

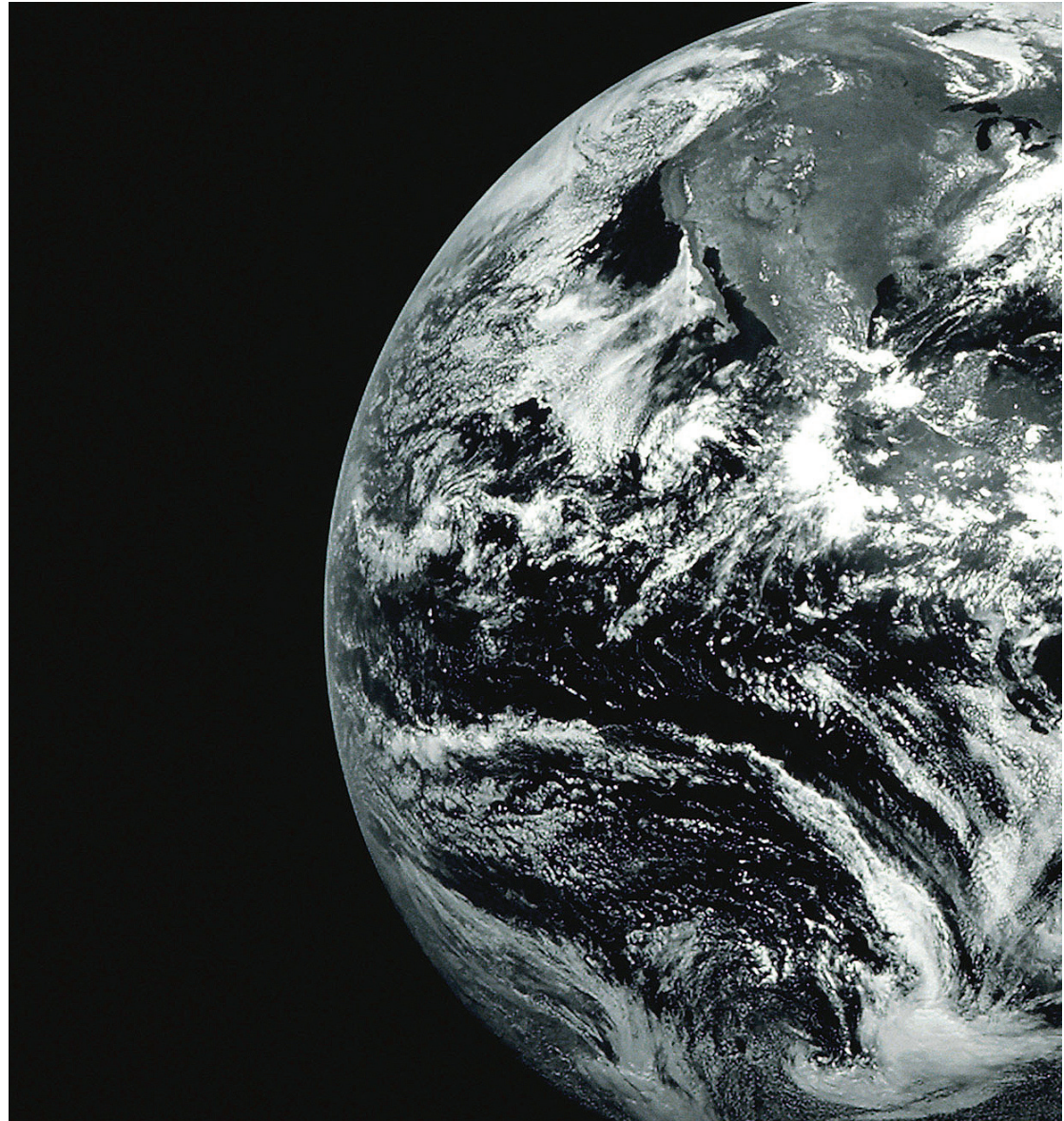
# A VIEW FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Jayantha Dhanapala explains why peaceful cooperation is vital for Planet Earth's future

The changing contours of global politics point irrefutably to a gradual shift from the dominance of the East-West security dimension in the Cold War era and immediately thereafter. Despite talk of a pivot to the Asia-Pacific region, the future is still unclear as the world continues to cope with the greatest recession since 1929 and as the Global South – powered by the economies of Brazil, India, China and South Africa – assumes a critical role in the global political and economic power configuration in an increasingly multipolar world.

And yet, as long as the most destructive weapon invented in history remains the only weapon of mass destruction that has not been outlawed, the lethal power of 19,000 nuclear warheads among nine countries will remain a Damocles Sword hanging over the very existence of humankind. The next stage in the implementation of the nuclear-weapon-free vision in President Barack Obama's 2009 Prague speech is expected by all, despite a deeply divided US Senate and a tougher Russian President to negotiate with.

A further US-Russian nuclear disarmament treaty to a bottom line of about 1,000 nuclear warheads each will have to be concluded, but the problem of US Ballistic Missile defence systems deployed in Europe (complicated by a controversial US National Academy of Sciences report) and of Russian



non-strategic nuclear weapons remain obstacles.

