

The Nuclear Security Summit: Towards International Cooperation

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2010 will be a watershed year for nuclear security and non-proliferation. Two landmark events will impact the global nuclear non-proliferation regime - the Global Nuclear Security Summit and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference. Additionally, the release of the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) 2010, which derives from the conclusion that "the risk of a nuclear confrontation between nations has gone down, but the risk of nuclear attack has gone up," announced the non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states and the signing of the US-Russia arms control treaty that envisages further reductions in their nuclear stockpiles. In some respects, these developments and the consensus on nuclear security being sought, lay the foundation for reaching the goal of a nuclear weapons-free world.

I THE NUCLEAR THREAT IS REAL

In his 5 April 2009 speech in Prague, US President Barack Obama outlined his strategy to address the international threat posed by nuclear weapons and materials. At the top of the list was his assessment that terrorists are "determined to buy, build, or steal" a nuclear weapon and to prevent this, the United States should lead an international effort to "secure all vulnerable nuclear materials around the world within four years." As a step toward this goal, he pledged to convene a summit on nuclear security within a year to "secure loose nuclear materials...and deter, detect, and disrupt attempts at nuclear terrorism." Obama announced at the UN General Assembly in September 2009 that the Summit would be held in early April 2010.

President Obama realistically proclaimed that the goal of a world without nuclear weapons would not be possible in his lifetime. In their seminal January 2008 *Wall Street Journal*

editorial, the Quartet urged world leaders to outline a course to the "mountaintop" of a nuclear-free world. They listed the need "to provide the highest possible standards of security for nuclear weapons, as well as for nuclear materials everywhere in the world, to prevent terrorists from acquiring a nuclear bomb" as an important step along the way. Their latest op-ed was devoted to this step and recognized that nuclear disarmament and maintaining the safety, security and reliability of weapons have to be accomplished simultaneously. Like Secretaries Shultz, Kissinger, Perry and Senator Nunn, Obama believes that the gravest large-scale threat to the US and its allies is posed by the proliferation of nuclear weapons or fissile material to terrorists or states that collude with them.

US officials say there are about 2,000 tonnes of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium worldwide, but nuclear non-proliferation experts say that there is almost certainly more that has never been declared. Nuclear materials (plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU)) are artificial materials that provide the explosive energy for nuclear weapons. They are produced by costly and complicated enrichment and reprocessing techniques that require the construction of large facilities that even states find difficult to conceal. Terrorist groups like the al Qaeda may find these facilities virtually impossible to construct. Also, stealing an assembled nuclear weapon is difficult, even in unstable states like Pakistan where nuclear weapon facilities are well guarded. But analysts say that terrorists could theoretically build a crude but deadly nuclear device or possibly something more sophisticated if they have the money, technical personnel, and required fissile material. They further say that groups like the al Qaeda have been trying to get the required materials. Obtaining arms-grade fissile material is the biggest challenge, which is why keeping it secure is the ultimate goal.

The global community, primarily with US leadership, has been addressing the challenges of nuclear security since the fall of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, significant challenges remain and continue to spread. Despite the fact that not all security objectives have been met in Russia and the former Soviet states, the danger is no longer confined to that region. The challenges are now more geographically dispersed and international cooperation on this agenda needs to significantly improve if there is to be any hope of meeting Obama's four-year goal to secure all loose nuclear materials. In particular, there needs to be a greater consensus on the urgency of this agenda, greater willingness to cooperate on the part of developed and developing nations, and a multilateral implementation plan. A long-term strategy for dealing with the inherent weaknesses in the evolving nuclear security regime is urgently needed to prevent what Professor Graham Allison calls "the ultimate preventable catastrophe" — a nuclear terrorist attack.

