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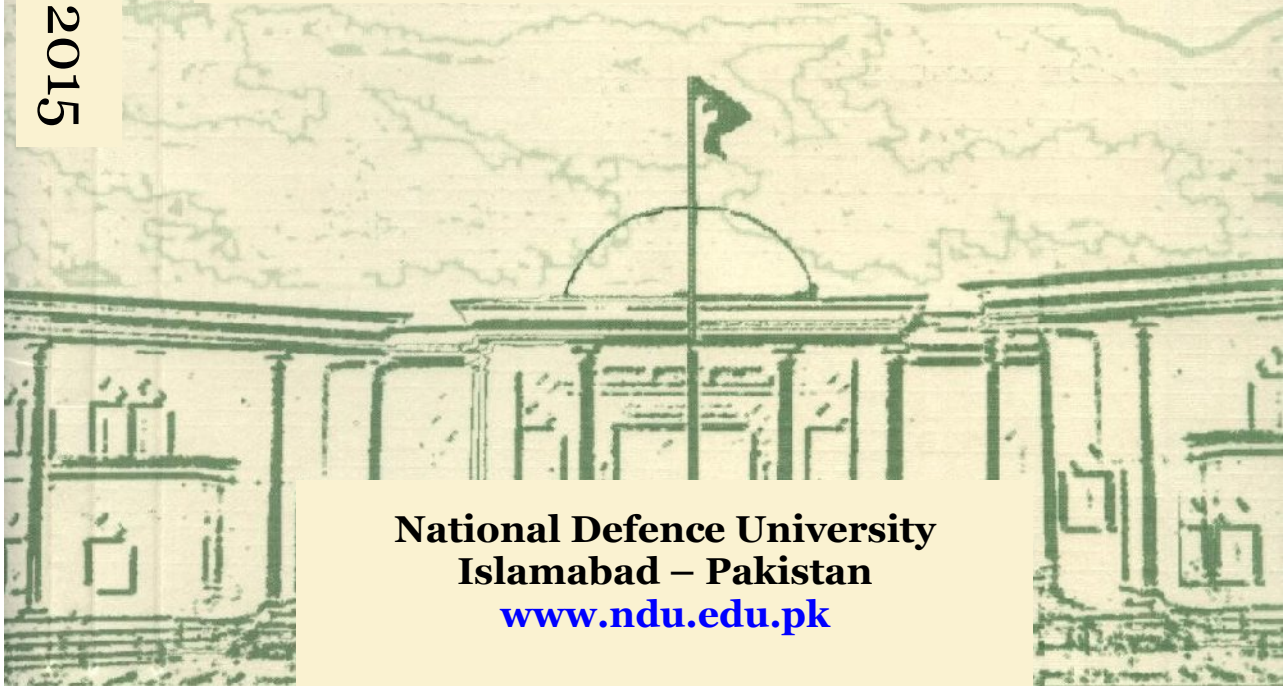


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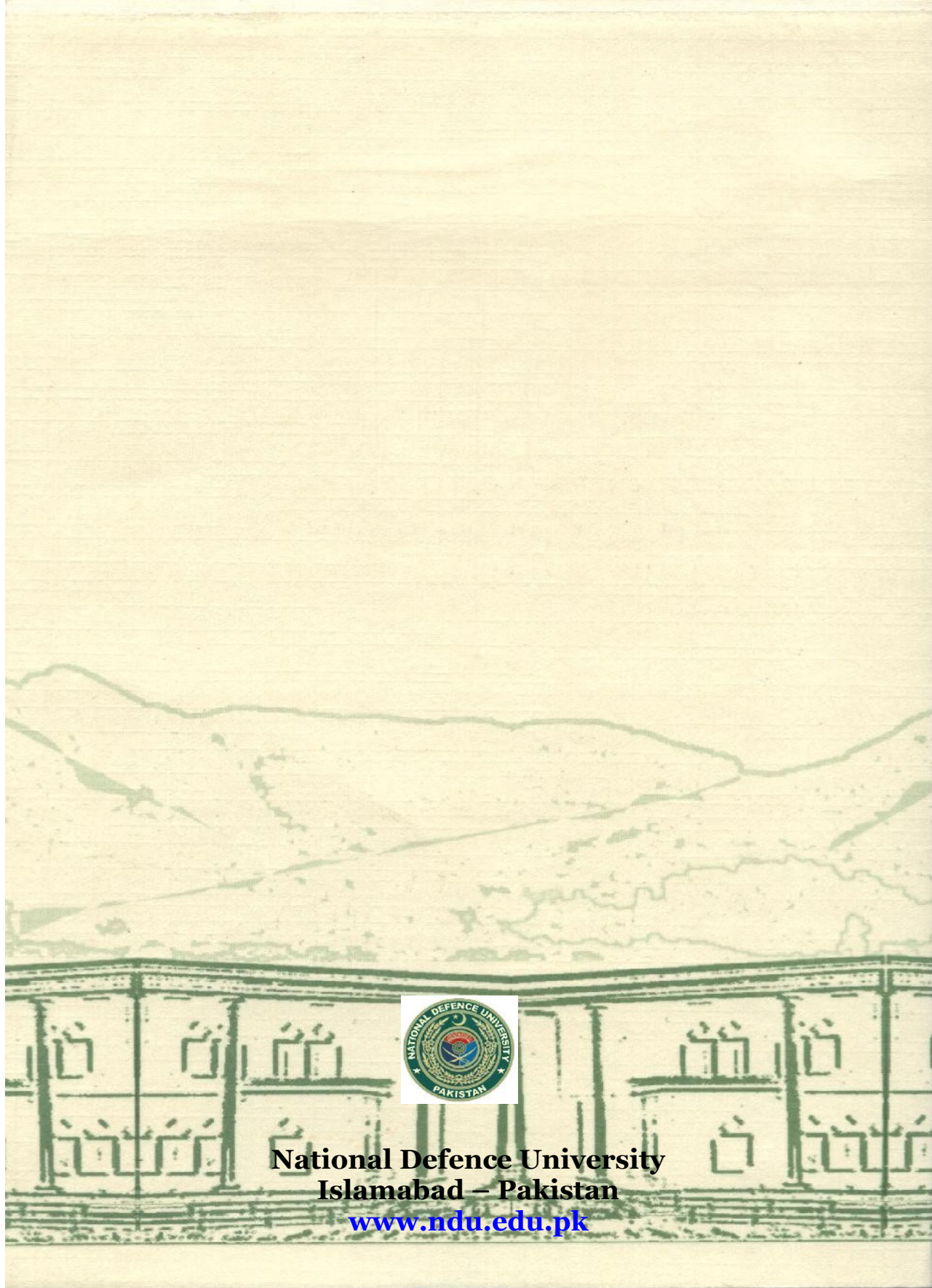
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‘Margalla Papers’ is an annual publication of National Defence University, the premier institution of security and strategic studies. The subject journal is a unique publication of the country which primarily deals with the national security issues of Pakistan. The journal has its own standing among the students, researchers, experts, policy makers and intelligentsia. It has been enlisted by International Political Science Abstracts, USA, Bibliography of Asian Studies USA and Ulrichs Periodicals Directory. Keeping the flag high, all the articles appearing in the journal are selected after a rigorous scrutiny and blind peer review at home and abroad. It is the testimony of quality of contents of the journal that **Higher Education Commission of Pakistan** has upgraded the subject journal to ‘Y’ category.

THE IRRELEVANCE OF NUCLEAR GLOBAL ZERO IN THE CHANGED STRATEGIC DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

Dr. Zafar Khan and Dr. Rizwana Karim Abbasi

Abstract

The language of Global Zero (GZ) initiated from the US and got currency particularly after the Obama's Prague speech. The GZ phenomenon is simple to pronounce but gets difficult and complex when it comes to changing contours of the international politics. Although the GZ phenomenon reminds both the nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states of the commitments that they would work for a complete disarmament, which in turn, becomes one of the important ingredients of the non-proliferation regime, both the major and minor nuclear weapons states have yet to work on these commitments. This article is to find out the relevancy of GZ in today's changed strategic environment amongst all nuclear weapons states irrespective of the region, these states belong to. It is to find out the complexities associated with the GZ and what they mean for the world free from nuclear weapons. While analyzing the difficulties the GZ confronts both at the regional and international level, this article aims at finding out whether or not the language of GZ remains any longer relevant in the nuclear politics and ultimately how this would affect the non-proliferation regime.

