

Managing Non-Proliferation: A Turkish Perspective

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In my presentation, I will try to bring to the discussion table a major challenge to the existing non-proliferation regimes, and I will share with you my thoughts on the evolution of the concept of arms control in the post-Cold War era.

I come from a country which never sought to acquire or possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD) of any sort. However, for the defence of the country, the Turkish security elite have long relied on the deterrence provided by the US nuclear weapons deployed in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) bases in Turkey since the 1960s. I would presume that there has been no significant change in this policy lately. Although the Warsaw Pact no longer exists, and no imminent nuclear threat is perceived from Russia today, the Turkish security elite still favour the presence of the remaining US nuclear weapons in Turkey, even symbolic in number, as a potential deterrent against the threats emanating from the uncertain neighbourhood.

However, the Turkish security elite are well aware that strengthening the existing nuclear, biological and chemical (NBC) non-proliferation regimes would bring more security to the country, and more stability to the region to which Turkey belongs. Compatible with such an aim, Turkey does its best to contribute to the efforts of various countries and organisations to strengthen the regimes in mention. Nevertheless, there are serious challenges to these efforts.

Beyond the well-known structural, economic, technological and legal difficulties that create serious frictions in the process of coming up with full-fledged NBC non-proliferation regimes, having effective verification mechanisms, the on-going debate on the plans of the United States to deploy a national ballistic missile defence system known as the NMD

seems to be one of the biggest challenges to the future pace of these regimes.

As we all know, for reasons discussed by and large in the international forums, the United States is seriously planning to deploy the so-called NMD which requires either an amendment to, or the abrogation of, the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty signed in 1972 between the US and the USSR. But Russia, in the first place, and China, object to such US plans on the grounds that the deployments of an effective anti-ballistic missile system will render the American cities and other strategic assets of the US invulnerable.

Therefore, the Russians and Chinese authorities express their fears that the US may then adopt more assertive policies towards their nations. Russian arms control experts warn their American counterparts in this regard, saying that their insistence on NMD deployment and the possible withdrawal of the US from the ABM Treaty would damage the bilateral strategic arms control process which includes, among others, the implementation of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) II. Russian experts also warn their American colleagues that the cooperation between the two countries in the field of strengthening the NBC non-proliferation regimes may come to an end.

Hence, if no middle way is found in this debate, and if Russia abandons the implementation of the INF Treaty which requires dismantlement of an entire category of nuclear weapons that can hit any target within a range of 1,500 to 5,500 km, the threat perceived by Turkey from Russia in this respect will increase again. It is also feared by the Turkish security elite that the same category of nuclear weapons will increase the threat posed to the Turkic republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Turkey pays serious attention to the continuation of democratic reforms and transition to market economies in these sovereign republics.

Moreover, if Russia puts a halt to its contribution to the international efforts which aim to strengthen the NBC non-proliferation regimes, as a reaction to the US NMD plans, the threat perceived by Turkey from the proliferation of WMD will increase. It is clear that without the active support of Russia, these regimes are doomed to failure.

Bearing in mind the strategic role played by Russia in the non-proliferation of NBC weapons and the US contribution to it, the Turkish

security elite, therefore, believe that it is essential to maintain the level of cooperation so far achieved between the United States and the Russian Federation within the framework of the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programme. The CTR's achievements in dismantling the legacy of the Cold War, and providing assistance to Material Protection, Control and Accounting (MPC&A) in the former Soviet republics are found highly remarkable.

The CTR and the MPC&A cover a wide range of sensitive material, technology and knowhow that are used in the manufacture of NBC weapons. A deficiency in the proper accomplishment of the task envisaged within the framework of the CTR, it is feared in the security circles in Turkey, will provide momentum to the already existing illicit trafficking of the NBC material as well as the brain-drain from the former Soviet territories towards aspiring states and terrorist groups. It goes without saying that most of such states and non-states are located in the immediate neighbourhood of Turkey. Moreover, because of Turkey's geographical location, the illicit trafficking of highly radioactive and toxic material brings with it the danger of an environmental disaster in case the smuggled materials are not kept under proper safety conditions. Ironically, we need responsible and careful smugglers!

On the other hand, China's reactions to the US plans to deploy NMD are paid equal attention by the Turkish security elite. It is reported that, as a reaction to the US plans to deploy NMD, China threatens the United States, among others, with a rapid military build-up, especially in the category of strategic nuclear weapons. China is known to have a small intercontinental ballistic missile arsenal in vulnerable silos. Hence, after a US NMD deployment, the Chinese authorities may conclude that they have lost their deterrent force and they may act accordingly.

Thus, if China embarks upon a rapid armament programme, the world will certainly become a much less safe place to live in. Moreover, China's collaboration, especially in the field of export controls of sensitive and dual use material, may come to an end. Again, the active and potential customers of such materials are no doubt located around Turkey.

Although the Turkish security elite fear a diminishing support of Russia and China to NBC non-proliferation regimes, it is quite clear that the threats involved are not peculiar to Turkey only. All the peace-loving countries which have trusted in collective security and collective defence

structures for keeping international peace and order for decades, will be negatively affected in case the above mentioned scenarios become a fact.

