

6 What Next?

At present, China will likely maintain its current state of nuclear forces and commitment to non-proliferation. Nevertheless, developments in East and South Asia may force a change in China's current posture. For most countries, ratification of the Non-Proliferation Treaty means adherence to the norm that no more states should develop or acquire nuclear weapons beyond the five that conducted nuclear tests before 1967. At the same time, the NPT does not legitimize the privilege of permanent possession of nuclear weapons by any state. While the ultimate goal of arms control remains the elimination of the nuclear threat altogether, the intermediate goal remains non-proliferation. The 1998 tests by India and Pakistan present a clear challenge to the non-proliferation regime. There are sound reasons for all nations to uphold, expand, and strengthen this regime. Among the most important steps that should be taken to accomplish this are the following:

- The United States should work to strengthen the Non-Proliferation Treaty and to bring into force the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. To demonstrate its leadership, the U.S. Senate should ratify the CTBT as soon as possible, a move that would greatly enhance the effectiveness of the nuclear non-proliferation regime.
- The United States and Russia should proceed with the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty process, and China, France, and Britain should likewise begin to negotiate reductions of their own nuclear forces. Each phase, of course, requires prudent execution at no cost to national or international security (by giving the wrong signal to aspiring nuclear proliferants, for example).

- The Non-Proliferation Treaty should be kept intact. No revisions should be made to enlarge the existing nuclear-weapon club. A relaxed rule would be misleading for other potential nuclear-weapon states and would cause a new round of crisis for the non-proliferation regime.
- The nuclear non-proliferation regime needs to be reexamined from the supply side. Export controls on dual-use nuclear technology must be universal among all nuclear-weapon states and not discriminate against non-nuclear-weapon countries. Meanwhile, the security concerns of non-nuclear-weapon states need to be addressed.

At present, it seems that India and Pakistan are intent on deploying nuclear weapons whether or not they are formally recognized as nuclear-weapon states under the NPT. Many have criticized as unrealistic the intention of the United States and other countries to roll back the proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia. The choice for the international community is either to redouble its efforts to contain the spread of nuclear weapons—or to abandon the nuclear non-proliferation regime as unworkable.

China has committed itself to the Comprehensive Test Ban and is not likely to resume nuclear tests for a long time. Nevertheless, China might continue the proliferation of nuclear technology and devices that are restricted by the NPT either intentionally or because of loopholes in its export-control system. China also is almost certain to delay joining the Missile Technology Control Regime.

To influence Chinese behavior in the future, U.S. policy makers should first put the Chinese situation in context: China's proliferation has been motivated primarily by its broader thinking on, among other issues, Taiwan, Japan, and the Persian Gulf. Taiwan is both a security concern and a matter of great political importance to China—a point often lost on those in Washington who miss the clear causal relationship between China's proliferation and U.S. arms sale to Taiwan.

The United States and China obviously have areas where their interests are in conflict—and areas where their interests overlap. The United States should continue to encourage China to abide by the regimes on test ban, nuclear export control, and pledges not to target nuclear weapons at each other, with appropriate inspection mechanisms wherever applicable.

Finally, the United States should develop a routine dialogue with China at the cabinet level—and higher—to improve mutual understanding and to reduce existing differences. Working together, the two countries can do much to repair the non-proliferation regime and to improve peace and stability in South Asia.