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Nuclear World (Dis)order: Nuclear Apartheid and proliferation

Introduction

After the unpunished nuclear atrocities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and the unlearned lessons of the Cold War, the threat of a nuclear catastrophe, including nuclear terrorism, is re-emerging in a world threatened by state and non-state terrorism, religious and military fundamentalism, an apocalyptic view of the world, with a willingness to destroy the world in order to save it, first from communism and now from terrorism.

The nuclear weapon states still refuse to comply with their treaty obligations to disarm and still threaten to use nuclear weapons. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is near collapse and proliferation is a real danger, because the NPT is not only about non-proliferation. It is also about disarmament and the elimination of nuclear weapons. In other words, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament are two sides of the same coin.

During the Cold War, nuclear proliferation was driven by the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and the race for nuclear supremacy between the United States and the Soviet Union. Today, proliferation is being driven by nuclear apartheid and by the new nuclear and military policies of the Bush administration, as articulated in the Nuclear Posture Review and the National Security Strategy.

These new policies envisage a permanent nuclear arsenal, a major expansion of the role of nuclear weapons, a new triad of capabilities that combine nuclear and conventional offensive strikes with missile defences, and a new nuclear weapons complex for the design, development, manufacture and testing of new warheads. In other words, any conventional war waged by the United States has the potential to escalate into a nuclear war.

By rejecting the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, the United States has signaled the beginning of the end of the non-proliferation regime and the start of a second nuclear age, as more and more states will eventually choose to oppose nuclear apartheid and nuclear double standards. The 1996 Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons enunciated the axiom of proliferation: *The possession of nuclear weapons by*

any state stimulates other states to acquire them. This could result in a nuclear free-for-all.

International black-market in nuclear technology

The uncovering of an international black-market in nuclear technology should persuade all governments that humankind is edging closer towards global nuclear suicide. Abdul Qadeer Khan, the 'father' of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, which gave Pakistan nuclear parity with India in 1998, was pardoned by the Pakistani government after he confessed on television that Khan Research Laboratories had been selling nuclear secrets to Iran, Libya and North Korea over the past fifteen years. The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Mohamed El-Baradei, has called it "the tip of the iceberg" and has warned that nuclear proliferation is a mortal danger and that "we risk self-destruction."

There are many lessons to be learnt. Both the pardoning of Pakistan's 'national hero' and the muted response of the US administration reveal a mutual desire to avoid the destabilising of President Musharraf's government, an important ally of the US in the so-called "war on terrorism." It also sends a disturbing signal about American and Pakistani attitudes toward proliferation and shows up the double standards by which much of international diplomacy is practised all over the world. The other lesson is that strategic allies of the US receive special treatment. For example, the war on Iraq was waged on the spurious grounds that it possessed weapons of mass destruction. The conclusion by the former US chief weapons inspector in Iraq, David Kay, that Saddam Hussein "got rid" of his chemical and biological weapons long before the invasion, underlines the point that Iran, Libya and North Korea posed a far greater threat than Iraq.

The failure to detect the existence of an international black-market in nuclear technology for fifteen years has revealed weaknesses in the NPT, designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons technology. It has rocked the international community, particularly the United States. In a speech at the National Defence University in Washington on 11th February 2004, President Bush outlined his continuing counter-proliferation strategy, calling for an expansion of the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) and announcing a US proposal to limit the number of countries permitted to produce nuclear fuel. The PSI, made up of another 'coalition of the willing' - Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States - will share intelligence, track suspect international cargo, search planes and ships, and seize weapons, missiles or equipment that raise proliferation concerns. The UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) confers the rights of freedom of navigation on the high seas and innocent passage through territorial waters without interference. The PSI asserts that some states may have a right to interdict ships even when such a right does not exist. This lack of legal clarity could result in unjustified interdiction actions and international tensions over their legality, that could escalate into military conflict.

In addition, the PSI envisages direct action against middlemen, suppliers and buyers involved in proliferation networks, by shutting down laboratories, seizing their materials and equipment, and freezing their assets. A UN Security Council resolution is being proposed, which will require all states to criminalise proliferation, enact strict export controls, and secure all sensitive materials within their borders. This invests the Security

Council with legislative powers which could threaten state sovereignty. To paraphrase George Orwell, all states are sovereign, but some states are more sovereign than others.

In order to close a loophole in the NPT and prevent governments from developing nuclear weapons under the cover of civilian nuclear programmes, there is a proposal that states may have reliable access to fuel at reasonable cost for civilian nuclear reactors, provided those states renounce uranium enrichment and plutonium reprocessing, which are the two main paths to producing weapons-grade fuel. The forty nations of the Nuclear Suppliers Group will also refuse to sell enrichment and reprocessing equipment and technologies to any state that does not already possess full-scale, functioning enrichment and reprocessing plants. All states with civilian nuclear programmes will have to sign the IAEA's Additional Protocol, which will require them to declare a broad range of nuclear activities and facilities and submit to challenge inspections by the IAEA.