Keywords: The language of Global Zero; changing contours of nuclear politics; GZ and nuclear weapons states; the GZ and complete disarmament

Introduction

Many think and closely observe that the US and Russia should go for more strategic force reduction after the end of the Cold War. Other think of bringing more openness and greater transparency in terms of nuclear doctrinal posture and yet many others talk about the Global Zero (GZ). Although lots

*The Irrelevance of Nuclear Global Zero in the Changed Strategic
Dynamics of International Politics*

have already been written on enhancing the conceptual understanding in the mid and late 1990s, the talk for GZ is speeded up in the 2000s particularly after Obama's Prague speech in 2009 and the development of strategic partnership in the form of New START replacing the older strategic arms reduction talks; that is, START 1. The GZ is a concept that speaks for a nuclear free world, which has a link with the NPT's provisions for disarmament of nuclear weapons by major nuclear weapons states that in reality has not occurred yet. Even if does, the knowledge for re-acquiring nuclear capability cannot simply be eliminated. States forgoing their nuclear weapons today could acquire back when the security threat emerges. It is more to do with the knowledge and greater economy embraced with sophisticated technology that can enable states to acquire nuclear weapons in a shorter period of time.

Little work has been done on the possibility of GZ in the contemporary world. The works that have covered up so far by the Global Zero policy organization co-founded by Bruce Blair depict one-sided picture.¹ It has a little or no policy implications on the US to go for an actual GZ, though Russia and the US are committed to reduce their strategic forces. However, as both the US and Russia tend to reduce their strategic forces to desirable minimum number, more advanced conventional armed forces are acquired by all major powers to replace the level of nuclear deterrence capability, but even the concept of minimum deterrence gets complex when it comes to its actuality. For example, the setting of minimum deterrence for the US and Russia may not be minimum for smaller nuclear weapons states. Therefore, the parameters of minimum deterrence of the major nuclear weapons states may not be applicable on the smaller nuclear weapons states. That said, it is also important to understand how their desired level of strategic reduction, but the continuous and persistent conventional advancement are observed in the real world when it comes to the conceptual understanding of getting other nuclear weapons states on board towards GZ. Both France and Britain retain nuclear deterrence forces. They modernize and upgrade these

deterrent capabilities. Although China has kept its modest number of deterrence forces, it also develops conventional capabilities. None of these major nuclear weapons states have yet crafted a strategy for a universal arms control regime (ACR). Also, smaller nuclear weapons states India, Pakistan and Israel are not part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Therefore, GZ becomes a complex phenomenon. Is nuclear global zero relevant in the changed strategic environment affecting both major and smaller nuclear weapons states? This is very simple and straight forward question, but there is no simple and straight forward answer to this. It would require deeper and critical understanding of the emerging theoretical and conceptual phenomenon of GZ by analyzing various factors that make the concept of GZ irrelevant and unpersuasive. Hypothetically speaking, the GZ remains an irrelevant concept in the changing contours of international politics where uncertainties prevail and struggle for power remains predominant factor despite the needed cooperation amongst states. As the concept of GZ confronts issues, it may become extremely difficult for the states both at the international and regional level to agree on common mechanism to pave ways towards GZ.

This article closely focuses complexities associated with the conceptual understanding of global zero by unpacking the discussion. In doing so, it begins with a series of articles written by the former US officials who have served the US on the top influential positions asking for a global zero. It then examines the conceptual development of the global zero phenomenon around the world and its implications on major and smaller nuclear weapons states. Also, it analyses the challenges from the nuclear aspirant states and what they could mean for the concept of global zero as a whole. It concludes that global zero confronts complexities and seems irrelevant to both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states and that the goal for a world free from nuclear weapons becomes difficult to achieve in the foreseeable future. Also, it concludes that nuclear zero may not be possible without a conflict-zero world.

The Gang of Four for Global Zero

The gang of four: William J. Perry, George P. Shultz, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn are the four US influential characters who have served the US administration at the top level and contributed in terms of US strategic and security postures. Since they served the US at the top level, their statements matter a lot, affecting the policy choices of the US. Once used to be hawkish for the US policy advancement, the gang of four greatly desires for a global zero. They contributed few short articles in the *Wall Street Journal* in order to convince the US administration in general and the international community in particular, about the need for a nuclear zero and the relevance and irrelevance of nuclear weapons in the post cold war period. The aim of these influential writings is not merely the review of these pieces, but to systematically unpack the grammar of so-called concept of GZ. For example, the language of GZ remains strong in the initial writings of these four men, but that changes gradually in the favor of beast (nuclear forces) reflecting that without these deterrent forces the world could be more chaotic and unstable. In their first article in 2007, they have asked for change in the nuclear policy; that is, the need for a departure from the Cold War greater reliance on nuclear weapons. They opined that although North Korea's nuclear test and Iran aspiration to acquire nuclear weapons undermine the possibility for a nuclear free world, but the consistent Cold War reliance on nuclear weapons have become "increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective".²The central argument of the four men is based on the following futuristic agenda: 1) changing the Cold War posture of deployed nuclear weapons to increase warning time; 2) substantial reduction of the size of nuclear weapons in all states; 3) elimination of short-range nuclear weapons (tactical nuclear weapons) between the US and Russia; 4) ratification of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); 5) stopping and banning the production of fissile materials for weapons globally; and 6) achieving the goal of world free from nuclear weapons.³

In 2008, the four men stressed on similar points with special emphasis for more strategic reduction of nuclear forces by means of extending the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1) which was due to expire in 2009. They stressed that both the US and Russia need to take lead in terms of reducing their armed forces as only they possessed 95% of the total world nuclear warheads. Another emphasis was the need for improvement of verification mechanism bolstered with trust between the two sides just to follow the maxim of the US President Ronald Reagan: “Trust, but verify”.⁴In 2010, there is a change for the first time in a strategic tune of the four men. They assert that the US needs to retain safe, secure and reliable deterrent forces as long as other states possess nuclear weapons. This reflects barriers in the long road towards nuclear zero and it also indicates ambiguity when it comes to the US nuclear policy orientation towards reduction of strategic forces vis-à-vis Russia. While realizing the complex phenomenon of nuclear zero, the four men asserted that, “we will need to maintain our nuclear arsenal, whatever its size, for as long as the nation’s security requires it.”⁵In 2013, the four men still put emphasis of the non-reliance on nuclear and suggested for improving the verification mechanism. Also, they suggested for inclusion of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) as part of the New START strategic dialogue between the US and Russia.⁶

From 2007 to 2013, these four men urged the US and Russia to reduce the strategic deterrent forces towards the ultimate goal of global zero, but they have also realized the difficulties with this regard as they, at the same times, asserted that the US retain its deterrent forces and extends its deterrence to its allies and partners as long as nuclear weapons exist. The language for the desired GZ changes as the gang of four observes complexities with regard to their individualistic approaches towards the so-called GZ phenomenon. The language in these pieces creates dichotomy and ambiguity with regard to GZ phenomenon. This shows ambiguity within the US nuclear policy. Also, this builds up a dilemma between nuclear zero and nuclear deterrence –that is, the concept of GZ speaks for irrelevance of nuclear weapons

in the post cold war era and nuclear deterrence reemphasizes the significance of these forces for strategic stability. The dilemma consistently exists and it exists in the US President Barak Obama's Prague speech too, when he desired for a nuclear zero, but at the same time asserted that it may not be possible at least in his life time. The ambiguity with regard to nuclear zero enlarges.

Obama's Dream for a Nuclear Zero

Obama highlighted the fear and deadly consequences of these weapons and the risk associated with nuclear proliferation. However, Obama asserted the complexity associated with the world free from nuclear weapons when he stated, "this goal will not be reached quickly...perhaps not in my lifetime." This indicates that on one hand the US desires for a world free from nuclear weapons, but on the other, the US retains safe, secure and reliable deterrent forces as long as nuclear weapons exist; that is, to protect the US heartland and its allies and partners. Paradoxically, global zero is not happening and it would perhaps not occur as long as we have conflicts and security threats around the world. Perhaps, nuclear zero would first require conflict zero world, but in reality, unfortunately, the world would confront with uncertain and unpredictable episodes that would open new avenues for more conflicts. In such a chaotic and uncertain world, nuclear forces become the grammar of deterrence. Nuclear weapons states would consider these weapons for deterrence purposes and greater assets for their ultimate survival.

Obama's Prague speech is encouraging in terms of strengthening the non-proliferation measures and conveying a message to other nuclear weapons states in particular to Russia, that the Cold War greater reliance on nuclear weapons has dramatically changed and the policies of nuclear weapons states with regard to both employment and deployment of these weapons need to be revisited. This may also reflect upon other outstanding challenges emitting from non-state actors, rogue states, and emerging threats of cyber warfare where

sheer reliance on nuclear weapons may not necessarily be required. Nuclear deterrence may not be applicable to successfully counter these emerging challenges which in turn, would require states to craft innovative strategies.

