

The Sixth ISODARCO Beijing Seminar on Arms Control
October 29-November 1, 1998
Shanghai, China

The Future of Nonproliferation

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After the first wave shock of the Indian and Pakistan nuclear tests, people all over the world are now having the 2nd thought of the questions of the future nonproliferation: Why did the efforts of stopping the nuclear tests of these two countries fail? Will there be more nuclear threshold countries tests? Will the world with more nuclear countries become more unsecured after the cold war? We should study these questions and seek the right answers.

THE INDIAN TEST AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE WORLD

Mainly out of its own domestic and international needs, India tested its nuclear devices on May 11th and 13th 1998.

Domestically, the Indian new government is a coalition government of minorities (it only occupies 179 of all 545 seats in the parliament). For the need of controlling the power firmly and diverting the attention of the people, the new government is pursuing a radical hard-line policy. It was calculated that the nuclear explosion would raise the national sentiments and feelings of pride and consolidating its domestic unity.

Internationally, India, though a world 2nd large populated country with a very long history and rich culture, now does not enjoy its right place in the world community. Excluded from a formal nuclear weapon country status and a permanent U.N. security membership whereas China is not, India desires to be treated as a great power by exploding nuclear devices. Then it can seek hegemony in the subcontinent and enter the nuclear club of big powers. Furthermore it can get the leverage with China and advantage over Pakistan. So before the test, it advocated the China threat and after its test, Pakistan followed its suit.

The subcontinent nuclear explosions have serious consequences:

1. They have brought setbacks and ill effects to the nuclear nonproliferation movement.
2. They have made the subcontinent a more dangerous place. These two countries often quarrel and there were wars between them in the past and now have frequent armed clashes along the borders and conflict over Kashmir.
3. The nuclear tests will in the end increase the possibility of using nuclear weapons in the future, as there is no transparency of each other's intentions and there is no early warning system.
4. The nuclear tests will trigger the desire of other threshold nuclear countries to accelerate the research and try to test their own nuclear devices if these two countries acquire the position of a nuclear power easily and without getting any punishment.
5. The nuclear tests will bring no good to their own countries except a temporary euphoria, because they couldn't be recognized by the world community as a nuclear country according to the NPT. Besides, the explosion is the only mid stage of a series of follow on activities if they want to put them into practical use and it will be a heavy toll on the finance of these two developing countries, let alone the huge cost should there be a war.
6. The tests are a countering move against the trend of peace and development.

They have negative impact on the peace, stability and progress of the whole world. Especially since the demise of the cold war, people all over the world are hoping peace and want no more nuclear threat or nuclear blackmail or nuclear deterrence. They thought there would be no nuclear war in the world since the two super nuclear powers have set on a course of reducing their nuclear arsenals. And all of a sudden, the hopes are now lost in the gloomy clouds of subcontinent nuclear tests. Then the nightmare of nuclear holocaust is now looming large.

IS THE FUTURE OF THE NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION VERY DIM?

In face of the new threat and new challenge to the nonproliferation, should we lose hope? Has all that we have done before come to no avail after the tests? And if so, what should we do next, sit and wait? My answer is a big No. Why?

1st, we should see the progress we have made so far in spite of the setback in the subcontinent. After all, we have had 2 treaties, and most of the countries in the world have signed the treaties. The START 1,2,3 will cut the nuclear arsenal to 30% of the original level. Most of the developing countries do not have the desire to become the nuclear have countries and most of the nuclear threshold countries are not induced by the Indian tests. The nonproliferation movement is still going on as we are sitting here discussing the schedule and the initiative Abolish 2000. All of this proves an old Chinese saying that when we are having a hard time, we should see the achievements in the past and see the bright future ahead and enhance our encouragement.

