



NWIP FACT SHEET

A New Arms Race

Deterrence

The philosophy behind nuclear weapons is called deterrence. The idea is that if you have a large enough threat and your enemies believe that you would be willing to use it, you can deter them from attacking or hurting you. This strategy, it has been argued, worked during the Cold War, since we never had a full-scale nuclear war. Others argue that we were just lucky, because there were plenty of situations where things could have gone terribly wrong and we wouldn't have been here today.

At the end of the Cold War most people thought that nuclear war ceased to be a threat to humanity and there were reasons to believe that nuclear disarmament would occur in the near future. Unfortunately the past 10 years have shown a contrary development. The nuclear states continue to rely on nuclear weapons programs and the philosophy of deterrence even though nuclear weapons and deterrence cannot secure any state against the immediate threats of terrorism and growing instability in the world.

An Efficient shield



Or A Leaky Umbrella?



Vertical Proliferation

All nuclear weapon states have worked on developing their nuclear arsenals and build new weapons. Most notably the US has worked for years on developing new low-yield nuclear weapons called Bunker Busters and Mini-Nukes, which are intended to be used as battlefield weapons. If that will happen it will be the first time a nuclear weapon has been used since 1945. That would be a very serious development in the wrong direction and we have all reason to believe that it would make the world further unstable and provoke a new arms race.

Horizontal Proliferation

Since the end of the Cold War in 1991 several states have developed nuclear weapons. India and Pakistan tested nuclear missiles in 1998 and in 2003 North Korea withdrew from the Non-Proliferation Treaty and declared themselves a nuclear power. In 2004 Iran finally signed the additional protocols to the NPT allowing weapons inspections. Until then Iran had been suspected of covertly developing a nuclear weapons program.

The US plans for a Missile Defence

In addition to the above the US has developed plans for a missile defence that is supposed to protect the US from nuclear attack. The professed goal of promoting national security with a missile shield is inconsistent with the message of continuing reliance on nuclear

Weapons that it sends. There is reason to believe that a missile shield would increase the danger of nuclear war, start a new arms race, fuel proliferation of nuclear



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weapons in the world, exacerbate political and military confrontations between the US and its adversaries, alienate the US from many of its allies and waste billions of dollars.

The Missile defence system is a system with which the US would be able to detect missiles aimed at the US and shoot them down during the flight before it reaches its target on US soils. The systems are technologically very advanced and so far no realistic tests have been successful.

The development of the systems has led the US to withdraw from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with Russia, which has created Russian outrage and resulted in Russian research to develop new advanced weapons that wouldn't be detectable by the missile defence and this in turn can lead to the expansion of weapons programs in other nuclear weapon states.

Counter-proliferation

Several of the Western Nuclear Weapon States acknowledge that it will be difficult to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons as long as they continue to be an essential part of some countries security policies. But instead of working for disarmament, which is the most obvious way to prevent further proliferation of weapons, they accept a certain amount of controlled proliferation and have reaffirmed their own reliance on nuclear policies. The US has embarked on a unilateral road of counter-proliferation in which they seek to limit proliferation by military attack on adversaries with presumed nuclear weapons programs. Such a policy will surely aggravate the nuclear ambitions of those very adversaries and therefore serve the opposite purpose than what they are intended for. They will ignite a new arms race, not only between current nuclear weapon states. They will draw new states into the race for nuclear supremacy.

Threatening collapse of the NPT

The recent developments in nuclear policy and the failure of nuclear weapon states to demonstrate dedication to disarmament endanger the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The NPT stands at the centre of any effort to abolish nuclear weapons. If it is made to work, the path to disarmament at least remains visible. If it fails disarmament seems more impossible than ever.

References

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