The Global South, consisting largely of non-aligned countries, is generally in favour of the elimination of nuclear weapons. And their approach is mirrored in the UN Secretary-General's five-point disarmament plan which includes the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

This is supported by a large number of non-governmental organisations and civil society focused on the humanitarian aspects of disarmament. The gradualist arms control approach of the major nuclear weapons states include mutually contradictory reductions in deployed weapons and expensive modernisation of nuclear

arsenals. This is predicated on the continued possession of nuclear weapons by nuclear weapons states as a guarantee of their monopoly.

The vital need then is to reduce the role of nuclear weapons until such time that we achieve nuclear disarmament. The nuclear postures of the US and Russia are critical. The 2010 United States

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Nuclear Posture Review says that nuclear weapons are necessary to deter only those states that possess nuclear weapons, or those that may be seeking such weapons in violation of their commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It leaves open a narrow window of possibility that the United States could initiate the use of nuclear weapons against those states in extreme circumstances, to deter or defeat non-

nuclear attacks against US allies and partners, as well as pre-empt them from using nuclear weapons.

According to its own 2010 military doctrine, the Russian Federation “reserves the right to utilise nuclear weapons in response to the utilisation of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and (or) its allies, and also in the event of aggression against the Russian Federation involving the use

of conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is under threat.”

As Hans Kristensen says: “The US must adjust its force structure to demonstrate that it intends to follow Russia, and avoid that the large US force structure and warhead upload capability deepen mistrust and drive worst-case planning, on the part of Russia and other adversaries.”

The return of Vladimir Putin to the helm in Moscow is

perceived in the West as a signal of a less flexible stance and the possibility that the Military-Industrial Complex in Russia may now be more influential. However, Russia’s nuclear arsenal is ageing and the huge cost of a build-up is self-evidently unfeasible. Making a virtue out of necessity, Russia would do well to agree to deep cuts while safeguarding its legitimate concerns over Ballistic Missile Defence

## DISARMAMENT AGENDA

(BMD) systems in Europe. In November 2012, a US report on Options for Implementing Additional Nuclear Force Reductions was submitted by the International Security Advisory Board chaired by former Defense Secretary William Perry, containing the following recommendations.

- Fast forward the implementation of New START reductions for completion prior to the 2015 NPT Review Conference. In addition, the US could remove from operational status all of the strategic nuclear weapons it would be reducing.
- Make progress on non-strategic weapons. The United States and Russia could lay the groundwork for reducing non-strategic nuclear weapons, thereby expediting the process for a future treaty. To make treaty negotiations easier, the US and Russia could work towards a shared definition of non-strategic nuclear weapons. The US should work closely with its allies on this issue.
- Implement mutual reductions below New START, including non-strategic weapons. The United States could communicate to Russia that it is prepared to go to

lower levels of nuclear weapons as a matter of national policy that is consistent with the strategy developed in the Nuclear Posture Review, if Russia is willing to reciprocate. The United States will have to address lingering concerns over asymmetries between the US and Russian stockpile composition, force structures and reconstitution capabilities, particularly considering the imbalance between the US and Russian non-strategic forces, which some believe will become more salient as strategic weapons are reduced.

It remains to be seen whether the Obama Administration will follow these guidelines and if Russia will reciprocate. A package which includes deep cuts in nuclear weapons, a compromise on BMD and an agreement on non-strategic nuclear weapons in Europe will have to be negotiated.

Speaking in Monterey in January, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said: "Over a half-century ago, President John F. Kennedy stood at the podium in the United Nations General Assembly and warned, 'every man, woman and child lives under a nuclear Sword of Damocles hanging by the

slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident, miscalculation or madness. The weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us.' The world was lucky that the nuclear arms build-up that followed did not result in a global nuclear catastrophe. Yet the nuclear sword remains, as does that slender thread. But so too does that plea for abolition – an appeal rooted in the threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and the unrestrained global competition for more potent weaponry. So I will add my own appeal to you. Focus your minds not on clever ways to strengthen the thread. Focus instead on how to remove the sword. This is the true challenge for disarmament and non-proliferation."

Apart from that main agenda, there is the ratification of the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (NTBT) by the US Senate, which Obama has pledged to deliver. The politics in the Senate will make this tough, unless Obama is more persuasive. If the US ratifies the NTBT, the other outliers will inevitably follow suit and a long-standing goal of a permanent end to nuclear testing will be achieved.

The failure to hold the Middle East WMD-free Zone talks in December was a great

disappointment. Unless these talks are held soon, the 2015 NPT Review Conference is doomed to fail jeopardising the viability of the NPT. The problems of the Iranian nuclear programme and North Korea's nuclear weapons need to be addressed diplomatically. This requires the cooperation of the key players including the P5 (the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council) and the EU. The conference on disarmament is unlikely to agree on starting work on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. The challenge is for the concerned states to work on this and bring a negotiated treaty to the UN General Assembly.

Other conventional disarmament steps require multilateral cooperation. This month, talks on the Arms Trade Treaty will resume with a new chairman, and Obama must resist the pressures of his notorious gun lobby and go ahead to conclude a treaty. The Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty also needs reviewing, and it is in the mutual interest of the US and Russia to begin this early.

The world is on the cusp of a new era when peaceful cooperation is vital if we are to forge ahead. The next steps in global disarmament are a priority in this journey.



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