2nd, although it's highly possible for the two countries to have the frequent conflict, even the armed clashes along the border, there is little possibility for the two countries to go into a nuclear war in the near future. It's true that both countries exploded the nuclear devices, but there is still a long way to go for them to acquire the nuclear weapon capacity. Although they had walked through the nuclear threshold, various efforts can still be made to cap their capacity at the present level and curb them not to go too far. Besides, since both the two have the nuclear devices in their own hands, no one dares to use it first, like the case of the U.S and U.S.S.R in the cold war. Mutual deterrence sometimes contributes to stability. It at least is better than the monopoly ownership of nuclear weapons. Because in that case, the monopolist tends to use the weapon without any fear of retaliation. Supposing the Japanese had got hold of the nukes at the end of 2nd world war, the U.S. wouldn't have so easily used the atom bomb.

3rd, we are living in an era of peace and development. To develop economy and raise the living standards has been the main theme of our time. While the arms race is still going on to some extent, the importance and scale has gone down. To achieve the status of a major power mainly depends on the economic power, not the nuclear power. So the way that India is taking now is quite out of date, is a way of cold war thinking is a move against trends, is doomed to failure. In fact, under the pressure of the world community, both countries have declared their willingness to sign the CTBT in 1999. They have no other choice.

So in the final analysis, in the new era, people all over the world want peace, not war; want prosperity, not atom bombs. This mainstream can't be stopped or reversed. We should not lose our hope. On the contrary, we should push forward our noble cause of nonproliferation, with even greater efforts and stronger will.

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT?

At present, the first and foremost thing for us to do to curb the tendency of proliferation is to push India and Pakistan to abide by the U.N. resolution 1172 and the P-5 Joint Communiqué on June 4th. The main steps included are as follows:

1. India and Pakistan stop further nuclear test of any kind.
2. They should refrain from the weaponization or deployment of nuclear weapons.
3. They should reduce the tensions in the area and arms race, try to solve the Kashmir conflict through negotiations.
4. They should adhere to the CTBT immediately and unconditionally.
5. They should sign the NPT and not proliferate any of their technology, equipment, material to a third party.

As to the other nuclear threshold countries, we should keep a watchful eye and take prevent measures. There are lessons we should learn from the unexpected Indian tests and the expected Pakistan tests. For one, we were not vigilant enough. For the other, we were supportive enough. Now among the 44 nuclear counties, except the 5 nuclear powers and newly exploded countries, there are some potentials, we should keep a vigilant eye on them. We should make it known to them that nuclear test will bring them no good while they get full safeguards and security and all the benefits from not doing it.

For the P-5, especially the U.S. and Russia, they bear the responsibility of destroying their huge nuclear arsenals first. They should not carry on any kind of nuclear test open or in covert, any critical test or simulation test because any single test is a temptation, an allurements to the others whether legally or illegally, let alone to develop the B61, W87, W88, etc. new type nuclear warheads. They should carry on the deep cuts according to the agreements of STARTs and should not develop TMD and NMD in violation of the ABM treaty. In one word, they should take the lead and set an example for others

The lessons we should learn from the subcontinent nuclear explosions are that in the past the major powers supported the Indian and Pakistan nuclear program in one way or the other, earlier or later. Even when India refused to pass the draft of CTBT and refused to sign it, the world community, the U.S. in particular didn't take any strong measures to sanction India, a weapon the U.S. likes to use on many other occasions.

Now it's time for the world community to act in one voice and with one accord. China, as a permanent member of the U.N. security council, a neighbor of India and Pakistan, has and will play an important part in this event. At a time when the U.S. and Russia are having their own domestic problems, China can certainly do more.

People are basic driving force of the nonproliferation movement. We are confident to fight against any proliferation is in the interests of the people and will get the support of the people all over the world. We also believe that mankind who invented the atom bomb about 50 years ago, letting the genie out of bottle, can surely destroy them completely, putting back the genie in the 21st century. To reach the noble goal, to have a nuclear free world, let's set a date for the final abolition of all the nuclear weapons on the earth no later than July the 16th, that's the 1000 years anniversary of the 1st explosion of the atom bomb. Let's unite and strive for it!