

The Changing Strategic Context of Nuclear Weapons And Its Implications for the New Nuclear World Order¹

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Ever since the nuclear bombing at Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, nuclear weapons have become one of the defining elements in shaping the world strategic situation for better or worse. The end of the Cold War has led to dramatic changes in the world security landscape. The international community, however, continues struggling to grapple with many vital security issues involving nuclear weapons. Depending on ways of their solutions (or lack of solutions), these issues may greatly impact on the threat perceptions and security policies of major powers as well as the strategic stability of the world in the future. The present paper offers my own perspective on the roles of nuclear weapons both during and after the Cold War period, and ends up with my hope to see an ideal future strategic context in which the nuclear world order will evolve and help strengthen the enduring international strategic stability.

The Strategic Context of Nuclear Weapons in the Cold War

Two factors have mainly characterized the strategic international environment which had direct bearing on the nuclear issues in the Cold War:

The first was the emergence of a bipolar structure, in which the two superpowers the US and the Soviet Union were competing for world domination. These two powers soon formed two confronting camps NATO and the Warsaw Pact, dominated by each of them respectively. The antagonism between the two sides had virtually covered all the fields, underpinning the basic trends of the world situation, and rendering relations between East and West as of absolute zero sum nature. Meanwhile, of this fierce confrontational relationship, scramble for military superiority is thought to be of particular significance as security first of all meant for them military security.

The second phenomenon was that the nuclear superiority became the centerpiece of US-USSR contention, owing to the unprecedented destructive power of nuclear weapons. In fact, for almost the whole period of the Cold War, relations between the US and the Soviet Union evolved virtually around the struggle for the nuclear supremacy. During the initial period of the Cold War when the US had single-handedly controlled the nuclear bombs, it had actively tried to consolidate a stable world order based on its monopoly of these horrible weapons. In 1946, the US put forward “the Baruch Plan” in an attempt to block once for all the access to nuclear weapons by the Soviets and other countries.² Militarily, Washington formulated the strategy of mass retaliation, using nuclear weapons as a trump card vis-à-vis its

¹ The article is based on a couple of my previous papers, namely, “Reflections on the Rationale of Rebuilding the Global Strategic Stability” in Chinese, *International Studies*, No. 4, 2002, China’s Institute for International Studies; “Nuclear Nonproliferation-Past, Present and Future”, No. 1, Volume 3, 2005, *Research and Progress on Arms Control*, China’s Association for Arms Control and Disarmament. Views expressed in the present article are entirely of the author’s, and do not necessarily represent the position of any organizations or any other individuals.

² The Stanford Arms Control Group, *International Arms control*, Second Edition, Stanford university Press, 1984, pp. 97-98.

adversary.³ All these had brought into vivid reflection the US strategic doctrine for world domination based on its nuclear superiority. The nuclear monopoly, however, was short-lived and was soon broken by the Soviet access to its own nuclear capability. A fierce race for the nuclear build-up followed between the two superpowers, ended up each equipped with a nuclear arsenal by the early 1970s, enough to annihilate the other side more than once.⁴ The danger of a nuclear war dramatically increased. Meanwhile, the development of nuclear weapons by the two superpowers had also brought to the world a new risk of proliferation of these weapons to other aspirant nations.

Under the circumstances, the US and the Soviet Union had gradually found themselves locked in an ambivalent relationship. They were vying for military superiority while forced to carefully avoid a head-on confrontation. Antagonism in their relations remained while common interests also emerged and were identified between them. These common interests included the need to put their arms race on a more controlled and predictable track, preventing the competition from escalating into a nuclear war, and avoiding proliferation of nuclear weapons materials and technologies to other countries. This same complex situation also existed in the international politics at large. On the one hand, the race between the two superpowers had pushed the world to live under the shadow of a nuclear war and led to the growing voice in the world to halt nuclear arms race and to avert the nuclear war. The tension between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states became acute. At the same time, the international community also saw the increasing common interests among all the nations in coping with the risk of nuclear proliferation.