Apparently, Obama's Prague speech calling for a nuclear zero becomes logical for the US when the US makes remarkable endeavors in terms of conventional weaponry; that is, the US technological innovation makes its conventional weaponry system more unique and stronger than other nuclear weapons states. This provides the US an extra confidence to quicken the process for strategic force reduction with its counterpart Russia. Russia, unlike the Cold War time, is weak in conventional innovations against both the US and its NATO allies in Europe.⁷ Therefore, the Russians stride for MIRVing –increasing the lethality and sophistication of Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) because it is considered that increasing the number of warheads on MIRV is cheaper than building an intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and/or making anti-ballistic missile complexes. Also, given the increasing conventional disparity between the US and Russia, the Russia might not agree to reduce further its strategic forces including the non-strategic weapons which have not yet become part of the New Start treaty. Presumably, the more the US increases its conventional capability, the more it gives itself a confidence to decrease its strategic forces with Russia. It is observed that the US has used its advanced conventional capability in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya and currently against the Islamic States (ISIS) forces in the Middle East. Seemingly, the US remains comfortable in terms of archiving its geopolitical and military goals through its advanced conventional forces. Why to rely on nuclear forces? Arguably, the more the conventional force disparity increases between the US and Russia, the more the Russians rely on nuclear forces to offset the conventional stronger side. In this context, the Russians have got two possible options. First, try not to decrease their strategic forces to the US desired level which could undermine the Russian deterrence capability. Therefore, Russia would retain some form of both strategic and non-strategic

deterrence forces to offset the rising US conventional might. Second, deploy its offensive forces closer to the Eastern border as part of escalation tactics to put pressure on the US to restrain from any military adventurism vis-à-vis the Russian interest.⁸

Nevertheless, Obama's Prague speech paved the way for building a strategic partnership with Russia regarding the renewal of START I by the New START to reduce the strategic forces to 1550. This would be a remarkable strategic achievement, but the world free from nuclear weapons is yet to be witnessed. Even if one closely and critically analyzes the New START, one can find certain weaknesses that could make other states ponder whether or not the New START between the two sides (i.e., the US and Russia) would last longer. For instance, the New START does not include: first, the strategic discussions about the future of TNWs. It is considered that US has got approximately 200 TNWs placed in Europe, but the Russians believe that it is more than that. On the other hand, the US believes that the Russians have got about 2000 TNWs. The possibility and the danger associated with the TNWs use in the direct limited war between the US/NATO and Russia still exist, although these weapons have not been used yet. Second, the New START does not include the talks on ballistic missile defense (BMD). The US had withdrawn from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM) in 2002 showing the desire to build defense shield both within the US and in Europe against the possible missile threats from North Korea and Iran. Both Russia and China look at this US development with suspicion. Third, the New Start does not prohibit both the US and Russia for modernizing their strategic and conventional forces. Also, it does not prohibit either side from deploying conventional warheads on long-range ballistic missiles. This provides both the US and Russia an excuse for modernizing conventional forces and introducing new technologies into their strategic innovations. Last but not least, the member can withdraw from the New START on the extraordinary rise of threat that undermines each security.

The analysis reflects difficulties the global zero would confront when it comes to more clear conceptual and practical understanding of the possibility of a nuclear free world. The process is difficult if not impossible, but the world may not expect the GZ very soon, not at least in the near future. To understand this, we need to closely see what is happening between the major nuclear weapons states at the international level and smaller nuclear weapons states at the regional level. Are they, seriously engaged to meet the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which they pledged at the time of its creation? Is the complete disarmament happening? Is there a fair and non-discriminatory treatment of the major powers towards minor nuclear weapons states? Is there occurrence of any major breakthrough between the major and smaller nuclear weapons states in terms of the creation of a universal arms control regime? What would be the future of CTBT? These are some of the key areas, which ultimately could be linked in an effort for the concept of GZ.

Conceptualizing the Challenges for Global Zero

Conceptually crafting strategies for global zero is a complex phenomenon, though it appears extremely innocuous. Initially, it may not be applicable for those regions particularly that comprise smaller nuclear weapons states because of the acuteness of security dilemma and the embryonic stages of their nuclear development programs. Apparently, if the ambitious program GZ is to be strategized, it would possibly involve major nuclear weapons states more particularly the US and Russia to begin with. In the meantime, there are some conceptual and practical issues with regard to nuclear free world. We need to consider the challenges the goal for GZ may confront; that is, major nuclear weapons states role, the weaknesses within the non-proliferation regime, the small nuclear weapons states grievances, and the challenges emitting from the nuclear aspirant states.

Major Nuclear Weapons States and Global Zero

Besides the US and Russia, other established nuclear

weapon states namely France, UK, and China are in possession of hundreds, if not thousands of nuclear weapons with sophisticated delivery systems. Like the US and Russia, they also modernize, upgrade and procure more sophisticated deterrent forces. For instance, UK spends billions of pounds in developing new nuclear submarine to replace its aging nuclear submarines. France replaces its *Rubis-Class* submarine with the modernized *Suffren* nuclear submarine.⁹ China has recently developed anti-satellite missile vis-à-vis the US ballistic missile system and spends on modernization of its nuclear submarines.¹⁰ Also, as it feels threatened, it develops Multiple Independently Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) to increase the lethality and credibility of its deterrent forces.¹¹ Both France and the UK retain deterrent forces despite having no major nuclear threat unlike the US and Russia and/or India and Pakistan. All the three states (i.e., France, UK and China) have not yet become the part of the wider international or regional arms control and disarmament processes. Perhaps, one day soon the US and Russia would urge these tiers of nuclear weapons states to become part of the universal strategic partnership when it comes to a proposed universal arms control and disarmament. Given this, the minor nuclear weapons states urge the major nuclear weapons states to play a meaningful role for a complete and verified non-proliferation, thus, providing an incentive to smaller nuclear weapon states to be part of the process of non-proliferation. So long as the established nuclear weapon states keep and plan to upgrade and modernize their deterrence forces, it becomes very difficult for minor nuclear weapons states to forgo their nuclear weapons and sign the NPT.¹² Besides, there is a danger of more withdrawal of the NPT member states to develop and acquire nuclear weapons for security purposes. This depicts that the US has adopted a policy of ‘engagement’ – that is, on the one hand it makes efforts towards non-proliferation calling for a Global Zero. On the other hand, it does not only modernize its deterrence forces and work on a national missile defense system, but also extends its nuclear deterrence to its NATO allies and partners.¹³

The major powers role in terms of arms control and

disarmament, as it promises before the non-proliferation regime becomes more responsible. At present, they affect the policies of other nuclear weapons states at the regional level. The smaller nuclear weapons states feel that they are affected one way or the other by not only the offensive policies of the major nuclear weapons states, but also, their sophisticated advancement and modernization of their deterrent forces at all major level of deterrence. These are threatening for both smaller nuclear weapons states and those within the non-proliferation regime who have not yet acquired nuclear weapons.

The Weakness within Non-Proliferation Regime

Despite heavy weight membership and life extension of NPT since 1995, the NPT is largely considered a weak regime to help achieve the GZ. Often, it is considered that states in the past accessed to the NPT not because that NPT had the greater influences in terms of compelling states to become part of the NPT, but largely number of states accessed to the non-proliferation regime because of geo-political dynamics; that is, these states did not confront security threats.¹⁴ That said, states with greater security concerns have not yet become part of the treaty and the treaty has failed to prohibit them to go nuclear. Even the treaty faces similar practical issues halting withdrawal of the states. For example, North Korea withdrew from the NPT before it tested nuclear capability and Iran could be the next challenge if it desires to acquire and test its nuclear capability. The NPT fails to craft a strategy to deal with these emerging challenges in the changing contours of international politics.

First, the provisions within the formation of the NPT seemed blurred and create contradiction for the future survival of the NPT. For example, article 1 of the NPT directs the nuclear weapon states party to the NPT to “undertake not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons of explosive devices directly or indirectly”.¹⁵ Similarly, in accordance with article 2 of NPT, “the non-nuclear weapons

states party to the treaty undertake not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly”.¹⁶ It may be considered that the US transfer and its NATO-led European allies being the recipient of TNWs may somewhat violate the provisions of the NPT, though these types of nuclear weapons could be under direct command and control of the US.¹⁷

Second, the US-India nuclear deal involves the transfer of nuclear technology to India which encourages Russia and Australia to strike similar deals with India, is considered a violation of the NPT made by the NPT members to a non-NPT nuclear weapon state which, in turn, provides an incentive for other established nuclear weapons states of the NPT to assist states outside the treaty.¹⁸ At the same time, both member states party to the NPT and non-NPT nuclear weapons states can claim the possession of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes as their “inalienable right” which, in turn, can be converted into military purposes as both the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the NPT have not developed a thorough safeguards procedures due to which member states can cheat.¹⁹ On one hand, NPT prevents states from transferring nuclear weapons and their related technology to other states directly or indirectly. On the other, it makes a provision for securing the similar technology as an “inalienable right.” There exists ambiguity with NPT provisions which perhaps needs further elaboration and modification to satisfy the concerns of the smaller nuclear weapon states such as Pakistan.

