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We hoped that our Adelphi Paper might provoke exactly the kind of debate in which we are now engaged. For too long, those opposed to the project of abolishing nuclear weapons did not think it worth committing their arguments to paper. We therefore welcome Elbridge Colby's response. Our disagreement with him centres on two questions: why bother to pursue abolition at all? And, would 'world government' be necessary to ensure security in a world free of nuclear weapons?

We believe, as Colby correctly identifies, that in the long run it will be impossible to prevent proliferation without a serious commitment to disarmament. There is a broad consensus that the non-proliferation regime is, at best, in need of a serious overhaul and, at worst, in the process of collapsing. To this end, the United States and its friends have tried to enact new rules to prevent the spread of sensitive nuclear technology, argued for tougher sanctions on Iran and North Korea, advocated the strengthening of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and sought clarification of the conditions under which a state can withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These efforts have met with little success because a large number of non-nuclear weapon states - the vast majority of which are in compliance with their non-proliferation obligations - have declined to support them.

We posit in our Adelphi Paper that this lack of cooperation stems, in large part, from the failure of the nuclear-weapon states to live up to their obligation to work in good faith toward disarmament. In response, Colby first asks whether states really care about equity before arguing that, actually, because of extended deterrence the world is largely equitable anyway. This argument would find little traction in, say, Argentina, Brazil or South Africa - three leading non-nuclear weapon states whose support is vital to strengthening the non-proliferation regime. Each had a nuclear weapons programme - South Africa actually had the bomb - but decided to abandon it and join the Non-Proliferation Treaty. They, along with Egypt, Indonesia and several other 'middle powers,' increasingly feel they were mistaken to go along with the decision in 1995 to extend the NPT indefinitely because the nuclear weapon states display little serious intention to live up to disarmament pledges. It would be strained to suggest that these middle powers which increasingly resist new non-proliferation initiatives 'enjoy the benefits of nuclear weapons'

in the same way that Japan, Turkey or South Korea (and, of course, the nuclear-armed states themselves) do.

By abandoning nuclear weapons programmes, these states gave up more than the ability to deter. They deprived themselves of the status and political power that derive from nuclear weapons today. This self-abnegation looks increasingly self-impairing as the nuclear weapon states agree to extend special treatment to nuclear-armed India, for instance. Security obstacles to nuclear abolition are real, as we discuss extensively, but Colby is blind to the political hazard of allowing nuclear weapons to be sources of prestige. Only a commitment to abolition can devalue the political currency of nuclear weapons and thereby keep other states from trying to acquire their own.

To be clear: progress on disarmament is not necessary to justify the value of a strengthened non-proliferation regime, but, as a practical matter, diplomats are finding that it is necessary to achieve it. Christopher A. Ford, for instance, who served as the US special representative for nuclear non-proliferation during the Bush administration recently stated:

Clearly, in my view, they [non-proliferation and disarmament] are connected to the degree that there are those out there who will be more easily enticed into collaborative, cooperative work against would-be proliferators to the extent that they perceive there to be some hope of real movement on disarmament. It is safe to say, I think, that it has been harder as a matter of non-proliferation compliance diplomacy to elicit cooperative effort because there is this sort of leitmotif out there in certain circles that, in effect, the N5 [the five recognized nuclear-weapon states] don't really deserve our help in controlling proliferation because they're not doing what they ought to do. On any number of different levels I will fight that view on its merits; but silly or otherwise it's widely held; counterproductive and dangerous or otherwise it is widely held.<sup>1</sup>

As we say in the Adelphi Paper, the desirability of working in good faith towards the abolition of nuclear weapons does not necessarily make the end achievable. A central purpose of disarmament is to enhance global security. To this end, improved 'global governance' would be necessary for the safe elimination of nuclear weapons, as Colby correctly emphasizes. But that is not the same thing as 'global government.' A 'sovereign-like entity' with 'the power to make decisions about states' central security dispositions' is his creation, not ours. He frequently uses the pronoun 'it,' in reference to global government, as if we had invoked it. Yet, we envisioned no such thing.