This nuclear fuel initiative is yet another extension of nuclear apartheid. The United States and the other nuclear weapon states will continue to exert their hypocritical righteousness and exceptionalism to possess and produce nuclear weapons, while denying other states access to the same technology and weapons. It also reflects a discriminatory, pernicious "rogue state" approach to proliferation, instead of viewing non-proliferation as a global challenge, requiring global cooperation. It approaches the fuel issue exclusively from the viewpoint that it is a problem in non-proliferation. It is likely to prove counter-productive and stimulate the development of new sources of fuel supply.

The IAEA has made an alternative proposal to create an international, multilateral organisation to control the production of all nuclear fuel in the world, giving members of the organisation ownership and control over how it is used. The Bush administration has rejected the proposal because it would clearly stifle ongoing US plans to develop new nuclear weapons.

Since 9/11, the international community is right to be concerned about the spread of WMD technology and materials, but it must also seriously question the reasons for proliferation and understand the causes of terrorism, including militant religious fundamentalism and political extremism, fanned by the sense of injustice among the dispossessed and disempowered. Apart from material gains, Khan was also moved by his perception that the development of Muslim nuclear arsenals would correct the military imbalance between the West and the Muslim world.

A new culture

We live in a disorderly, unequal world where security is still defined in military terms, where the rule of force is overtaking the rule of law, and where ethics and social justice are drowning in a sea of market forces. Time is running out for a world, increasingly menaced by a culture of violence and war, in an age where amoral science and technology claim neutrality and ignore the consequences of their actions in producing more and more destructive nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

This is the dark side of science. Although the uniquely destructive nature of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were plain to see, Edward Teller went on to develop

the hydrogen bomb, which produced a megaton test explosion in 1952 that made the kiloton blasts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki look like a damp fire-cracker. Teller also blocked attempts to fashion a test ban treaty and was responsible for spurring the US nuclear arms race. Surely, the world would be a safer and better place, if Teller had been regulated by a code of ethics for scientists and subject to international humanitarian law. If the Nuremberg Tribunal could have tried and convicted Nazi leaders for initiating the Second World War, it follows that world leaders and scientists who initiate a second generation of genocidal nuclear weapons should also be tried and judged for premeditated genocide and crimes against humanity.

Conclusion

The world is a gloriously diverse and complex place, in need of a far greater understanding of the politics of culture and the culture of politics. Western attitudes to the

East have long been shaped by its history of imperialism. Western images and perceptions of the Arab and Muslim world, which is still submerged in the depths of obscurantism and religious misinterpretation and disengaged from the modern world, are largely created by Western polemics.

The pseudo-simplicity of the "war on terror" cannot be allowed to go uncontested. The merchandising of neoconservative politics by the mainstream Western media continues to shape American foreign policy in ways that betray the great traditions and ideals of a great country. The solution to nuclear proliferation lies not in more discriminatory policies or the unilateral, pre-emptive use of illegal force, but in doing away with double standards and complying with treaty obligations and international law.

Humanity is at another dangerous crossroads. The wrong path could lead to the darkness of endless catastrophic war. The planet bristles with high tech conventional weapons, as well as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. With its illusions of omnipotence and 'manifest destiny', the United States even plans to militarise and weaponise outer space, to achieve 'full spectrum dominance' and its empire project. They call it *Pax Americana*. I call it *Pox Americana*.

Terrorism reflects the failure of the paradigm of national and military security in a world polarised by growing inequalities and poverty, arising from rampant capitalism. Old western perceptions of security and world order require radical rethinking and redefining in human terms.

The Cold War legacy of deterrence and the proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons are inappropriate and counter-productive as a response to international terrorism. A world that continues to be uncommitted to peace and disarmament will be condemned to perpetual war.

We in IPPNW are healers, educators, ethicists, advocates of peace and disarmament, of human rights and the rule of law, and of the prudent stewardship of limited resources. We continue to be inspired by the visionary leadership of our two founders, Bernard Lown and Evgueni Chazov, who courageously united physicians across the ideological divide at the

height of the Cold War to educate and mobilize public opinion for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

The new dynamics of a violent and morally regressive world, in which the glorification of violence threatens to divest people of their common humanity, require the same response from IPPNW today. A global mass movement must be built by galvanizing the worldwide peace movement that opposed the war in Iraq.

In awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to IPPNW in 1985, Egil Aarvik, chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, emphasized that “We have the choice between living together, or ceasing to live at all.”