Third, NPT creates discrimination between nuclear “haves and have nots”. It permits all the major nuclear weapons such as the US, Russia, UK, France, and China to be legitimate nuclear weapon states, but denies this legitimacy not only to the member states of NPT, but also non-member of the NPT nuclear weapon states. It is one of the major obstacles to non-member NPT nuclear weapon states signing the treaty and loopholes within the treaty that could allow other states to develop and acquire their own nuclear weapons.²⁰ The

weaknesses within the NPT, which urges the major nuclear weapons states to work for a complete disarmament, pose a challenge to the so-called conceptualization of the GZ. The language of GZ seems irrelevant for smaller nuclear weapons states that consider themselves to be more vulnerable without nuclear weapons with poor conventional capabilities.

Smaller Nuclear Weapons States and Global Zero

Since the major nuclear weapons states confront issues of nuclear transparency and verification mechanism and since nuclear ambiguity exists in their nuclear policy framework despite the official documentations, the smaller nuclear weapons states confront the similar challenges. The gap between the major and smaller nuclear weapons states is enormous in term of nuclear and conventional forces. The concept of GZ may not initially be applicable to smaller nuclear weapons states given the deterrence force disparity, security dilemma, and changing security dynamics where inter-state rivalry continues to prevail. Arguably, it would be too early crafting and conceptualizing strategies for a nuclear zero for smaller nuclear weapons states when, in fact, the major nuclear weapons states have not crafted one for themselves yet; that is, how they could agree for a road towards nuclear free world; which states would be the first in this process; what would be the possible verification mechanism; how the trust amongst all nuclear weapons states could possibly be built; and whether or not this could possibly be accomplished. These are some of the rudimentary queries; smaller nuclear weapons states may ponder before they become part of this visionary GZ process. In the meantime, the smaller nuclear weapons states would wait and see how the major powers behave in the changing security dynamics of international politics and how they treat the smaller powers.

Given the logic of extra-regional-link factor, smaller nuclear weapons states are affected directly and indirectly by the deterrent policies of the major nuclear states. For example, whatever happens between the US and Russia, it affects China. China affects India and India then affects

Pakistan. The extra-regional-link factor does not only work in terms of replacing, modernizing, and procuring of deterrent forces, but also in terms of non-proliferation efforts. That said, if there are strategic restraint measures amongst the major nuclear weapons states, this would reduce the pressure at the lower trajectory. The reduction of this strategic pressure promotes deterrent stability that, in turn, enhances the possibility for crafting a framework for universal arms control regime in general and regional arms control regime in particular. However, the phenomenon of universal arms control regime remains ambitious and complex. It would require greater flexibility and transparency within nuclear weapons states doctrinal postures both in terms of employment and deployment of deterrent forces. Also, smaller nuclear weapons states may not be taken on board with regard to non-proliferation measures and ultimately for a complete disarmament unless the efforts become incentive and criterion based strategy; that is, smaller nuclear weapons states may demand for equal treatment and even nuclear recognition. They may not desire diplomatic pressures and economic sanctions on them as part of the major powers non-proliferation efforts. To show more responsibility, the smaller nuclear weapons states may convey to the major powers that they follow minimum deterrence; they are not interested in testing nuclear weapons anymore; they can better protect and secure their nuclear weapons given the lessons learned from the Cold War hot strategic environment; their nuclear command and control would remain robust and effective because they would possess only small number unlike the two superpowers (i.e., the US and the Soviet Union) during the peak of the Cold War; they would keep their nuclear weapons in de-mated position to avoid the accidental use of nuclear weapons; and they would also say that they are responsible and rational actors when it comes to inter-state crisis. Conceptually, the major nuclear weapons states may get convinced as the small nuclear weapons states get to level of maturity and they demonstrate to be rational and responsible nuclear states, but major powers may not desire the nuclear aspirant states to acquire nuclear capabilities because it would further undermine their efforts for a complete disarmament;

that is, a nuclear zero. What strategy needs to be crafted for nuclear aspirant states: diplomatic and political approaches or options to strike?

Nuclear Aspirant States and Global Zero

It was once considered during the peak of Cold War when the US President John F. Kennedy stated that there could be more than a dozen of nuclear weapons states. Therefore, the efforts for non-proliferation were speeded up to contain such a scenario. Today, the good news is that amongst 190 members of the NPT, only nine acquired nuclear capability. It is considered that anyone country desiring to go nuclear would be from within the NPT and they would acquire nuclear weapons either by commencing its nuclear weapons programme clandestinely or quitting the NPT by giving a three-month advance notice as part of the provision of the NPT if a state confronts an acute security threat. The challenge for the major powers including the non-proliferation regime is what measures need to be taken and how these nuclear aspirant states may be contained before they actually acquire the nuclear weapons capability. Theoretically, state's acquisition of nuclear weapons is predominately linked with the security threats emitting from within the hostile neighbourhood that the state perceives. The US feared that the Germans would acquire and threaten the US security; the Soviet Union acquired because of the US; the Chinese did because of the Soviet Union; both France and Britain acquired nuclear capabilities because they felt vulnerable to both the Soviet Union growing conventional and nuclear deterrent forces; India did because of the threat from China as they fought a short war in 1962; and Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons capability because of the rise of acute security threat from the growing India's conventional forces and nuclear weapons acquisition. The growing conventional capabilities and security dilemma between the states played a significant role in terms of state's acquisition of nuclear weapons. The nuclear aspirant states such as Iran, South Korea, and Japan have shown their willingness to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities to meet their security

needs. Iran desires to acquire nuclear weapons capability to retain a strategic balance in the Middle Eastern region vis-à-vis Israel who has had nuclear weapons capability since 1960, but has not yet tested its nuclear weapons capability. Although the P-5+1 (i.e. the US, Russia, China, UK, France and Germany) have reached a historic deal in terms of successfully prohibiting Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability, It is observed that this joint comprehensive plan of action does not eliminate Iran's nuclear programme rather it substantially slows down Iran's nuclear weapons capability for at least fifteen years.²¹ Israel largely practices nuclear opacity.²² Both Japan and South Korea have desired to go nuclear given the recent development of strategic dynamics in their periphery, which could turn into military escalation. Both the states have the potential to go nuclear in a very short period of time. However, the major nuclear weapons states including the US do not desire the South Korea and Japan to go nuclear as part of the non-proliferation pledges to the NPT and also the kind of nuclear security guarantee provided to these states. The major powers can adopt certain practical measures to discourage the nuclear aspirants: 1) the major powers can provide a negative security assurance, that is, that nuclear weapons would not be used against them in the event of crisis; 2) major economic and military assistance including the peaceful uses of nuclear facilities under a strict verification mechanism can also discourage aspiring states to go nuclear; and 3) decreasing the security threat environment both at the regional and international level and increasing the possibilities for crafting several prolific strategies to help resolve the issues peacefully without the use of force.

Futuristic Aspects of Nuclear Zero

Following the dictum of a renowned military strategist Carl Von Clausewitz that "Everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean everything is very easy."²³It may be safe to argue that any strategy for nuclear zero might be easy to craft, but difficult to execute given the strategic complexities and security issue of each individual states. States that have already acquired nuclear weapons may not desire to abandon

them unless others do so first. This is expressed by the major nuclear weapons states, say, the US who has emphasized the security need for retaining some nuclear weapons despite its efforts for reducing their number vis-à-vis its counterpart Russia. The US has clearly expressed that as long as nuclear weapons exist, it would retain its nuclear weapons capability. This indicates that the US would like to see other nuclear weapons states to get on board for an idealistic goal of nuclear zero. It means the US would not be the first to forgo its nuclear weapons capability unilaterally. Also, this indicates the growing level of mistrust, lack of transparency in nuclear policies of nuclear weapons states and the absence of a clear theoretical and conceptual mechanism for nuclear zero. The dichotomy and ambiguity with regard to nuclear zero enlarge when on the one hand, talks for promoting the concept of nuclear zero amongst nuclear weapons states are initiated, but on the other, nuclear weapons states consistently retain their nuclear weapons along with development of advanced conventional weapons capability.

Security remains a predominant factor for states to retain nuclear weapons for their ultimate survival. International politics teaches the dictum of uncertain world where each state prioritizes its national interest. States would weigh the cost and benefit analysis, that is, how much they would gain and how much they would lose by abandoning their nuclear weapons capability. If states would lose much and if their security would be undermined absent from nuclear guarantee, they would not forego their deterrent forces for the sake of idealistic conceptualization of global zero. Idealistically, the goal for a nuclear zero may be attained if international community comes up with such a framework based on nuclear free world that is unanimously accepted both by nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states. First, nuclear weapons states would need to resolve the issues of states that fall within security dilemma. The security concerns of these states vulnerable to security threats and pre-emptive strikes by the adversaries can be resolved when and if nuclear weapons states execute the strategy of negative security assurances – that is, these states would not strike other states with their

nuclear weapons. Second, all the major nuclear weapons states party to the NPT would meet the promises of nuclear disarmament that they have made at the initiation of this treaty. Also, they would attempt to strengthen the non-proliferation regime by not only eliminating their nuclear weapons, but also urging others to do so. Third, before the GZ to occur, there is a need for a conflict free world that in reality may not be possible because of greater security issues of greater number of states. Each one of these belongs to threatening scenarios and each of these states confronts security issues against the others. The resolution of these conflicts confronting each individual states becomes so complex that conflict remains inevitable, though these states may not desire to be trapped by these security issues.

