Disarmament and International Security: Nuclear Non-Proliferation

JPHMUN 2014 Background Guide

Introduction

Nuclear weapons are universally accepted as the most devastating weapons in the world (van der Meer, 37). Since their power was demonstrated in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, there has been a global aversion to these weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). The fear of nuclear weapons caused by the devastation was demonstrated by the politics of threat that typified the Cold War (van der Meer, 37). Although a relatively small number of countries were developing or trying to develop these weapons, the fear of nuclear conflict remained a constant theme during the Cold War.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) divides states into non-nuclear states or nuclear-states, with the only states that can legitimately possess nuclear weapons being the United States, the United Kingdom, France, China and the Soviet Union, which later became the Russian Federation. According to the Treaty “the NPT non-nuclear-weapon states agree never to acquire nuclear weapons and the NPT nuclear-weapon states, in exchange, agree to share the benefits of peaceful nuclear technology and to pursue nuclear disarmament aimed at the ultimate elimination of their nuclear arsenals” (IAEA, 2013).

Trust is a critical factor in the creation and maintenance of this treaty. The non-nuclear states signed away their rights to obtain nuclear weapons (Wheeler, 70). These signatories have to trust that the nuclear weapon states will behave responsibly and live up to their obligations under the NPT (Wheeler, 70).
The History of Nuclear Weapons Development

Nuclear weapons were first used by the United States during World War II. In August 1945, nuclear bombs were used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan. Their initial impact was devastating, resulting in the immediate deaths of more than 200,000 people. It took years to determine the extent of the long-term damage caused by the nuclear blasts (van der Meer, 37). It was not long after their initial use that the talks of banning these weapons began (Nobel, 2014). Nonetheless, by the end of 1946, a nuclear arms race started between the US and the Soviet Union (Nobel, 2014). In August 1949, the USSR tested their first nuclear bomb (Nobel, 2014). The following year, President Truman of the US created a program that entailed creating more sophisticated bombs (Nobel, 2014).

Soon the “h-bomb” was created. This weapon was even more powerful than its predecessor (Nobel, 2014). By 1954, the USSR and US had both tested this form of weaponry, that could yield explosions equivalent of up to 50 megatons of TNT (Nobel, 2014). In 1952, the UK created its first nuclear weapon; it was followed by France in 1960 (Nobel, 2014). In October of 1964, China became the world’s fifth nuclear weapon power (Nobel, 2014).

The NPT was opened for signatures in 1968. On March 5, 1970, the NPT came into force. This treaty divided states into three categories: nuclear states, non-nuclear states and non-NPT states (Nobel, 2014). Today, India, Israel and Pakistan all possess nuclear weapons outside of the treaty. North Korea has withdrawn from the NPT and implemented a nuclear weapons program (Nobel, 2014). North Korea is widely believed to possess a working nuclear weapons capability.

The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 is the closest the world has ever come to nuclear warfare (Norris & Kristensen, 85). At the time of the crisis, the US had 3,500 weapons, whereas the USSR had 300-500 weapons (Norris & Kristensen, 86). President John Kennedy of the US and Premier Nikita Khruschev of the Soviet Union had no intention of starting a nuclear war, but there was a real possibility of accidental war. (Norris & Kristensen, 86).
The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) is made up of a preamble and eleven articles. These articles pertain to the use and spread of nuclear weapons across the globe (NPT, 2). The NPT prohibits nuclear weapons states from transferring nuclear explosive devices, or control over such weapons, to non-nuclear weapons states and completely disallows the encouragement of these countries to develop such weapons (NPT, 2). Each non-nuclear weapons state has the responsibility to refuse the transfer of this weaponry as well as to not take part in the manufacturing or acquisition of these weapons (NPT, 2).

Each non-nuclear party to the NPT must agree to safeguards set out by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in order to fulfil their obligations of non-proliferation. These safeguards essentially entail the verification of any nuclear technology acquired by a country in order to determine that it is not being used for weapons manufacturing purposes (NPT, 2). Each non-nuclear party to the Treaty must not provide any fissionable material or equipment/material for processing towards the manufacture of a nuclear weapon. This sort of fissionable material is subject to the IAEA safeguards (NPT, 3). All non-nuclear parties to the Treaty must comply with the safeguards set out in Article III of the NPT (NPT, 2-3).