A world free of nuclear weapons could only depend for stability and security on the alignment of interests between key states, not on the

*deus ex machina* of world government. Enforcing an abolition agreement would require a legitimate forum for states to decide collectively upon the response to breakout, but it would be the states themselves, not Colby's 'entity,' that marshaled the means to confront a violator. The efficacy of this process would depend on states regarding non-proliferation as a supreme priority (which they do not today) and acting accordingly, not on a solution being imposed on them from above.

States would also have to believe that they could protect their vital interests without nuclear weapons. Again, this would require not a 'sovereign-like entity' but, in Harald Müller's words, a 'great power concert.'<sup>2</sup> In such a model of international relations, states recognize that their security and prosperity is best served by respecting one another's core interests. It is a model that emphasizes dialogue and diplomacy. States do not need to eschew the use of force entirely but they do need to refrain from unilateral or unauthorized military interventions.

We certainly do not want to downplay the daunting challenge of reshaping international relations in this way. There is complete agreement between Colby and ourselves that one prerequisite would be to solve (or permanently stabilize) those territorial disputes that stimulate proliferation of nuclear weapons and threats to use them. However, we do not regard the aim as utopian. South America, for example (as Colby himself points out), is a continental nuclear weapon free zone. States there could produce nuclear weapons, but they have chosen instead to secure themselves without them, and without nuclear deterrence being extended by external powers.

Our Adelphi Paper argues that a minimum condition necessary to eliminate nuclear weapons from other continents and regions is strategic cooperation between the US, Russia, and China. These states would have to remove the threats that make nuclear weapons attractive to themselves and to others that have legitimately acquired them. For instance, concerns about the evolution of China's nuclear arsenal leads India (and hence Pakistan) to seek the means to augment fissile material production and keep open the option to conduct nuclear tests. Russia does not now contemplate reducing its nuclear arsenals to the low hundreds due to concerns about US conventional military power, ballistic missile defenses, and overall American strategic intentions - concerns that China also shares. Similarly, worries about Russian and Chinese intentions towards American allies make nuclear deterrence an attractive option for the US. Moreover, without strategic understanding amongst these three permanent members of the UN Security Council, the Council is unlikely to reliably enforce non-proliferation rules. This problem can be seen in the failure to halt Iran's nuclear programme, which in turn makes nu-

clear disarmament in the Middle East a more distant prospect. To summarize, most of the problems that make the abolition of nuclear weapons unfeasible today stem from the current divergence of US, Russian, and Chinese interests.

Several points contrary to Colby's discourse arise from this analysis. First, global government is irrelevant: the real challenge is for the three big nuclear weapon competitors to reorder their security relations in ways that could end their reliance on nuclear weapons, and then to build on their convergence to induce the other nuclear-armed states to follow suit.

Second, if these states move in this direction, they will not surrender national sovereignty, as Colby suggests. Rather, they will be making sovereign decisions to reassure each other and their neighbors that they will respect each other's territorial integrity and will only deploy military assets in non-threatening ways. This can be formalized in arms control and disarmament agreements, with the sort of verification and enforcement procedures we indicate. Such procedures may assign functions to international bodies - such as the International Atomic Energy Agency - but this is hardly revolutionary practice in international politics.

Finally, contrary to Colby's allusions, we do not predict that the many states whose cooperation would be necessary to make nuclear abolition feasible will actually take the necessary steps (although we urge them to do so). We merely try to identify some of those steps and invite serious international analysis and debate. We find nothing to fear in such debate, not least because we believe that states will not take the many sequential actions required to abolish nuclear weapons if they do not gain security along the way. ■

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Christopher A. Ford, 'Deterrence to (and Through) "Zero": Challenges of Disarmament and Proliferation' (speech to the Woodrow Wilson Center for International Scholars, Washington DC, 14 November 2008), <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=events.event—summary&event—id=487660> (accessed January 19, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Harald Müller, 'The Importance of Framework Conditions,' in *Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*, ed. George Perkovich and James M. Acton (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, forthcoming).