That said, it is simple to conceptualize the phenomenon of nuclear zero or nuclear free world. Also, it might be simple to theorize what needs to be done for achieving the perimeters of global zero. However, the difficulty comes in the strategic execution of this conceptualized phenomenon. Idealistically, GZ may be possible in terms of conceptualizing the phenomenon, but in reality, it becomes vague, ambiguous and complex which in turn makes the concept of GZ irrelevant in the changing contours of international politics.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of global zero got famous at the US president Obama's Prague speech. Conceptually, it basically aimed at reminding both major and smaller nuclear weapons states to become part of the arms control and disarmament discussions both at the regional and international level in order to fulfill their commitments for a complete nuclear disarmament. Also, it aimed at encouraging the strategic relationship between the US and Russia to strike meaningful deals towards more and/or deep reduction of their deterrent forces. The language of global zero meant for a world free from nuclear weapons seems simple and idealistically attractive for both the major and smaller nuclear weapons states, but it becomes difficult and complex when it comes to

the changed and/or changing strategic environment of each nuclear weapons state confronts. In other words, the goal for a global zero is simple to pronounce, but difficult to achieve. Scrutinizing the complexities closely of both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states can assess this. First, although both the US and Russia have agreed to reduce their strategic forces by striking a New Start treaty, there is no deep reduction taking place. Both states still rely on nuclear forces in the event of war. Both the sides pursue a policy of first use nuclear option. Both the US and Russia are modernizing and advancing their conventional forces. Both are still keeping tactical nuclear weapons. Second, despite the NPT's life extension and expansion in terms of its membership, the NPT confronts challenges. For instance, there is still no talk on how to construct a dynamic mechanism under which both major and smaller nuclear weapons states would work for a complete disarmament. In addition, India, Pakistan and Israel are not part of the NPT. North Korea withdrew from the treaty and tested its nuclear capability. Iran could be next. Also, the future nuclear aspirant states would be from within the NPT. Third, member states have yet to work on the possible creation of universal arms control regime, which could involve both the major and smaller nuclear weapons states. But this is easier said than done. Security interest, security dilemma, deterrence stability, and equal treatment are some of the major ingredients that would become part and parcel of the establishment of universal arms control regime and states would play around these essentials as part of the nuclear politics. Last but not least, given these challenges arising both from nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states, the phenomenon of global zero becomes irrelevant. It remains difficult and complex to achieve. Since the Obama's Prague speech, the talks on global zero seem to be losing strength which in turn, indicates that both the major and smaller nuclear weapons states may not be ready to develop a concrete mechanism for a complete disarmament which idealistically leads these states towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

Notes

¹ For details see, James Cartwright, Richard Burt, Chuck Hagel, Thomas Pickering, Jack Sheehan, Bruce Blair, “*Global Zero US Nuclear Policy Commission Report: Modernizing US Nuclear Strategy, Force Structure and Posture*,” (Global Zero, 2012)

² George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 04, 2007

³ *Ibid.*,

⁴ George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “Towards a Nuclear Free World,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2008

⁵ George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “How to Protect our Deterrent,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2010

⁶ George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “Next Steps in Reducing Nuclear Risks: The Pace of Nonproliferation Work Today Doesn't Match the Urgency of the Threat,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 06, 2013

⁷ For interesting discussion see, Michael Peck, “Five NATO Weapons of War Russia Should Fear,” July 01, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/five-nato-weapons-war-russia-should-fear-10769> (accessed on November 16, 2014).

⁸ Along with keeping some form of both strategic and non-strategic deterrent forces, Russia plans to increase its conventional forces to recall the Cold War era when the former Soviet Union (now Russia) were superior in terms of conventional forces. For interesting discussion on this see, Nikolas K. Gvosdev, “The Bear Awakens: Russia's Military is Back,” *The National Interest*, November 12, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/russias-military-back-9181> (accessed on November 16, 2014).

⁹ For details see, “France Submarine Capabilities,” August 15, 2013, available at: <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/france-submarine-capabilities/> (accessed January 06, 2015)

¹⁰ Zachary Keck, “China conducted anti-satellite missile test,” July 29, 2014, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/china-conducted-anti-satellite-missile-test/> (accessed January 06, 2015)

¹¹ For details see, “China's ICBM with MIRV warheads will be commissioned soon,” April 05, 2013, available at: <http://chinadailymail.com/2013/04/05/chinas-icbm-with-mirv-warheads-will-be-commissioned-soon/> (accessed January 06, 2015)

¹² ‘Pakistan Rules out Joining Non-Proliferation Treaty’ (23 Feb. 2010), available at: www.nti.org/gsn/article/pakistan-rules-out-joining-nonproliferation-treaty/ (accessed on 14 May 2012).

¹³ The term conengagement is an economic term, which is the amalgamation of both connection and engagement. I have borrowed this term from ZalmayKhalilzad's two influential pieces: see for example,

ZalmayKhalilzad, 'Congage China', Rand Issue Paper (1999), available at www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/2006/IP187.pdf (accessed on 23 May 2012); and ZalmayKhalilzad, 'A Strategy of 'Congagement' toward Pakistan', *Washington Quarterly* 35/2 (Spring 2012) pp.107–19

¹⁴ Christine M. Leah and Andreas Lutsch, "To Go Nuclear or Not: Does the Non-Proliferation Treaty Really Matter?" *The National Interest*, November 18, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/go-nuclear-or-not-does-the-non-proliferation-treaty-really-11698?page=2> (accessed on November 20, 2014)

¹⁵See the NPT article I 'Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,' IAEA (22April 1970), available at www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infocircs/Others/infocirc140.pdf(accessed on 14 May 2012).

¹⁶See the NPT article II, Ibid.

¹⁷The Iranian Ambassador, Ali AsgharSoltanieh, to International Atomic Energy Commission(IAEA) has recently stated during the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna that, 'The deployment of hundreds of the US tactical nuclear weapons in EU states is a blatant violation of the NPT by the US and the host countries.' See, for example, 'US, EU Worst Nuclear Proliferators, NPT Violators, Iran Says' (7 May 2012), www.presstv.com/detail/240046.html(accessed on 3 Aug. 2012).

¹⁸Many in Pakistan accuse the US of violating not only the NPT but also UN Security Council Resolution 1172, which was adopted after the South Asian nuclear adversaries tested nuclear weapons in May 1998, to deter them from carrying out more tests. See, Bast, 'Pakistan's Nuclear Calculus' p.79; For useful readings on the Indo-US Nuclear Deal see, for example, M.V. Ramana, 'The Impact of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal on the NPT and the Global Climate Regime' (8 Dec. 2009), available at www.boell.de/intlpolitics/security/foreign-affairs-security-7983.html(accessed on 7 Aug. 2012); JayshreeBajoria, 'The US-India Nuclear Deal' (2010), available at www.cfr.org/india/usindia-nuclear-deal/p96663(accessed on 7 Aug. 2012); Sharon Squassoni, 'The US-Indian Deal and Its Impact', *Arms Control Today*, July/ Aug. 2010; and NasrullahMirza and M. Sadiq, 'Indo-US 123 Agreement: Impacts on Deterrence Stability in South Asia' (January 2008), available at www.sassu.org.uk/pdfs/Research_Report_7.pdf (accessed on 7 August 2012).

¹⁹For details, see Henry Sokolski, 'The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty's Untapped Potential to Prevent Proliferation' in Henry Sokolski (ed.), *Reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (Carlisle, PA: US Strategic Studies Institute 2010) pp.10–11.

²⁰It is clearly stated in the NPT's article IX that, 'for the purposes of this Treaty, a nuclear weapon state is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to January 1, 1967', see for example, 'Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons', IAEA (22 April 1970), available at:

www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infocircs/Others/infocirc140.pdf (accessed on 14 May 2012). It depicts that those who have, or will have acquired nuclear weapons are not nuclear weapon states in light of article IX of the NPT despite their nuclear weapon acquisition and when they join the treaty, they will have to forgo their acquired nuclear technology.

