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by Marius Grinius
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POLICY UPDATE

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At the end of April, 189 States, including Canada, will meet at the United Nations in New York City to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Such a review is mandated every five years. The NPT, in force over the past 45 years, has long been praised as the “essential cornerstone for the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the foundation for the pursuit of nuclear disarmament.” Essentially it is a three-pillared bargain between the five nuclear weapon states (the P5: United States, Great Britain, France, China and Russia) and the non-nuclear weapon states that are also party to the Treaty. The nuclear weapon states have committed to eventual nuclear disarmament in exchange for non-nuclear weapons states’ commitment to refrain from acquiring nuclear weapons. All states party to the Treaty have the right to access peaceful nuclear technology, including nuclear energy.

In 2010 the NPT review conference convened in optimistic anticipation for a substantive outcome. Indeed its results in terms of commitments were generally positive. The final consensus document listed sixty-four “actions” distributed among the three pillars that members committed to implement, albeit with few actual deadlines. While there has been some progress since 2010 with respect to the non-proliferation and nuclear technology pillars, little has happened in terms of nuclear disarmament. This has not however prevented the P5 from giving as positive a spin as possible on their disarmament “actions”.

The P5 met in London in early February. Their joint statement from this sixth P5 conference noted how the P5 Process has contributed in developing mutual confidence and transparency among the P5. They discussed efforts to achieve entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and recalled their commitment to take steps towards its early entry into force. They reiterated their support for the UN’s disarmament machinery, including the Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC). The P5 also welcomed the ongoing diplomatic process with Iran and politely stressed their resolve for a diplomatic resolution to the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. They announced their intention to release the first edition of their Glossary of Key Nuclear Terms and expressed their full support for the efforts to hold a conference on establishing a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East. Finally they looked forward to a “consensual, balanced outcome to the 2015 review Conference, which would do much to enhance the P5’s continuing efforts to strengthen the NPT.”

In March U.S. President Obama reiterated the importance of the NPT and noted that the U.S. was reducing its strategic nuclear weapon stockpile to its lowest level in 50 years; but, was prepared to negotiate further reductions “while protecting our security and that of our friends and allies around the world.”

Indeed in many respects the NPT has been a success story. Dire predictions that there would be numerous states armed with nuclear weapons have just not happened. Countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Saudi Arabia and South Africa, which may have had nuclear weapon ambitions, eventually signed on to the NPT. However at the same time the P5 have been joined by a nuclear India, now with ninety to one hundred-ten nuclear weapons according to the 2014 report of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists; a nuclear Pakistan with one hundred to one hundred-twenty



nuclear weapons; and an ambiguous nuclear Israel thought to have about eighty nuclear weapons. None of the three have ever signed the NPT and have no intention to do so. They have been joined by North Korea which withdrew from the NPT in 2003 and has carried out three nuclear tests so far. The country now has a small arsenal of perhaps ten nuclear weapons or fewer, but one predicted to grow. These NPT outliers believe that possession of nuclear weapons adds to their security even if it also adds to greater unpredictability and insecurity in their respective regions. The outliers are also an unfortunate reminder that an alternative model to national security may exist. Iran is a case in point where the P5 plus Germany now have a framework agreement in place but must hammer out a full binding agreement with Iran by the end of June. It may still fail with dire consequences for the region and the global non-proliferation regime.

While the P5 have a collective self-interest in achieving a successful 2015 review conference, their actions elsewhere undercut claims of progress on the disarmament pillar. NATO's strategic concept continues to uphold the need for nuclear weapons for its collective security. Its 2012 "Deterrence and Defense Policy Review" stated that "Nuclear weapons are a core component of NATO's overall capabilities for deterrence and defense along-side conventional and missile defense." Russia's military doctrine, updated last December, reiterated its reliance on nuclear weapons. It also maintained that NATO and the U.S. were its main external military danger. Difficulties over Ukraine and Crimea, as well as suspicions that Russia may be violating the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty will only serve to weaken what NATO-Russian cooperation remains. Similarly, while China has long stated that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons, its own military doctrine remains opaque. Chinese strategic calculations must be all the more challenging with the U.S.-stated intentions to re-balance its forces toward the Asia-Pacific region. Both Russia and China are strongly opposed to any U.S. moves to deploy ballistic missile defences in Eastern Europe and Asia. None of these issues enhance mutual confidence and transparency as espoused by the P5 in London.

The CTBT, if it ever came into effect, would be a significant step towards nuclear disarmament. Early on, the Obama Administration was looking to ratify the CTBT. This now will not happen anytime soon in a Republican-controlled Senate. France, the U.K. and Russia have signed and ratified the CTBT, China has not. India, Pakistan and North Korea have neither signed nor ratified while Israel and Egypt have signed but not ratified. The only positive note on this issue is that with the exception of North Korea, no nuclear weapon state has tested for some time.

The P5 made their usual genuflection towards the importance of the United Nations disarmament machinery. In theory both Conference on Disarmament (CD) and the UN Disarmament Commission (UNDC) should be dynamic vehicles for global peace and security. However in practice the UNDC has not produced any useful arms control and disarmament studies in decades and the CD has been frozen in procedural wrangling for some seventeen years. It cannot agree to a program of work, let alone start negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty, a key component of any effective nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime. No break-through is anticipated.