II THE NUCLEAR SECURITY SUMMIT

The two-day Nuclear Security Summit was the largest assembly of world leaders organized by the US since the United Nations Founding Conference in 1945. The Obama summit included 47 nations, including 38 heads of states and government and three international organizations. Not every head of state who had been invited, accepted, for instance Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who cancelled his trip to the Summit at the last moment and sent the Deputy Prime Minister Dan Meridor in his place. It is speculated that this was meant to avoid answering questions regarding Israel's nuclear weapons programme and its failure to join the NPT. The Obama administration also excluded several nations not in compliance with international obligations, most notably, Iran, North Korea and Syria. What was significant was that the world's designated nuclear powers – the US, Russia, France, Britain, and China, sat at the same table with India and Pakistan, both nuclear-armed states, but categorized as non-nuclear weapons states under

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the NPT. And, high-level political attention is essential to motivate rapid action on this important agenda.

President Obama in his opening remarks on 13 April 2010 said, "Two decades after the end of the Cold War, we face a cruel irony of history—the risk of a nuclear confrontation between nations has gone down, but the risk of nuclear attack has gone up...Terrorist networks such as al Qaeda have tried to acquire the material for a nuclear weapon, and if they ever succeeded, they would surely use it. Were they to do so, it would be a catastrophe for the world—causing extraordinary loss of life, and striking a major blow to global peace and stability." This warning underscored the urgency felt by the US administration on matters of nuclear terrorism. At the conclusion of the Summit, a three-page communiqué delineating broad goals and a seven-page work plan detailing the national responsibilities and international obligations that each participating country would discharge voluntarily, were issued. Though they were vague and weakened by qualifying phrases, such as "where appropriate," it was important that developed and developing powers at the highest levels had come together and agreed that there was a problem with nuclear security and were prepared to deal with it.

Communiqué

The communiqué noted that nuclear terrorism was one of the most challenging threats to international security and "strong nuclear security measures are the most effective means to prevent terrorists, criminals, or other unauthorized actors from acquiring nuclear materials." The countries assembled also agreed to endorse President Obama's initiative to secure "all vulnerable nuclear material in four years." It glossed over divisive issues like whether to continue making weapons-grade uranium and plutonium and came up with no binding commitments. However, it recognized the need to improve security and accounting for Highly Enriched Uranium (HEU) and plutonium, and to strengthen regulations concerning such materials. The countries also reaffirmed the "essential role" of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the international nuclear security framework and called for the continued support of the agency to maintain its role in implementing nuclear security activities.

Work Plan

The Work Plan drew attention to the importance of and areas of improvement in the various conventions and initiatives for the prevention of acts of nuclear terrorism already in existence. It

constitutes a political commitment by the countries represented to carry out the Work Plan on a purely 'voluntary' basis.

The Work Plan drew attention to two international conventions - the International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, adopted by consensus on 13 April 2005, and the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM). The former addresses the unlawful possession or use of nuclear devices or materials by non-state actors and calls for states to develop appropriate legal frameworks criminalizing nuclear terrorism-related acts, investigation of alleged offences, and prosecution of offenders as appropriate. The Work Plan calls on states parties to work toward universality and collaborate on ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention.

The CPPNM, adopted on 26 October 1979, is the only internationally legally binding agreement in the area of physical protection of nuclear material used for peaceful purposes. It establishes measures related to the prevention, detection and punishment of offences related to nuclear material. The Summit drew particular attention to the need for quick ratification and implementation of the 2005 Amendment, strengthening the provisions of the CPPNM to facilitate cooperation to recover nuclear materials, prevent the consequences of radiological sabotage, establish new norms for the physical protection of nuclear materials, and encourage parties to criminalize offenses in their domestic law. Other initiatives highlighted include the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism and the G-8 Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction.

In April 2004, the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1540 was adopted, establishing for the first time, binding obligation on all UN member states acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter to take and enforce effective measures against the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), their means of delivery and related materials to non-state actors. The inadequate enforcement of the resolution and the untimely reporting by member nations, as mandated by the resolution, were of importance to the Summit nations. The Work Plan emphasized the need for deeper international cooperation through continued dialogue between member states and the 1540 Committee. The mention of this resolution in the Summit's Work Plan highlighted its importance.