²¹ For interesting analysis on this see, Daniel R. DePetris “Israel’s Master Plan to Crush Iran’s Nuclear Program,” *The National Interest*, (July 22, 2015), available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/israels-master-plan-crush-irans-nuclear-program-13392> (accessed on July 24, 2015); John Allen Gay, “Iran: A Deal Worth Celebrating?” *The National Interest*, July 17, 2015, available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/iran-deal-worth-celebrating-13365> (accessed on July 24, 2015); ZalmayKhalilzad, “Congress Must Strengthen Iran Deal,” *The National Interest*, July 14, 2015, available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/congress-must-strengthen-iran-deal-13335> (accessed on July 24, 2015)

²² Although it is considered that Israel has achieved nuclear capability in the 1960s, it does not declare that it has got nuclear weapons. Israel only claims that it would not be the first one to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East. There is no evidence of nuclear policy and nuclear policy remains largely ambiguous. For interesting readings see, Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); also see, Cohen *The worst kept secret: Israel’s bargain with the bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

²³ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, (trans.) M. Howard and P. Paret (NJ. Princeton, 1976), p. 178

STRATEGIC IMPACTS OF IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

Masoud Amin and Muhammad Khurshid Khan

Abstract

Iran becomes a nuclear weapon state in immediate future or not is hard to predict forecasted, however, this study reveals the implications of a nuclear Iran for the Middle East in specific and the world at large. Unlike De Gaulle, a nuclear analyst who opined that the possibility of the states with nuclear weapons behaving illogically has been based on unfounded fear and blown out of proportion, the analysts belonging to other school of thought assume that if Iran gains nuclear status, it would enhance her influence on the Arab states that would increase rift between Shiite and Sunni states of the Persian Gulf, the signs are already visible. Some analysts also believe that in future, nuclear Iran would go to war in Middle East that probably would be nuclear, against the U.S. and Israel. None of these scenarios can be either accepted or rejected out-rightly. Even the accord between Iran and P-5 plus 1 does not provide clear direction as to how Iran would behave 10 years down the line if strict measures are taken by the U.S. and its allies. However, it is viewed that the situation for Pakistan as a result of a nuclear armed Iran might not be as grim as considered by some scholars. Pakistan and a nuclear Iran being the two neighbouring countries might continue to enjoy good brotherly relations.

Keywords: Middle East, Persian Gulf, P-5 plus 1.

Introduction

There is a general consensus amongst the scholars/analysts that Iran's nuclear program has strategic implications. Iran's quest for nuclear weapons is perceived by the West as the most dangerous development at the strategic level. The discovery of Iran's nuclear program during the early part of the last decade and its continuous defy complying with

the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) safeguards agreements has pushed Iran to the center of international attention.¹ Despite denials, Iran's continuous delay to explain inconsistencies in IAEA findings and safeguards raised alarms that its peaceful nuclear program was being diverted to nuclear weapons development.² It is because of the nuclear concerns that the P-5 plus1 conducted extensive dialogue with Iran for a prolonged period and managed to strike a deal though, the contours of the deal have yet not been crystallized. To analyze Iran's approach towards nuclear weapons correctly, one needs to look at the security and geopolitical environment of Southwest Asia and the greater Middle East.

Given its bitter history with the United States (U.S.) and its troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, Iran is increasingly concerned about her influence in the region. Adding nuclear-armed Israel to the situation, Iran suddenly finds itself in a hostile environment with increasing isolation.³ Moreover, it is believed that Iran is also concerned about the future discourse of the U.S. that had captured Iraq even after it did not possess nuclear or chemical weapons.

Iran is conscious of the fact that if Iraq had the nuclear weapons, the U.S. would not launch offensive attack twice during early 1990s and later on during 2003. Iran is therefore, watchful of its weakness vis-a-vis that of the U.S. and Israel. Above all, Iran does not enjoy good relations with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) especially Saudi Arabia which also maintains a well equipped military establishment fully backed by the U.S, being its close ally.

It is believed that these are emerging strategic threats to Iran's sovereignty which compel her to look for alternative security arrangements. Like any other state, Iran is also expected to follow the realist school of thought by perusing the 'Theory of Realism'.⁴ Keeping in view its security concerns and limitations, Iran seems to maximize its security by acquiring nuclear weapons as explained by Kenneth Waltz in his theory of 'Neo-realism' or 'Structural Realism'.⁵

Since 2003, working both tracks was kept secret by Iran in violation of the IAEA safeguards agreements. As listed in the Director General's report of September 2005, Iran failed over an extended period of time to report on important transactions and activities; to declare the existence of important facilities; to provide design information; and on many occasions, to cooperate or facilitate the implementation of the safeguards.⁶ In 2005, Ahmedinejad said in his election campaign speech, "I don't agree with those who say the nuclear issue has created a crisis for the country. What crisis? Nuclear technology is our right and no one can deprive us of it. We have come so far, and, God willing, we will need just one more push [to reach it]".⁷

Later on, Obama administration tried to convince Iran to give up its plan and extended numerous friendly gestures. Obama said, "If countries like Iran are willing to unclench their fist, they will find an extended hand from us" but Iranian regime did not change its attitude and continued to behave aggressively by adopting back and fro policy on the issue of its nuclear program.⁸

In the backdrop of these developments, some nuclear non-proliferation experts like Orde Kittrie further suggests that the America and her allies should intensify sanctions to increase negotiating leverage with Iran. They believe that the existing level of sanctions against Iran is quite weak as compared to the sanctions imposed against other countries during 1990s including Libya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Yugoslavia, Haiti and South Africa.⁹ Kittrie suggests that instead of outsourcing the mission to Israel, U.S. should do the job itself because Israel's involvement would make the issue more intricate.¹⁰

This research paper aims at understanding, how Iranian nuclear program has made strategic impacts on the regional security and stability in specific and the world at large. The arguments presented in this paper have been unfolded in following sequence: One, brief history of the Iranian nuclear program, two, NPT obligations and Iran, three, Iranian nuclear program and its implications for the regional stability,

fourth, the nuclear danger and the possible way forward and finally the conclusion.

NPT Obligations and Iran

Nuclear weapons continue to pose a threat to the world community. The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, (NPT) signed more than four decades ago, established a significant framework for the security in the world.¹¹ The treaty constrained free will of obtaining the nuclear weapons.¹² Despite being signatory to the treaty, Iran will ultimately go for development of nuclear arsenals because she continues to defiance the compliance. Iran has thus, created strategic threat to the regional stability.¹³ It is viewed that the recently concluded agreement between the U.S. and Iran might give a pause to the ongoing strategic threat to the regional stability, but Iran being a realist country, might come back to pursue its nuclear program after a decade as soon as she regains the economic strength.

Iran believes that each nation has the 'inalienable right' to enjoy the benefits of the peaceful use of nuclear energy, in conformity with the provisions of non-proliferation and safeguards obligations in the NPT and the IAEA statute. Iran considers that it has the right to access peaceful nuclear technology and accordingly, it has given its expression of readiness to guarantee the 'three Ss', safety of its facilities and operation; security of facilities and materials; and safeguards. Tehran's official stance on the issue is that the enrichment of uranium has nothing to do with the development of nuclear weapons but in reality, all indicators are going against Iran's declared stance.

Iranian Nuclear Program: Implications for the Regional Stability

As pointed out earlier, Iranian nuclear program dates back to later half of 1950s and continued to prosper till late 1979. The U.S. cooperation with Iran turned into confrontation after the fall of Pahlavi. Since then, the U.S. pursued a coercive

diplomacy towards Iran. In turn, the discourse of the Iranian leadership in the backdrop of Islamic Revolution clearly demonstrates that Iran considers the U.S. as its number one enemy referring it as 'the Great Satan'. Since 1979, both the countries have had bitter experience of dealing with each other. Making hostage of 52 diplomats of the U.S. Embassy by Iran from late 1979 to early 1981 was a serious issue. It ended into a disaster because all the members were killed during the U.S. operation to rescue them from Iran's captivity. It brought huge embarrassment for the U.S. back home.¹⁴

Furthermore, the Iran-Iraq war had a detrimental effect on Iranian nuclear program as Iraq frequently bombed the Iranian nuclear installations. It is viewed that Iraq was duly supported by the U.S. during its 10 years war against Iran. However, there is a consensus on the view that the Israeli attack on Osirak nuclear reactor in 1981 and subsequently, the first Gulf War in 1991 must have convinced Iran that without a credible deterrence, it stands no chance to effectively defend its interests and stature in the region.

Additionally, as explained earlier, the U.S. presence in the region and its support to Saudi Arabia is yet another factor that must have encouraged Iran to look for credible security mechanism to protect its supreme national interests in the region and beyond. In this background, during 1991, Iran succeeded in obtaining nuclear cooperation from China thus, she reinitiated its nuclear ambitions as China provided the components of Uranium conversion at Isfahan.¹⁵ Subsequently, Iran also managed to negotiate a contract with Russia in 1995 to complete the nuclear facility at Bushehr.

