Today’s nuclear dangers and the implications for long-term disarmament

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Nuclear weapons: some good news

- Global nuclear weapons stockpiles down ~80%
- Only 9 states with nuclear weapons – same as 30 years ago
- Almost all other states have pledged not to acquire nuclear weapons, and to accept verification
- More states have started nuclear weapons programs and given them up than have nuclear weapons – efforts to dissuade countries succeed more often than they fail
- Nonproliferation regime has proved resilient in the face of multiple challenges over 5 decades
- >50% of the states that once had potential nuclear bomb material on their soil have eliminated it
- Nuclear material around the world is far more secure than it was 25 years ago
Potential nuclear flashpoints

- U.S.-North Korea
  - Collapse of current process could lead to "maximum pressure," threats of "fire and fury" (more later)
  - Miscalculation, inadvertent escalation could lead to conflict – which could escalate rapidly to nuclear use
  - Other nuclear dangers from North Korea: nuclear transfers; pressures on others to match DPRK capability; “loose nukes” in the event of regime collapse; also chemical and biological weapons

- India-Pakistan
  - Ongoing nuclear arms race, with shift toward tactical nuclear weapons that increase risks of seizure, early use in conflict
  - Nuclear doctrines which, if deterrence fails, could lead to rapid escalation to nuclear war

Potential nuclear flashpoints (II)

- U.S.-Russia
  - Intense hostility, mistrust, “grey area” actions could lead to conflict
  - Some conflicts – e.g., in Baltics – could lead to fears of rapid defeat, pressures to use nuclear weapons to prevent
  - Russian nuclear forces and command and control highly vulnerable, likely pressures to “use them or lose them” – launch on warning

- U.S.-China
  - Long-term tensions between rising, declining powers could lead to conflict – Taiwan, S. China Sea, E. China sea...

- U.S. or Israel – Iran
  - U.S. pullout from JCPOA, threats of military strikes could strengthen Iran’s nuclear bomb advocates
  - Many scenarios could lead to conflict – a few to nuclear use
Dangers to existing nonproliferation, arms reduction efforts

- U.S. pullout from the JCPOA, Iran’s ongoing programs
  - Little chance unilateral U.S. sanctions will lead to better agreement
  - Increases risk of proliferation, conflict in the Middle East
  - Decreases credibility of U.S. promises, int’l diplomacy

- North Korea’s ongoing nuclear and missile programs
  - Current process could collapse (more later)

- Intense U.S.-Russian hostility
  - Breakdown of cooperation on many fronts, potential risk of conflict (more later)

- Ongoing India-Pakistan arms race
  - In addition to direct dangers, risks of theft of nuclear material, leakage of technology, blockage of fissile cutoff, likely blockage of CTBT entry into force, near-term restraint unlikely...

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Dangers to existing nonproliferation, arms reduction efforts (II)

- Nuclear powers modernizing their forces, no negotiations toward further arms reductions or disarmament under way
  - Russia introducing whole new classes of strategic nuclear weapons
  - U.S. planning $1.2 trillion modernization with little serious debate
  - China also modernizing its much smaller forces
  - No talks on follow-on to New START, or limits on others’ forces

- Nuclear powers utterly rejecting the ban treaty
  - Could further inflame NPT politics between the nuclear “haves” and “have nots”
  - Ban treaty will enter into force for many developing countries, be a feature of the international system for decades to come
Dangers to existing nonproliferation, arms reduction efforts (III)

- No progress on key items on the NPT agenda
  - No disarmament progress (ban treaty will highlight)
  - FMCT blocked; little near-term prospect for CTBT entry into force
  - No progress on Middle East WMDFZ
  - No new initiatives on peaceful uses, security assurances

- Nuclear security efforts losing momentum after the summits
  - Five “action plans” led to little action
  - Political constraints limit IAEA as forum for decisions, actions
  - U.S.-Russian cooperation at a standstill, other bilateral cooperation slow

- Long term growth, spread of nuclear energy could create additional risks if not appropriately managed

North Korea talks: will lack of the best be the enemy of the good?

- Highly unlikely any achievable set of incentives and pressures would lead to near-term N. Korean total nuclear disarmament
  - Nuclear weapons seen as central to regime survival, prestige

- Churchill: “Jaw, jaw” better than “war, war”
  - Recent process has offered months of reduced risk of war

- Many types of intermediate steps would serve U.S., world security interests
  - Freezes on further testing, production; reductions in some aspects of capabilities; military confidence-building measures

- Danger: disappointment over lack of total disarmament could lead to return to “maximum pressure,” “fire and fury”
  - Volatile situation could lead to military conflict
  - Intermediate opportunities may be missed
The whole structure of U.S.-Russian nuclear arms control is in danger

- For nearly 5 decades, U.S.-Russian nuclear arms treaties offered
  - Limits on, reductions in, nuclear forces
  - Predictability
  - Transparency