It laid emphasis on increased state cooperation with the IAEA for guidance, recommendations

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and effective implementation of nuclear security measures and commended IAEA efforts through its Nuclear Security Program and the 2010-2013 Nuclear Security Plan. The Nuclear Security Plan aims to contribute to global efforts to achieve worldwide, effective security for nuclear and radioactive material and enhance international cooperation through bilateral or international initiatives. The Work Plan underscored the value of information exchange and the necessity of developing the human dimension by providing adequate education and training.

Taken in its entirety, the plan provides recommendations for increased cooperation at the domestic and international levels, as well as with the IAEA, in the spectrum of nuclear safety and security. It enhances the collective concerns put forth in the Communiqué by establishing a specific agenda for nations to follow within a stipulated time frame despite not being mandatory.

Other Outcomes

Much of the work had been initiated before the Summit kicked off. The Summit provided a platform for nations to announce ongoing nuclear security efforts, with 29 individual countries making a series of unilateral national commitments. Ukraine announced that it would give up its stockpile of HEU by 2012, indeed most of it within this year. Chile revealed that it had successfully removed all HEU from its territory following the massive earthquake that devastated the country. The Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper agreed to transfer inventories of HEU to its supplier in the US and promised to help fund the removal of HEU from Mexico and Vietnam. During the Summit, the US, Canada and Mexico announced a new agreement that calls for the conversion of HEU fuel in Mexico's nuclear research reactor to LEU. Furthermore, Russia and the US announced an agreement to dispose off 34 metric tonnes of weapons-grade plutonium. Finally, some funding commitments were made at the Summit.

With regard to India, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's decision to set up a Global Center for Nuclear Security in India with four schools being envisaged to conduct research on proliferation-resistant nuclear technologies was a positive measure, illustrating India's constructive role in the overall global dialogue. President Obama's nuclear security and disarmament agenda were buoyed by these announcements and managed to provide a broad endorsement for this common threat.

III WHAT WAS MISSING?

While all of these achievements are important, there are some areas where the Summit could have done more. The first is regarding international funding for the nuclear security mission – at the very least, the IAEA is in need of significant funding, particularly those departments that are focused on nuclear security. Second, the issue of radiological material security was not afforded high priority at the Summit. While it was referenced in both the communiqué and the work plan, it should have been given more attention. This could potentially be on the agenda for the 2012 Summit in the Republic of Korea. There were no new initiatives announced. While there may be some international fatigue given the current set of activities, even when combined, they are still inadequate to the task of effectively preventing nuclear terrorism. At the very least, there is a need for a nuclear security framework agreement that incorporates existing and new activities in a coherent and organized document that can address the transnational nature of the challenge and forcefully drive international action.

The Summit was an important step forward in establishing nuclear security as a top-level international objective. But, this mission will require actions beyond the current mechanism and international consensus that has been generated. The commitments made at the summit need to be implemented rapidly. It will be important to keep the dialogue between these nations moving, and expand the engagement beyond the summit attendees and also report on the progress made.

IV CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the Nuclear Security Summit was an unprecedented event and a significant success. It took a practical first step in drawing up a four-year time framework to secure the world's loosely protected nuclear materials. The nuclear security architecture currently comprises an array of formal and informal instruments and initiatives, many of which are linked to the IAEA. These initiatives

constitute what might be described as a distributed architecture, although it is uncoordinated and not comprehensive in nature. It was essential to develop an international consensus on the seriousness of the threat, besides unity of effort to strengthen the nuclear security architecture and the emerging norm in the years ahead. The Summit has accomplished this. It is evident that greater international coordination is required between the existing nuclear security framework and the development of additional approaches. If the nuclear renaissance really does take hold and the world sees a major expansion in the number of states using nuclear power, it will be very difficult to retrofit the nuclear security architecture.

The NPT rests on the three pillars of nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. While there are overlaps between nuclear proliferation and nuclear security threats, the NPT was never intended to address the present-day threats from non-state actors and its language takes no account of them. To deal with nuclear terror it will also be necessary to deal with the states that sponsor it. To do so, it will be necessary to update the proliferation regime worldwide and perhaps add a fourth pillar to the NPT - nuclear security. This is where India could leverage its new nuclear status and contemplate innovative multilateral initiatives to bring non-state actors within the discipline of the non-proliferation regime.

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