Since the Islamic revolution, the U.S. was always wary of the Iranian nuclear program and perceived it as a threat to Israel and vital U.S. economic and strategic interests in the Middle East. The U.S. apprehensions were based on the behaviour of the Iranian leadership who frequently hinted to strike against the U.S. and Israel's interests. The former Iranian President Rafsanjani, in a speech at Tehran University in December 2001, specified that "on the day Iran comes into

possession of a nuclear weapon, Israel will cease to exist". Additionally, the U.S. is also worried that Iran is already working on the Shihab-5 missile; it will enable her to hit the U.S continent in addition to Israel.¹⁶

As Gold Dore in one of his writing states "The Iranian nation will not give up until the corrupt leadership in the world has been obliterated".¹⁷ Iranian nuclear program has in fact created dilemma for P-5 plus 1. Since 2003, it has been evidently proven that Iran has been violating its international commitments by passing the existing system. The Director General of the IAEA has identified "many breaches of Iran's obligations to comply" with the safeguards, Iran agreed to under the NPT.¹⁸

In the backdrop of the international pressure, keeping the Iranian nation united was a vital factor for the President of Iran. In researchers' view, the narratives structured and promoted by Ahmadinejad were probably aimed at convincing the domestic audience to remain united in the face of economic difficulties that Iran was likely to face due to the international sanctions and the sanctions that the U.S. imposed unilaterally.¹⁹

The U.S. security concerns notwithstanding, the imposition of latest round of UN sanctions in June 2010 has put Iran in a further defiant mode with a belief that pushing Iran further would prove to be counterproductive and may compel her to pursue a course towards an acquisition of nuclear weapons similar to that of the North Korea. Probably, it was because of this reason that during the prolonged parleys with Iran, the U.S. and her allies did not cross the 'redlines' despite the fact that they had been frustrated by Iran quite often. Resultantly, they could not draw maximum advantage of the long awaited agreement between Iran and the P-5 plus1. Timmerman and Kenneth in the book "Countdown to Crisis: The Coming Nuclear Showdown with Iran" has analyzed Iran's nuclear weapon program and its impacts by giving the facts that former CIA Director R. James Woolsey is of the view that acquiring a nuclear weapon would embolden Iran to

become more aggressive in a number of ways against the Iraqi government. Albeit, the political situation in Iraq has already turned in Iran's favor. Nuclear capability will also embolden the regime to stamp out domestic dissent. At the same time, it will actively seek ways of lashing out at what it sees as the sources of that dissent: the U.S. and Israel.²⁰

Indyk and Martin in the book "Restoring the Balance: A Middle East Strategy for the Next President" has discussed that in order to contain Iran's nuclear program, although diplomatic efforts could not be so far successful, yet it will take 2-3 years that Iran acquires the capability of nuclear weapons. The intrinsic problem to detect and monitor weapon program denotes most consistent measure and capability of producing nuclear fissile material, the most challenging technological hurdle in development of nuclear weapons.²¹ Whether or not Iran could develop the capability, it took considerable amount of time by prolonging the dialogue process with the P-5 plus 1. Mahjoob Zweiri in his article "Arab-Iranian relations: New Realities", discussed how Arab and the GCC countries perceived Iranian nuclear program. Soon after Ahmadinejad came into power, Arab countries, as well as the European Union and the U.S., expressed their concern about Iran as a threat to security in the Middle East. The GCC countries are apprehensive of the using Russian technology by Iran.²²

These concerns have been articulated by Arab officials and GCC countries. The foreign minister of Saudi Arabia has announced that the Iranian nuclear program is not a threat to their country, but at the same time, he has asked Iran to pay more attention to the demands of the international community. Egypt takes the same position. Interestingly, the secretary of the Arab league has criticized Arab countries for not doing enough to have their own nuclear program so that they can join the nuclear club and follow the examples of Pakistan and India.²³

The U.S. and Israel have proclaimed that Iran, with nuclear weapon capability, is unacceptable and all options including military strikes are on the table. Israel's stance

regarding attack on Iran's nuclear investiture is older than the hardliner regime and had in fact helped them in coming to power. Most neutral experts believe that there is no way to stop Iran from acquiring the ability of nuclear weapons. Even if Israel makes a decision to attack on Iranian's nuclear program, there is very rare chance of completely eradication of Iran's conventional military and nuclear capacity. The Israeli initiative might complicate the situation in the Middle East.²⁴ Irrespective of the decision that Israel might take in future to eliminate Iranian nuclear capability, she is not convinced about the positive outcome of the agreement between Iran and the P-5 plus 1. Thus, Israel has explicitly criticized the deal and registered her concerns with the U.S. decision makers.

Nonetheless, Israeli initiatives to eliminate Iranian nuclear program would involve such a heavy cost for the U.S. and Europe which would be far greater than having a nuclear Iran in the region.²⁵

➤ **Iran's Nuclear Program and Arab World**

- Arab World shows great concern over Iranian nuclear program and their strategic ambitions. The world powers are concerned about the response of major countries in the Middle East, like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Egypt. Iran's nuclear proliferation will comprise a considerable threat to the security of the region. Hence, counter security measures in the form of nuclear weapons technology would remain as an option open on table by the other regional states. Krepon concluded that if Iran is not contained, it might lead to the spread of unsafeguarded enrichment plants in the Middle East that will doom the NPT.²⁶
- 2003 has been marked as a turning point because Iran's bitter relationship to its neighbors became more stressed as Iran made achievements in two fields. Firstly, the civilian nuclear plant at Bushehr was near to completion and Iran started arrangements for its operation. Secondly, the

reactors having capacity of producing weapon grade uranium were discovered at Arak and Nantanz. The Middle East's Arab states took two years in clasp the fact, as King Abdullah of Jordan stated, "the rules of the game have changed" consequently, uncovering Iran's nuclear activities paved way for revitalization of nuclear program.²⁷ Iran's advancement became a major distress of Arab countries, because Iran also remains involved in the internal matters of some of the Arab states.

- Iran did not re-assure the regional countries about the environmental effect of civil nuclear plant at Bushehr. Moreover, in Middle East, the balance of power would incline the U.S. and (possibly) Saudi Arabia to support an Israeli attack, if not publicly, then privately, country that seems prepared to take out Iran's nuclear program by launching pre-emptive strike.

➤ **Regional Dominance and Hegemony**

- Iran, in the Middle East, has two major objectives; first establishment of its hegemony in the region, especially, in 'Strait of Hormez' and the second is exporting Shiite revolution to other countries in the Middle East. Most of the countries in the region have fears that if Iran becomes a status of nuclear state, its hardliner regime would possibly utilize this weapon as a psychological instrument to establish her hegemony. Iran would, obtain bargaining position and international importance because of its control over the oil supply route.
- Iran seems pursuing 'Defensive Realism promoted by Waltz, but when we consider it in the regional context, Iran's strategy appears to be offensive in nature, following Mearsheimer's school of thought which persuades her to maximize military power vis-a-vis that of the other regional states with an ultimate aim to gain regional hegemony.²⁸

- Hence, a nuclear Iran might force her regional adversaries to follow the strategy of ‘Defensive Realism’ by maximizing their security. This situation would create a state of ‘Security Dilemma’ in the region that might lead to an unending competition in arms race including acquisition of nuclear weapons.²⁹
- **Rift between Sunni and Shiite**
- Iran’s endeavors for exporting Shiite to other countries with nuclear weight behind. These efforts could critically multipart the rift between the Sunnis and Shiites within the entire region. This would also have severe effect on Pakistan. Pakistan, having friendly relationship with both Iran and Middle East’s Sunni states could face a very hard situation to choose Iran, a Shiite state, or other Sunni states of the Middle East. It would also cause stress among Sunni and Shiite sects in Pakistan.
 - Pakistan being the next door neighbor and a center for Shiite-Sunni conflict is likely to suffer more especially with Iran becoming a nuclear state. Regrettably, since the last four decades, Pakistan has failed to contain the influence of the outside powers especially that of Saudi Arabia and Iran which has made Pakistan a battle ground to promote their respective brands of religion. With Iran becoming nuclear, it might come up with more strength to encourage Shiite in Pakistan without caring for its sensitivity.
 - This kind of scenarios would have very serious consequences for the whole region engulfing the entire Middle East where the majority of the established Muslim communities live. It is believed that the outside powers might not be very serious about containing the conflict of this scale among the Muslims.

➤ **Serious Blow to NPT**

- If Iran becomes a nuclear weapon state, it would seriously damage the efforts for non-proliferation. Other regional countries, for example, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Jordan and Egypt (some of them already hinting at starting their nuclear programs) would be compelled to go nuclear. This situation would lead to a stage where the NPT might become fruitless. Since we live in realist world therefore, we must expect a matching response from the regional states to protect their respective national interests.
- Additionally, if Iran becomes a nuclear state, it would open a Pandora box and encourage South Korea, Japan and Indonesia³⁰ as well as Malaysia³¹ to pursue their nuclear programs in South Eastern region. This development would also help North Korea to further strengthen its stance over the nuclear program and its possibility to come back in the NPT fold would be minimized.
- Finally, the leading provisions of NPT have already been shattered by the U.S. and its allies by striking a nuclear deal followed by the waiver given by the Nuclear Supplier Group to India. There are over 44 countries with nuclear weapons' technology. If Iran is not stopped, no one would be able to stop all 44 nuclear technology possessor states from developing nuclear weapons' program. Therefore, a nuclear Iran would have implication for the whole world.

➤ **Bolstering Non State Actors**

- In case Iran succeeds in developing its nuclear weapons technology, she might bolster non state actors like Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and splinter groups in Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. This scenario might embolden these groups to undertake clandestine and surgical operations within Israel and Afghanistan respectively.