Against the backdrop, the Cold War context bears some important hallmarks involving the inescapable role of nuclear weapons:

First, nuclear balance between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union became the highlight for strategic stability. The ABM Treaty together with other agreements limiting the strategic offensive weapons served as a codification of this nuclear balance.⁵ According to these agreements, the two countries were not allowed to develop strategic defensive weapons. In addition, there were also certain constraints on the development of offensive weapons in total numbers but not in quality. This peculiar arrangement of allowing the development of an offensive capability but not of a defensive one was aimed deliberately at consolidating a state of the so-called “Mutual Assured Destruction” (MAD) between the two powers, preserving and exposing each other’s weakness, and taking each as a hostage to the other side. The rationale was easy and simple to understand: since either had the formidable nuclear offensive capability without defensive capability, a nuclear war between the two superpowers would virtually mean a mutual annihilation. Thus, neither dared to launch a pre-emptive strike, and a nuclear war would be prevented. On the basis of the

³ Wang Zhongchun and Wen Zhonghua, “the Un-dissipated Nuclear Clouds” (in Chinese), the NDU Publishing House, Beijing, 2000, pp.111-113.

⁴ According to the estimate of the Institute Strategic Studies at London, the United States deployed 294 ICBMs, 155 SLBMs, and 600 strategic bombers; the Soviet Union deployed 75 ICBMs, 75 SLBMs and 190 strategic bombers. Ibid. p.75

⁵ These treaties include “Antarctic Treaty” in 1959, “Limited Test Ban Treaty” in 1963, “Outer Space Treaty” and “Latin American nuclear-Free Zone Treaty” in 1967, “Seabed Arms Control Treaty” in 1971, and “South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone Treaty, etc. See, A Concise Guide to World Armaments and Disarmament”, edited by China Institute for Strategic Studies, Military Translation Press, October 1986, pp. 72-77.

MAD doctrine, both superpowers proceeded to pursue a strategy of deterrence. The core of this doctrine was to turn the MAD into operational reality with the aim of preventing a nuclear war as the primary target. The deterrence strategy was thought feasible because it had been based on the balance of terror, each with a formidable nuclear offensive arsenal.⁶

Second, the balance between the nuclear weapon states (NWS) and the non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) in terms of different rights and obligations constituted another pillar for strategic stability in the Cold War. This balance was codified by the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1967 and other related multilateral treaties for nonproliferation of nuclear weapons endorsed by the majority of the international community around that time. The NPT in particular had played a unique role in defining two categories of states, namely the nuclear weapons states (NWS) and non-nuclear weapons states (NNWS), with either having different rights and obligations. The NNWS pledged not to seek nuclear weapon capability; in exchange, the NWS were committed to nuclear disarmament and assistance to the NNWS in benefiting from the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purpose. The NPT gained the broad support from the outset by the overwhelming majority of the international community, and thus contributed greatly to the international effort for nonproliferation.

Thirdly, the Cold War context also saw certain institutionalization to regulate the behaviors of all nations, even including the two superpowers. It involved a series of arms control and disarmament mechanisms, and regional security arrangements both at bilateral and multilateral levels. They included, for example, the U.S.-Soviet Union bilateral negotiations on further limitation of their nuclear weapons, the Mutual Balanced Force Reductions talks in Central Europe (MBFR) between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the multilateral arms control and disarmament negotiation-conference on Disarmament in Geneva, and Peacekeeping activities under the auspices of the United Nations, and many others. Despite the discriminatory nature of many of these mechanisms, all these legal documents combined reflected the convergence of interests of the majority members of the world community, as well as their political willingness to accept certain constraints on their actions in the international arena. Not all the nations faithfully observed all these constraints. A few refused to participate in the international nonproliferation regime based on the NPT framework; a few other NNWS pursued their clandestine nuclear programs even as members of the NPT. The NWS, the two superpowers in particular, were yet to honor their commitment of nuclear disarmament. These failures aside, the existing arms control agreements and the international legal mechanisms that were entailed still played a unique role in regulating the behavior of all the nations of the world one way or the other, contributing significantly to the strategic stability in the Cold War.

Because of the above-mentioned characteristics, the implications of strategic stability in the Cold War were mixed.

On the positive side, strategic stability contributed in a significant way to the maintenance of peace in general and the curbing of the nuclear war in particular. Even a large-scale conventional war between the two major powers or between NATO and

⁶ See Darry Howlett, *New Concepts of Deterrence*, "International Perspectives on Missile proliferation and Defenses", Occasional Paper No. 5, Center for Nonproliferation Studies, march 2001, p. 19-20.

the Warsaw Pact did not take place in the fear of the war being escalated into a nuclear exchange. Like two scorpions in a bottle, the two superpowers were virtually locked up in an impasse (called strategic stability); neither side thought a major war would be in its best interests.