- New START is working — but expires soon
  - Both sides have met key limits
  - Inspections are almost the only remaining nuclear cooperation
  - Expires early 2021; 1-time extension possible to early 2026

- Intense U.S.-Russian hostility, mutual charges of INF Treaty violations, make it very difficult to reach a new treaty:
  - That Russia will accept, and
  - That 2/3 of the U.S. Senate will accept

U.S.-Russian hostility is poisoning the atmosphere for progress

- United States and Russia, each see the other as aggressive, hostile powers, threats to their national security

- In the U.S. view, Russia:
  - Violated longstanding norms by seizing Crimea, effectively invading eastern Ukraine
  - Illegitimately interfered in U.S. elections, and plans to do so again
  - Is protecting Assad from consequences of brutality, chemical use, thereby undermining chemical weapons regime — constant lies
  - Is murdering opponents (including with banned chemical weapons)
  - Is building new classes of nuclear weapons, planning nuclear use early in nuclear conflicts, rattling the nuclear saber in a way not seen since Khrushchev, violating arms control treaties
  - Democrats, Republicans (except for Trump) united in anti-Russian hatred in a way not seen for decades
**U.S.-Russian hostility is poisoning the atmosphere for progress (II)**

- In the Russian view, the United States and NATO:
  - Violated promises by extending NATO toward Russia’s borders
  - Violated international law by bombing Serbia, invading Iraq, overthrowing Qaddafi without UN authorization
  - Organized the “color revolutions” and had one planned to overthrow Putin – routinely interferes in other countries’ elections
  - Organized the ouster of the Ukrainian government and planned to draw Ukraine (and Georgia) into the EU and NATO
  - Threw out the ABM Treaty and is now building missile defenses to threaten Russia’s deterrent
  - In essence, conducts more aggressive behavior than Russia – but more cynically, claiming to support a rules-based order
  - Remarkably widespread anti-American hostility

**U.S.-Russian hostility is poisoning the atmosphere for progress (III)**

- Even when locked in a global Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union cooperated on mutual interests:
  - Built the arms control structure
  - Built the global nonproliferation regime
  - In-depth military-to-military, scientist-to-scientist contacts
  - Cooperated on security in Europe – from Austrian State Treaty to OSCE

- Today, even this Cold War cooperation is largely blocked
  - Except for JCPOA, little nonproliferation cooperation
  - No arms control talks
  - Military-to-military, scientist-to-scientist contacts mostly cut off
  - No effective cooperation on security in Europe
  - Mostly looking for ways to undermine each other
The INF issues could derail arms control

- U.S. charge focuses on the SS-C-8 cruise missile, arguing:
  - Tested from ground-based launcher
  - Prohibited range capability
  - Now being deployed
  - Russian response: permitted SLCM; similar GLCM does not have prohibited range; U.S. provides too little info to discuss
  - In Congress, seen as clear evidence arms control with Russia doesn’t work – creating opposition to New START extension, further accords

- 3 Russian charges, one with substantial merit
  - ABM test targets intermediate-range; drones similar to cruise missiles (1st already has treaty provision; 2nd readily addressed)
  - AEGIS Ashore: Ground-based launcher whose sea-based version regularly fires cruise missiles of prohibited range

Are INF compromises possible?

- For the SS-C-8:
  - Russia could eliminate prohibited system
    - Complication: reportedly tested from Iskandr launcher (Russia unlikely to be willing to eliminate all of those)
  - If SS-C-8 really does not have prohibited range capability (unlikely) Russia could offer inspections to demonstrate that

- For the Russian charges
  - AEGIS ashore:
    - U.S. offer of inspections for absence of cruise missiles likely inadequate
    - Possibly add “functionally related observable difference”
    - Build new, purpose-built launcher if needed
  - Others: reach agreed interpretations
    - But may not be enough if real Russian concerns are elsewhere
Complications for the next stage of arms control – even if we can get there

- Many strategic issues beyond numbers of nuclear weapons:
  - Russia concerned about:
    - U.S. missile defenses
    - U.S. conventional precision strike capabilities
    - Increased U.S. counterforce capabilities
  - U.S. concerned about:
    - Russian new types of nuclear weapons
    - Russian tactical nuclear weapons
  - Both sides concerned about:
    - Strategic implications of cyber
  - All of these harder to define, limit, verify than strategic launchers

- When should other countries participate in arms reductions?
  - Multipolar deterrence and arms control inevitably more complex

Implications for long-term disarmament

- Getting to zero nuclear weapons likely to be a long and winding path

- The final step of zero will require building many foundations:
  - Robust verification (including the difficult problem of confirming a few hundred are not hidden away)
  - System to provide international security without nuclear deterrence
  - In particular, resolution of conflicts that drive some states’ perceived need for nuclear weapons
  - Mutual confidence among former nuclear weapon states

- Need to maintain, build from existing regimes, resolve current dangers, to make progress