Therefore, it is essential to maintain a high degree of effective cooperation among the United States, Russia and China in strengthening the existing non-proliferation regimes. Because, if these regimes fail to prevent acquisition of WMD capabilities by aspiring states, then a number of technologically advanced states that are within the regime today, may wish to head on to different directions with a view to providing more security to their nations. Such an occurrence, however, may pave the way to the collapse of the non-proliferation regimes and bring chaos in the world political arena.

Cooperation between the United States and Russia as well as China is also important because of the roles they play, or have played in the past, in the nuclearisation of the subcontinent. India and Pakistan, self-proclaimed nuclear weapons states, are known to have tense relations with each other and with some of their neighbours. Hence, the likelihood of a hot confrontation at any scale is not negligible. Although both India and Pakistan have small nuclear arsenals today, their nuclear programmes are up and running and they are quite likely to expand in both scope and capacity.

At this point, I would like to make two references to the classical approach to arms control: Thomas Schelling and Morton Halperin have eloquently stated in their masterpiece, *Strategy and Arms Control*, that arms control “rests essentially on the recognition that military relations with potential enemies is not one of pure conflict and opposition, but involves strong elements of mutual interest in the avoidance of a war that neither side wants”¹

Similarly, in his remarkable book, *Arms Control: Theory and Practice*, Michael Sheehan states that “the arms control approach believes that peace and stability are as much a function of intentions as they are of capabilities.”²

For obvious reasons, the chances of rolling back the nuclear weapons capabilities of India and Pakistan are next to impossible for at least the foreseeable future. Therefore, their intentions must be controlled, as was the case for the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. At this point, however, one must bear in mind that there is a very significant

distinction between the superpower rivalry during the Cold War and the rivalry in the subcontinent in the post-Cold War era.

The United States and the Soviet Union have deterred each other from resorting to a surprise attack with the fear of causing unacceptable damage in return with their secure second-strike capabilities. The existence of secure second-strike capabilities of both superpowers during the Cold War had almost ruled out the possibility of either being the winner of an all-out nuclear exchange. The enormous destructive capabilities of both sides compelled the responsible authorities to exercise utmost restraint and suppress their intentions in order to avoid a war. The guiding principle of arms control in the nuclear age was, therefore, strict avoidance of a war between the two superpowers.

Notwithstanding such a delicate balance of terror that shaped the superpower rivalry during the Cold War, in the post-Cold War era, India and Pakistan have apparently not attained a similar stable balance of deterrence. Hence, the lack of secure retaliatory forces in the subcontinent increases the fears that either side may intend to take the advantage of making a disarming first strike in the belief that it could be the winner.

Faced with such a challenge, the arms control community should do its utmost to assist both India and Pakistan to control their intentions so as to help avoiding a devastating war. This is, however, by no means to suggest providing secure second-strike capabilities to both sides and, thus, increasing the armament level which is already an alarming one. Nevertheless, mutual vulnerabilities of other sorts can be introduced into the region which might compel both sides to exercise utmost restraint on their intentions, as did the US and the USSR during the Cold War.

No matter how complicated it may seem to be, however, the nuclearisation of the subcontinent may still be regarded as one of the relatively easier chapters of the problems of arms control in the 21st century. Because, both India and Pakistan have managed to raise a community of security experts consisting of responsible politicians, academics, scientists and military personnel who will do their best to avoid a nuclear catastrophe.

However, the rest of the world today is dramatically different from the one that we had during the Cold War. The stable balance that existed in the bipolar international system is being replaced by a degree of

instability in many trouble spots in the world because of the emergence of a multitude of players, big and small, in the international arena.

Being big or small, however, should not make any difference to the strategic considerations of the states concerned due to the possibility of acquisition of nuclear weapons capabilities by small states. Even a modest nuclear arsenal may provide the smaller actors with enormous power and with unprecedented incentives for challenging the bigger actors.

Hence, as opposed to the bipolar world, where capabilities were hard to roll back, and, thus, intentions had to be controlled, today, in a multipolar world, intentions are hard to control, thus, capabilities have to be rolled back.

Therefore, in the post-Cold War era, the principal problem, in my view, is the spread of a wrong belief that there may be a winner of a nuclear war. The spread of this belief fuels nuclear proliferation as well as the spread of all sorts of **WMD**.

Thus, in order to achieve strict avoidance of nuclear war in the decades ahead, the primary task of the arms control community should be two-fold: the first should be to devise policies in order to control the malignant *intentions* of the states. This is, however, an extremely difficult task, especially as regards the so-called "states of concern", and is not achievable in the short term. Second, as a consequence of the first, the task of the arms control community should be to take all necessary measures to prevent the acquisition of NBC weapons *capabilities* by new states.

Having said this, it is clear that arms control in a multipolar international system will become much more complex in the years ahead, and it will require innovative approaches. Under such circumstances, bringing stability to the world, and maintaining it, will become much more difficult a task, and, thus, will necessitate the cooperation and collaboration of all the peace-loving states.

NOTES

1. Thomas C. Schelling & Morton H. Halperin, *Strategy and Arms Control*, (Maclean, Virginia: Pergamon Brasseys, 1985), p. 1.
2. Michael Sheehan, *Arms Control: Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 7.