Of critical importance at the 2015 review conference will be what to do about the dashed hopes of a conference to establish a weapons of mass destruction-free zone in the Middle East. Among the “action” items it was agreed in 2010 that such a conference would start in 2012. This has not happened. The saga of this conference actually goes back to the 1995 review conference when NPT members, including Egypt, agreed to the indefinite extension of the NPT. One quid pro quo was a Middle East conference. In 2010 Egypt led the charge to nail down such a conference even though Israel was not in the room and presumably not inclined to participate in such a negotiation. The recent re-election of Prime Minister Netanyahu signals no change in Israel’s position. This potential negotiation has been further complicated because, by definition, weapons of mass destruction include chemical and biological weapons, as well as nuclear weapons. Israel signed, but did not ratify, the Chemical Weapons Convention, while Egypt has neither signed nor ratified. Egypt did sign, but not ratify, the Biological and Toxic Weapons Convention. Israel did neither. Add to these uncertainties the ongoing wars in Syria and Iraq. At least the Iran-P5 plus Germany final negotiations have been conveniently punted to after the Review Conference.

As a concrete demonstration of its disarmament record the U.S. points to the dramatic decrease from 31,255 nuclear warheads in 1967 to about 7,300 warheads in 2014, the latter number according to the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. Of the 7,300, approximately 4,760 warheads are in the operational stockpile (about 1,980 deployed) and some 2,540 are awaiting dismantlement. On the Russian side its nuclear arsenal has also shrunk down from some 30,000 weapons in the heyday of the Cold War to about 4,300 operational warheads and 3,700 awaiting dismantlement. While military planners long realized that the possession of tens of thousands of nuclear weapons made no military sense, critics today, even some of those who still believe in nuclear deterrence, argue that current U.S. and Russian levels remain far too high. While implementation of the New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) may continue and the possibility of future strategic arms reductions may still occur, there is no treaty in place that covers tactical nuclear weapons. Arguably, there is no such thing as a “tactical” nuclear weapon, as any such use would have disastrous global security implications.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the disarmament pillar of the NPT is the fact that the U.S. plans to modernize all three elements of its nuclear triad (inter-continental ballistic missiles, ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-armed bombers) over the next fifteen-plus years. The U.S. Congressional Budget Office has stated that it will cost \$348 billion over the next ten years to maintain, upgrade and operate its nuclear arsenal. Money for the U.S. nuclear modernization plans has not been identified. China has announced a ten per cent increase in military spending over its 2014 budget. While reports point to rapid expansion and modernization of its nuclear warfare capabilities over the next five years, the exact budget allocation for nuclear forces is not clear. Similarly Russia has apparently started an across-the-board modernization of its nuclear forces.

Will the 2015 NPT review conference fail? As always, there will be considerable pressure on the P5 to do more on the disarmament pillar. This time it will include a growing momentum to



negotiate a Nuclear Weapons Convention, which would simply outlaw nuclear weapons, much like the chemical and biological conventions. Indeed, with virtually zero prospects for a Middle East conference, a CTBT, or for reinvigorated UN disarmament machinery, a Nuclear Weapons Convention will likely be the centre of attention notwithstanding P5 arguments that negotiation of such a convention would only be a distraction. The P5-promised first edition of a Glossary of Key Nuclear Terms will do nothing to deflect criticism that the P5 continue not to live up to their part of the NPT bargain. All those non-nuclear weapon states, including Canada and other like-minded members, who are concerned that failure to achieve consensus at the review conference will add to the unravelling of the non-proliferation regime, will be expected to work hard to ensure that the review conference muddles through to some veneer of success yet again. The P5 talk the talk about strengthening the NPT, yet they were vehemently opposed to a modest initiative by Canada, one supported by most states, to establish a small Implementation Support Unit for the NPT and to create a more effective review process. Perhaps in 2015 the P5 will support such an initiative, if only to stave off what otherwise may well be a failed conference and another step in the unravelling of the non-proliferation regime.

► About the Author

Marius Grinius joined the Canadian Foreign Service in 1979 after serving in the Canadian Army for 12 years. His early overseas postings included Bangkok, NATO/Brussels and Hanoi. Assignments in Ottawa included desk officer for nuclear arms control, Director for Asia Pacific South and then Director for South East Asia. In 1997 he was posted back to Vietnam as Ambassador.

Mr. Grinius then spent five years in Ottawa where he worked in the Privy Council Office in Social Policy, Western Economic Diversification and then again in the Privy Council Office as Director of Operations in the Security and Intelligence Secretariat. In 2004 he was named Ambassador to South Korea and added cross-accreditation to North Korea in 2005. In 2007 Grinius was posted to Geneva as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations and the Conference on Disarmament, during this posting he served as the Canadian Head of Delegation to the 2010 NPT Review Conference. He returned to Ottawa in 2011 for a secondment to the Department of National Defence as Director General International Security Policy. Marius Grinius retired in 2012 after 45 years of service to Canada.

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