Strategic stability in the Cold War also helped develop certain useful codes of conduct particularly for the major powers in their involvement (or non-involvement) in the regional conflicts as well as in the regional arrangements for peacekeeping or peacemaking. Despite numerous regional conflicts and local wars, the local instabilities and turmoil had generally not significantly jeopardized the global strategic stability at large.

Last but not least, the legal arms control and disarmament mechanisms played an indispensable role in maintaining strategic stability and mobilizing the international effort for further arms control and non-proliferation progress. As Mr. Tang Jiaxun, former Chinese Foreign Minister, put it: “thanks to joint efforts over the years, the international community has established a relatively complete legal system for arms control and disarmament. As an important component of the global collective security framework with the UN at its center, this system has increased the predictability of the international relations and played an important role in safeguarding international peace, security and stability”⁷. In the nuclear field, these mechanisms were helpful in further regulating the rules of the nuclear game, and ensuring the on-going nuclear arms race between the two superpowers on a controlled track. After the Cold War was over, this existing legal system continued to promote the arms control and disarmament process. During the most part of 1990s, the international effort on arms control succeeded in producing further important instruments like the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the agreement of indefinite extension of the NPT. All these achievements will continue to be important elements of the establishment of a new strategic stability in the 21st century.

On the negative side, strategic stability in the Cold War had always inherently carried some irrational elements. It first of all aimed to cater to the convenience of the world competition of the two superpowers, and was based on the acceptance of the legitimacy of the existence of nuclear weapons. The focus was the maintenance of “a stable conflict” between them rather than renouncing the conflict⁸. With inevitably deep-rooted suspicion and fear lest the other side overtook itself in the competition for military superiority, deterrence became the primary rationale for the continuing arms race between the two superpowers. In fact, in the strategic framework they had agreed to establish, the arms race (the nuclear arms race in particular) between the two countries had never ceased; preparation for fighting a nuclear war never relaxed. This situation has led to the continuing expansion of the two major powers’ nuclear over-kill capabilities beyond any reasonable calculations.⁹ The world still lives under

⁷ Tang Jiaoxun at Opening Ceremony of Conference on International Conference on A Disarmament Agenda for the 21st Century, sponsored by the United Nations and the People’s Republic of China, Beijing, April 2, 2002.

⁸ Camille Grand, “Ballistic Missile Threats, Missile Defenses, Deterrence, and Strategic Stability”, from *International Perspectives on Missile Proliferation and Defenses*, Occasional Paper No. 5, Monterey Institute of International Studies, and Mountbatten Center for International Studies, March 2001, p.6

⁹ According to one estimate, the United States had deployed operational nuclear warheads 9,376, non-operational nuclear warheads 5,000; Russia deployed operational nuclear warheads 9,196, non-operational nuclear warheads 13,500 respectively by January 2001. See Hans M. Kristensen, “The Unruly Hedge: Cold War Thinking at the

the shadow of the spread of nuclear weapons and the danger of a nuclear war. Obviously, strategic stability based on the balance of terror is fragile to say the mildest.

This irrationality had also found expression in the discriminating nature of the different rights and obligations for the NWS and NNWS under the NPT. The treaty had actually served to perpetuate the division of the two categories of world nations. The obligations for the former were vague and general while those of the latter were explicit and specific. Furthermore, while the overwhelming majority of the NNWS had largely observed their commitment not to acquire a nuclear capability, the NWS had yet to honor their obligations requested. The failure on the part of the NWS raised a serious moral obstacle in the strengthening of nonproliferation regime; it also increased the confidence gap between the NNWS and the NWS.

In a larger security context, strategic stability in the Cold War seemed to focus so narrowly on the military balance between the US and the Soviet Union that many regional conflicts and disputes were either set aside or frozen along with the ups and downs in the relations between the two superpowers. Far from being solved, these issues contained potential instabilities that would invariably surface and affect the future stability once the old strategic stability became eroded. The developments in the post-Cold War era have amply demonstrated the weakness of the Cold War strategic stability. During the whole 1990s, every year there were over 30 local wars or violent conflicts erupting in many regions of the world, which became one of the prime sources for the turbulence and instability of the world today.¹⁰

A changing Strategic Context of Nuclear Weapons in the Post-Cold War era

The end of the Cold War has fundamentally changed the world strategic environment. These changes have been demonstrated in the whole spectrum of the human life today. The following are a few highlights in the international arena:

Politically, the Soviet Union has disintegrated. The bipolar system has collapsed. As a general trend, the world is heading for multipolarity. The gamut of various nations' participation in world affairs has increased. So have their mutual interactions and mutual constraints. At the same time, the world also finds an only superpower left behind. Meanwhile, rising regional powers have also intensified instabilities in various regions.

