one could say absurdity-of all Western-sponsored discussions on nuclear nonproliferation is the total blackout of Israel’s nuclear programme. Despite this writer raising this point in the Conference, no one was prepared to respond with any type of an answer. Again, the point was made consistently, especially by EU participants, about the European commitment to nonproliferation and concerns about nuclear weapons. Yet, when asked why the EU was not asking the two European states, France and Britain, to give up their nuclear arsenals, no European participant was prepared to give an answer.

Christopher Ford, who is now an adviser to Trump, declared that the NPT was the key to nuclear and conventional disarmament but failed to explain how beyond stating that the norms of the nonproliferation regime should be bolstered. When this writer asked why an Additional Protocol could not be added to the NPT to allow Pakistan and India to join the NPT as nuclear weapon states, there was again a complete silence.

There was the usual session on Pakistan and India in which nothing new was said. It was interesting to hear the Indian participant assert that China “gave” Pakistan its nuclear programme and that China was responsible for the strategic imbalance in the region, which has led India to widen its strategic environment. Despite criticism of Pakistan’s “fast-growing” nuclear arsenal, by and large the criticism was far more contained than in earlier times-perhaps it was just the nature of the participants present. However, it was left to the Pakistani paper presenter and this writer to point out to the wide and rapidly developing Indian nuclear arsenal and Ballistic Missile Defence-all of which were being spurred not by developments in Pakistan’s arsenal but by India’s own great power ambitions.

So it seems the underlying debate on nonproliferation has not moved much beyond the issues of: how to strengthen nonproliferation norms of the NPT; how to deal with the Pakistan-India nuclearisation; how to move towards eventual nuclear disarmament. Unfortunately, there is never any movement forward on these three issues because no one focuses on three critical issues: One, no discussion on nonproliferation can really move forward substantively without bringing Israel's nuclear programme into the equation. There were only three original non-parties to the NPT-North Korea now having become the fourth and yet no discussion brought in Israel. Nor has Israel ever made public how it would see a strengthening of the NPT regime. Two, despite repeated suggestions by Pakistan, no serious consideration has been given to the idea that the NPT could have an Additional Protocol attached to it which recognises Pakistan and India as nuclear weapon states – given that both states have now gone overtly nuclear – and commits them to undertaking the obligations of such states under the NPT. After all, an Additional Safeguards Protocol was appended to the NPT when fears of Iran's nuclearisation arose. Three, the major powers are not prepared to accept nuclear disarmament for themselves so it is unlikely this will happen. There is little discussion on whether the US can revive the CTBT that was killed by Congress; or whether the CD in Geneva can actually shift gears on the Fissile Material issue to accepting that unless a reduction of existing stockpiles of fissile material is accepted, a Fissile Material Treaty will not come about in the near future. Again, there is a deliberate attempt by powers like the US to delink India's nuclear capability from that of Pakistan's and a refusal to discuss a criteria-based approach to membership of supplier cartels like the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). This discriminatory approach only undermines

the nuclear strategic stability in South Asia along with raising the level of nuclear arms in that region.

With Pakistan already confronting an India that is developing a Ballistic Missile Development System in cooperation with the US and Israel, it has felt compelled to expand the range of its nuclear arsenal with the development of tactical nuclear weapons and cruise missiles. It has also acquired second-strike capability, as India has expanded its nuclear missiles range and weapon system variants including induction of nuclear submarines. If India is given a country-specific exception and admitted into the NSG, it will directly add to the number and types of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent.

Given that increasingly it is not a matter of technology but political will that impacts nuclear development within a state, the global debates on nonproliferation have to re-focus with an emphasis on equity and parity. Or we will continue to spend fruitless hours going around in circles with the same hackneyed arguments and discussions at international conferences/workshops on nuclear arms control and disarmament.