No part of the Treaty affects the rights of member states to develop nuclear technology for peaceful purposes. All parties to the Treaty have access to the transfer of technologies and scientific information pertaining to nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, and are encouraged to utilize nuclear power for such purposes. States in the position to participate in nuclear development are encouraged to contribute research to international organizations in order to share the technology with the world (NPT, 3).

Each party to the treaty must take the appropriate measures in order to ensure that any benefits from any peaceful application of nuclear explosions will be made available to all non-nuclear weapons parties on a non-discriminatory basis. The charge from this sort of explosive device must be as small as possible (NPT, 3). Each party to the Treaty takes on the responsibility to discuss the cessation of nuclear arms races as well as to promote strict nuclear disarmament under the international supervision of all countries (NPT, 4).
Any party to the Treaty may propose amendments to the Treaty. The proposed amendments will only be applied if they are approved by a majority of the parties to the Treaty, including non-nuclear weapons states (NPT,4). The Treaty is available for all states to sign and accede to it at any point (NPT, 4). For all signatories, the Treaty is subject to ratification (NPT, 4). Any party has the right to withdraw from the Treaty at any point (NPT, 4).

**Signatories/Non Participatory States**

The NPT currently has 188 UN member states as parties. The only state to have ever withdrawn from the NPT is North Korea. There are four states that have not signed onto the NPT: India, Israel, Pakistan and South Sudan (Wikipedia, 2014). India, Israel and Pakistan all possess nuclear weapons, though Israel has not officially admitted to this. Interestingly enough, many states within the international community are concerned with the possibility that Iran may be attempting to develop nuclear weapons when it is a party to the Treaty. India is an interesting case in nuclear non-proliferation. In 2005, the Bush Administration created an agreement with the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh that allows the Indian government the ability to create nuclear weapons without changing its nuclear status (Fitzpatrick, 76).

**International Atomic Energy Agency**

The IAEA is made up of several bodies. First and foremost is the Secretariat, which is in charge of running the agency. The IAEA is made up of 2300 professional support staff from around the globe. They are positioned around the globe in regional offices as well as in the head office, located in Vienna, Austria (IAEA, 2014). There are also several policy-making bodies of the IAEA, most importantly, the General Conference. The General Conference is the highest body within the Agency. It is comprised of representatives of all of the member states of the Agency and meets annually (IAEA, 2014). The IAEA Board of Governors meets five times a year to discuss matters pertaining to recommendations for the General Conference (IAEA, 2014).

**UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon’s Five-Point Proposal for Disarmament**
The current Secretary General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, has spoken frequently about nuclear disarmament during his tenure. In October of 2008, he gave an address at the East-West Institute (located in New York, USA) that gave a five-point proposal for globalized nuclear disarmament (UN, 2008). Firstly, the Secretary General recommended that all parties to the NPT fulfill their Treaty-mandated obligation to enter a discussion that leads to disarmament (UN, 2008). He encouraged the nuclear powers to engage others in the Conference on Disarmament (UN, 2008).

His second point was that the five permanent members of the Security Council should commence discussions to negotiate the security issues pertaining to disarmament (UN, 2008). In this second point, the Secretary General also addressed the need for non-NPT states to give up their nuclear capabilities and make new commitments to disarmament. His third point referred to legal matters, primarily the fact that bans on fissile materials and nuclear tests are not significant enough (UN, 2008). Ban Ki-moon suggested that all parties to the NPT move beyond their existing commitments to the IAEA and begin implementing stronger nuclear safeguards under the “Additional Protocol” (UN, 2008).

Fourthly, the Secretary General recommended that nuclear states circulate information pertaining to the actions they are taking to achieve disarmament (UN, 2008). To supplement this, the nuclear states should also make available more information about the size of their arsenals as well as the specific disarmament targets they are achieving (UN, 2008). Lastly, the Secretary General argued that the parties to the NPT needed to consider “complementary” measures that will enhance international security. These measures include elimination of other weapons of mass destruction (WMDs), efforts against WMD terrorism, limits on arms trades, and weapons bans (UN, 2008).

**Conclusion**

The 20th century saw a breakthrough in technology. This has created many advantages and benefits, but it has also created unprecedented complications. The nuclear era began with the creation of a powerful weapon that, in sufficient numbers, has the potential to destroy the world. In many ways, this has been an age of fear, but in others, it has been an age of cooperation and diplomacy. The NPT was a major development
within the international community. Nuclear disarmament continues to be one of the most important areas of study and cooperation.

Works Cited