The on-going economic globalization has been profoundly changing the economic and trade relations of various nations in the world. Interdependence and mutual constraints are both greatly enhanced as a result. But globalization has also given rise to the enlarged gap between the rich and poor, and the North and South, owing to the inequality in economic competition.¹¹ Economic security has figured increasingly

Crawford Summit," *Arms Control Today*, December 2001, pp. 8-12.

¹⁰For the detailed description of these armed conflicts, see SIPRI Yearbooks in 1990s, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security.

¹¹ See Charles E. Morrison, "Globalization, Vulnerability and Adjustment", the Pacific forum, CSIS, August 19, 2000. Morrison pointed out "it is widely argued that globalization increases economic disparities between those better able to take advantage of globalizing forces and those unprepared for it. The relative income gaps between and within countries are widening. The income ratio of the richest fifth of the world's population and its poorest fifth have increased from 30 to 1 in 1960, to 60 to 1 in 1990, and 74 to 1 by 1997."

conspicuously in the security outlook of all nations.¹²

Rapid development of high-technology has become a double-edged sword for world security. It provides to the developed countries, and the US in particular, new material means to develop and deploy new weapon systems, and carry out a revolution of military affairs (RMA) that may fundamentally change the traditional mode of warfare and orientation of modernization drives of the military forces of major powers. But the development of high-technology also gives rise to the new possibility of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). In a deeper sense, while high-technology provides new impetus to the economic development and social progress as well as the dramatic upgrading of military capabilities in various countries, it also greatly changes ways of life and thinking of the average people, having a strong impact on the traditional norms of operation in a civilized society. Non-traditional security threats are emerging as a new security challenge to the world with such high speed and great magnitude that no nation can single-handedly deal with these issues.¹³ As the 911 event illustrated, while a state builds on greater strength, its society and individuals could become more and more vulnerable.

All these changes have brought home the increasing complexity in the security perceptions in the Post-Cold War era. State-to-state relations are no longer simplistically defined as foes and friends. Members of the international community are facing unprecedented great opportunities for development, peace and security. At the same time, the world is also confronted with new problems, threats and challenges. What adds to the complexity of the situation is that there is no international consensus as how to best address these issues. Power politics and Cold War mentality continue to be the coins in the international relations, generating deep-rooted suspicion and mistrust among the major powers. Military alliances continue to exist and are even strengthened. Nations are still divided based on perceived different values, and different geo-political and economic interests.

Thus in China's perspective, development of this pluralistic, diversified and interdependent world has two-fold implications for a strategic context of nuclear weapons in the future. The world trends vindicate Beijing's conviction that "peace and development remain the dominating themes of the times", and that the international situation in general and the Asia-Pacific in particular "tends to be stable as a whole"¹⁴. Under the circumstances, possibility of fighting a nuclear war among major powers becomes increasingly remote. Meanwhile, change of the political relations among major powers makes it more feasible for them to cooperate in addressing security issues, including spread of nuclear weapons.

¹² See Zhu Yangming "Asia-Pacific Security Strategy", The Military Science Publishing House, Beijing, 2000 pp. 181-182

¹³ See Paul Stares " 'New' Or 'Non-Traditional' Challenges", April 2002, <http://www.unu.edu/millennium/stares.pdf>.

Paul Stares said, "the range of conceivable security concerns broaden dramatically-some would argue limitlessly-to include a host of economic, social, political, environmental, and epidemiological problems. Whether they emanate from outside or inside the boundaries of the state is immaterial to their consideration as security threats. Likewise, whether they are the product of the deliberate or inadvertent acts is irrelevant. The harmful impact on the individual or the surrounding ecosystem is what matters. What makes problem 'new' or 'non-traditional' threats, therefore, is not that they are truly phenomena or products but rather that they are now treated as security concerns."

¹⁴ For more details of China's security perspective, see "China's National Defense in 2004", the State Council Information Office, Beijing, December 27, 2004.<http://www.china.org.cn/English/2004/Dec/116032.html>.

On the other hand, complexity also gives rise to factors of uncertainty, instability and insecurity. At least three major challenges are discerned as far as the future strategic context of nuclear weapons is concerned:

First of all, almost all the nuclear weapon states, the United States in particular, have shown heavier reliance on the role of nuclear weapons in their security strategy, which is indeed to set the stage for the future context of nuclear relations among world nations. It is ironical while the nuclear weapons seemed to be moved increasingly to the further background in the political relations of major nuclear powers, these nations find even a greater value in the role of nuclear weapons to protect their security interests.