- It would significantly increase the violence at regional level, besides further strengthening these groups militarily. Pakistan would also be confronted with a troublesome scenario as some groups operating from Pakistani soil usually adopt a hostile posture towards Iran which would profoundly affect the Iran-Pakistani relations in this power struggle.
- **Escalating Scenario towards Israel**
- Presently, Iran is involved in hostile diplomatic relations with Israel and the U.S. Though, Iran has developed political conflict with the U.S., its conflict with Israel is religious in nature. Iranian leadership has been hinting to eradicate Israel, following the advent of their twelfth Imam, called Imam Mehdi.
 - Iranians believe that the world would have to face a situation of anarchy and turmoil, prior to advent of Imam Mehdi hence, an Israel's invasion on Iran or some catastrophic occurrence of alike magnitude would paved the way for advent of Imam Mehdi³² and he would subjugate the whole world, starting from East to West, thus, establishing Shia rule throughout the world.
 - Therefore, it is opined that if Iran gains the nuclear power, it might launch a nuclear attack on Israel to create favorable condition, in the light of their belief regarding arrival of Mehdi. Furthermore, Israel contemplates nuclear Iran to be threat to its existence³³ primarily for its size that recognizes it to be a country of single bomb.³⁴ It is because of these concerns; Israel is convinced that if diplomacy fails, the sole method to avert Iran from attaining the nuclear capability would be the full military attack.³⁵
 - While Israel has guaranteed the U.S. to refrain from assaulting Iran, till they feel to be left alone and forsaken however, she is of the view that the moment of action against Iran would come soon for

which Israel's army is fully prepared regardless being a challenging mission.³⁶

➤ **Easing of Pressure on Pakistan**

- From realist perspective, no country would like to have a powerful neighbor and Pakistan is no exception. The national interests get preference over all other factors. A nuclear Iran, as a next door neighbor is not in Pakistan's national interest. Pakistan has had a neighbour with nuclear weapons in the East, and therefore, it would not like to have another neighbour with nuclear weapons along its western border.
- In the international relations, today's friend can be tomorrow's enemy. Secondly, one has the flexibility to change friends but there is no possibility to change neighbours. Prior to Iran-Iraq conflict, no one could imagine that Iran would suffer for 8 long years due to war imposed on her by Iraq. Likewise, prior to the Iranian revolution, no one could imagine that one day, Iran would stand in the opposite camp of the U.S.
- Nonetheless, on the plus side, if Iran succeeds in attaining the capability of nuclear arms, this would release international pressure, especially by the West, on Pakistan. It would generate new debate over legality of Iran's nuclear arms that might help Pakistan strengthening its position on its nuclear program including its stance over the issue of fissile material cutoff treaty.

➤ **Iranian Nuclear Weapons - A Political Bargain**

- Some analysts in the western diplomatic circles believe that Iranian nuclear capability doesn't pose a threat to the West rather it is a weapon for a grand political bargain especially against the U.S. This is also the assessment of Australian Office of the National Assessments which has recently been made public through a leaked wiki leaks cable.³⁷ It

would therefore, be naive to think that the Iranian regime will adopt a suicidal approach to directly confront with either the U.S. or Israel only to lose all the political and diplomatic benefits of the nuclear capability.

- Despite an agreement between the P-5 plus-1 on November 24, 2013 in Geneva on a six-month ‘Joint Action Plan’, the interim deal could not make any headway for negotiations over a longer term comprehensive agreement. During the deal, Iran was able to get several months of relief and gained time to look for an alternative strategy.³⁸ However, the U.S. administration is optimistic that the “Joint Action Plan’ is being followed in letter and spirit by Iran.³⁹
- Another round of negotiations was held between Iran and P-5 plus-1 at Vienna to conclude a nuclear deal which ended on November 24, 2014.⁴⁰ The extensive dialogues continued for five days without making any headway.⁴¹ After a long discussion, the deadline was extended to finalize the nuclear agreement on Iran’s nuclear program, until July 01, 2015.⁴² The two sides also “extended the Geneva nuclear deal, which was signed in last November for providing Iran with some sanctions relief in exchange for Tehran agreeing to limit certain aspects of its nuclear activities”.⁴³
- The fresh deadline has given sufficient cushion to Iran to think over its future strategy and come back with a renewed vision to protect its national interests without further annoying the stakeholders. Miles A. Pomper opines that the next phase too is unexpected to lead to the long term agreement which could impose permanent restriction on Iran’s enrichment program. ⁴⁴ Pomper is of the view even if the U.S. is able to strike a deal; Iran could still violate the terms and conditions thus, would continue to use its nuclear weapons program as a

bargaining chip with the U.S. and its allies including P-5 plus 1.⁴⁵

- Kittrie, reinforces what Pomper has said about Iranian intents. He says, “It seems likely that Iran will violate the temporary freeze agreement, as it violated a similar agreement in October 2003, or that follow-on negotiations will fail to extend the temporary freeze”.⁴⁶
- Mark Dubowitz and Kittrie opined that “In the absence of verifiable Iranian commitments not to proceed with nuclear-weapon and ballistic-missile research, there is nothing to stop Iran from having a designed bomb and ballistic missile ready to go”.⁴⁷
- The P-5 plus 1 group and Iran on July 14, 2015 entered into a comprehensive agreement called as the “Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action”, in order to limit the sensitive nuclear activities of Iran.⁴⁸ Iran in return, has succeeded to secure the relief of about 150 billion dollars that were frozen in the banks in European countries and also lifting of the international sanctions gradually in fields of energy, trade, finance and transport.⁴⁹

Nuclear Dangers and the Way Forward

Once Iran completes a dash to weapons-grade uranium, it can insert the warhead and quickly have a deliverable nuclear weapon. Therefore, as suggested by Albright and others, “Washington and its allies must insist that Iran verifiably stops increasing the number and quality of its centrifuges. Anything short of that will leave Iran far too close to an undetectable breakout capacity”.⁵⁰

The latest accord is an attempt in the right direction but it is still not a foolproof system to ensure that Iran roll back its nuclear program. In the long term, Iran is unlikely to compromise nuclear program even if it is given extra ordinary space by the P-5 plus-1 unless its security concerns are addressed amicably. Krepon suggested that “At this juncture,

the best of a poor set of choices is to constrain Iran's nuclear capability under close scrutiny".⁵¹ Persuading Iran for adherence to the Additional Protocol of the IAEA and its greater cooperation with the Agency is also essential to give confidence to the international community that Iran is serious to implement the latest accord with P-5 plus 1.

A long term diplomatic resolution of the issue depends upon America's readiness to deal with Iran in transparent manner by adopting the policy of cooperation, instead of confrontation. The success of the recently concluded agreement between the U.S. and Iran depends how Washington behaves with Iran in coming years. A greater cooperation from the U.S. might help them in maintaining and sustaining the agreement in the long term.

However, depending upon the political and strategic situation in the region, the leverage to abrogate the treaty remains with Iran. Therefore, the authors sincerely believe that besides cooperation, a deterrence of a more serious consequences must also be created by the U.S. so that Iran does not exercise the option of sabotaging/abrogating the recently concluded 'accord' at any stage.

The fact requires dire consideration that Iranian President has very less role in formulating Iran's nuclear program. The President only implements the instructions issued by Iranian Supreme Leader. Therefore, if the West has to deal with the Iranian nuclear issue, they should try to get an access to the Supreme Leader rather than relying on the statements of the President.⁵²

Finally, in the larger interest of the Middle East and the world, the U.S. will have to resolve Palestinian issue and take away the genuine cause of the insecurity from Israel. It having resolved the long pending Palestinian issue, similar to that of the Kashmir, comprehensive dialogue for Middle East nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) be initiated. Unless, this initiative is taken, this region would remain under tension and unending debate would continue without any result.

Conclusion

Impact of Iran's nuclear program has mostly resulted from its leadership. Former President Ahmedinejad believes that God has entrusted him with a divine mission. Some people in Iran are worried about threat of the U.S. and Israeli attack on their nuclear facilities. The options of isolating Iran from the world will be direr then to reduce the Iranian quest of nuclear weapons. It will be a threat to global security.

There should be a comprehensive strategy to meet the Iran security dilemma and its future energy needs. The West should also consider living with nuclear Iran. However, if the nuclear risk in the Middle East is to be removed, serious talks should take place over Israel case to rollback its nuclear program for the sake of global security. That can be made possible only if Palestinian issue is resolved amicably. Additionally, the West must also understand the history and culture of Iranian nation and accordingly plan their negotiating strategy to deal with them.

Containment, sanctions or military action would not be a perfect or a foolproof policy against Iran's nuclear program. A weaker state has to see threats posed to its security by a much stronger state and the only viable response against such a threat is the nuclear deterrence. It is worth mentioning that Iran's security needs and regional objectives against the U.S. are compelling her to look for alternative security arrangements. If its national interests are well protected through assured guarantees, Iran might change its position and come forward with a positive response.

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