In the security policy of each of these countries, nuclear force continues to be given an important role to play. Modernization of the nuclear force continues to be put as priority on their agenda. The Russians backed off from their no first use policy. Except for China today, all the other four acknowledged nuclear weapon states claim they are ready to be the first to use nuclear weapons if the situation needs it to be. Against this backdrop, none of the nuclear weapon states is seriously thinking to implement its obligations as stipulated in the NPT. Nuclear arms control and disarmament negotiation has been stalled. The CD in Geneva has virtually been deadlocked on all the items at the table. The situation has triggered growing anger and criticism on the part of the non-nuclear weapon states. The recent failure of the review conference on NPT highlights the tension between the two sides.

The second challenge is the emergence of regional nuclear aspirant powers, which the international community is yet to find a way to cope with. True, in regions where political situation improved for better interstate relations like in Latin America, or social progress was achieved like in East Europe and South Africa, one sees positive development in strengthening nonproliferation regime particularly in the last decade. Brazil, Argentina and South Africa renounced their nuclear option (for some, even their actual nuclear bombs) one after another in mid-1990s. There seemed also a satisfactory arrangement to prevent the spreading of its huge nuclear arsenal after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. All these were positive developments as far as nonproliferation was concerned.

But there have been more worrisome and indeed alarming aspects of the issue. In regions where tensions and conflicts have surfaced with the collapse of the bipolar world system like in South Asia, the Middle East and Northeast Asia (the Korean Peninsula in particular), many regional powers seem to be seeing more incentives to consider a nuclear option either in the hope of expanding its influence or simply of insuring its survival.

In May 1998, India conducted a number of nuclear explosions, which forced Pakistan also to make its response in kind. Two more new nuclear de facto nuclear weapon states emerged in the sub-continent. Although it was no secret that these two countries had long time ago acquired nuclear capabilities surreptitiously, the new explosions still had very negative shocking implications to the region as well as to the world.

And then there emerged the nuclear crisis in the DPRK in 2002, which threatened to

bring about a genuine confrontation and even a military conflict between the US and the DPRK. Although the six-party talks have helped to offer some hope for a peaceful solution of the issue, positions of the two principle antagonists seem still far apart, and uncertainty remains the hallmark of the present situation. Meanwhile, the international community has also serious doubts as to Iran's policy orientation with regard to its nuclear programs. Tehran seemed to acknowledge a HEU program, which had been unknown to the outside for a long time in the past, and seems still in a dubious state despite Iran's emphasis on the programs' peaceful nature and its pledge to put all the nuclear programs under the safeguards of the IAEA. Both cases of the DPRK and Iran would have serious implications to the world and regional peace and stability if they are allowed to go adrift. These incidents have also revealed some serious vulnerabilities of the international nonproliferation regime in terms of its monitoring and verification capabilities. First of all, the existing monitoring mechanism was proved to be inadequate to keep track of a non-nuclear weapon state's going nuclear in a secret way if that country chose so. Secondly, when the breaching was found, there seemed no immediate and effective way to correct the situation by taking legitimate punitive steps against the culprit country. Finally, even if the breaching country was eventually pulled back to the NPT scope usually by some rewarding measures, the psychological impact to the other non-nuclear weapon states would still be very negative. The message delivered seems clear: if you breach, you can always expect to get some rewards in the end; if you don't, you get nothing. So, what's the point for a non-nuclear weapons state to remain a faithful member of the NPT? Evidently, inability to deal with the spread of nuclear weapons to more non-nuclear weapon states has dealt a heavy blow to the international nonproliferation regime.

In an even more broad sense, the emergence of the new members to the nuclear club points to a more unsettling risk, namely, regional conflicts in those areas like the Middle East, South Asia and the Korean Peninsula are added a new overly dangerous nuclear element. The new situation would not only complicate the threat perceptions and war-planning of the countries in these regions, but also lower the threshold of the use of nuclear weapons, thereby offering further incentives for the nuclear proliferation.

The third challenge comes from a newly emerged role of non-state actors, who seem to be both the new source as well as the potential users of the nuclear material, technologies or know-how in proliferation. The international community is facing a new and real danger of a nuclear weapon, or a crude and dirty bomb falling into the hands of non-state actors like international terrorists or even the organized crimes. The scenario of an explosion of such a device in a big city, killing hundreds of thousands of innocent people is not too farfetched but simply unacceptable to the world. This is a new threat indeed, as all the international nonproliferation regime had been dealing with is only concerning the behavior of sovereign states. There had already been discovery of some documents at the Al Qaida caves in Afghanistan to show that these terrorists were studying manufacturing a dirty bomb. Although there was no evidence to prove to what extent they were successful in that regard, the discovery of the revealed interest to them was enough to alert the world that the danger cannot be ignored.

Now how come these new dangers of the emergence of new nuclear weapon states

and nuclear terrorism? Undoubtedly the rapid spread of science and high technology has played a particular important role in this regard. Many commercial companies or even individuals, who have the access to the nuclear related knowledge or know-how, have become virtually another source of nuclear fuel cycle suppliers in addition to the organizations such as the Zangger Committee, the London Club, and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, whose members are state-parties to the NPT. The former group is now found to have circumvented national export controls to supply states, which had the ambition to develop nuclear programs for the military purpose. It is already common knowledge now that a number of Western companies from the United States, Germany, Switzerland, France and the Great Britain were the main source of gas centrifuges to countries like Iraq, Libya and Iran. If all these acts had long taken place in the past, the rapid development of science and high technology has made the clandestine nuclear transfer more convenient, efficient and harder to be found. The recent discovery of A. Q. Khan of Pakistan as a principle organizer of a secret network to supply nuclear related material and technology further proved how important these non-state actors can be in assisting countries like Libya or even the DPRK to develop their nuclear programs.

More importantly, what is not clear is whether Western commercial companies or A. Q. Khan's network have any contact with non-state actors, who are so eager to have their fingers in the nuclear pie for their own purpose. To sever this connection has become indeed the main content of the concerted efforts of world against international terrorism.

The Need for a New Nuclear World Order

Clearly the above said three major challenges constitute the most unstable areas of the strategic context of nuclear weapons. Unless solutions are found for these three big issues, it is difficult to develop a healthy and enduring nuclear world order in the future. To solve these problems, the following points may be in order:

1. A universal agreement must be established as to the immoral and illegal nature of the use of nuclear weapons. Thus any new nuclear world order should lead to the effective nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation till complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all nuclear weapons. To facilitate the achievement of that goal, it is, therefore, essential to take measures to reduce rather to expand the role of nuclear weapons in the national security strategies.
2. A new nuclear world order is in fact one of the major building blocks for the new world order in general. It essentially involves a comprehensive approach bringing all the political, economic and military means to bear. But among all these efforts, political element is critical. In other words, an enduring nuclear world order would have to be imbedded in a more propitious political environment, in which a nation does not feel the need to resort to the nuclear choice, or it can find out a better alternative to developing nuclear capability.
3. The nuclear weapon states, particularly the two major powers with the largest nuclear arsenals should have special responsibilities to take the lead in observing their obligation for nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation.
4. The international community should also take practical and efficient measures to

strengthen the traditional export control as well as the verification and monitoring mechanisms. Both are evidently inadequate today in coping with the new challenges generated not the least because of the regional conflicts, the impact of economic globalization and the rapid development of science and high technology. But the solution of the problem needs a multilateral and cooperative approach. Coercive prevention based on threatening the use of force or unilateral actions will often backfire, and serve to aggravate the tension.

5. As two nuclear weapon states, China and the United States have important responsibility in fostering a new nuclear world order. But to that end, it is perhaps equally important for both nations to first seek establishment of a more enduring and propitious bilateral strategic stability, which serves as part of the new nuclear world order. This task may not be easy to fulfill as the two countries are so discrepant in terms of their nuclear capability, and so divergent in their perspectives with regard to the role of nuclear weapons. But on the other hand, it does not mean the impossibility of establishing strategic stability between the two countries. In Beijing's perspective, 1) nuclear stability should be part of the overall China-US relations. So far as this overall relationship remains good, it is highly likely that the two countries will continue to put their nuclear weapons in the background. 2) Owing to the defensive nature of China's nuclear posture, China will continue to exercise its self-restraint and avoid taking provocative measures to challenge the US core interests provided the US moves do not threaten the credibility of its small nuclear retaliatory force; 3) the two capitals may also find growing common ground in addressing the threats of nuclear proliferation. Cooperation in this field will provide increasing incentives for the two countries to seek strengthening strategic stability in the nuclear field.

<http://www.kas.de/proj/home/home/37/1/index.html>