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POLCC410 (GLOBAL POLITICS)

SEMESTER IV

Nuclear Proliferation

Introduction

Nuclear weapons are still the most potent military tools on earth and hence a race among the countries of the world to acquire, maintain and upgrade their nuclear arsenals and is the most prominent reason for nuclear proliferation. However the most interesting thing about nuclear weapons is that it is a weapon of deterrence rather than a weapon of demonstration. Deterrence is a specific type of relationship in which an actor- a state, group or an individual seeks to influence the behaviour of another in desired directions resting primarily upon threats of sanctions or deprivations, an attempt to indicate to an opponent that the costs of an action by him far outweighs benefits (Rajamohan 1986). But the cost-benefit calculation is based on the perception of the state actor which need not always be accurate which is the reason why one can't say with certainty that nuclear weapon will always remain an instrument of deterrence. In another words it means that a weaker state will be tempted to use its nuclear weapon first lest it loose the chances of using it forever if its calculation goes wrong. This raises another question as to how many nuclear arsenals a state requires to survive a nuclear attack and still be in a position to inflict nuclear attack which means that nuclear deterrence rests on nuclear superiority which is dangerous for peace as it increases the risk of nuclear war. Another question which gain significance in the nuclear proliferation discourse is the status of non-nuclear states vis a vis nuclear states as the question of the benefits of first strike and second strike capability doesn't apply to them. It is this advantage which the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) have over the Non-Nuclear Weapon states (NNWS) which forces nuclear weapon states to deny the NNWS access to nuclear technology.

Evolution of Nuclear Weapons

During the Second World War in 1942 United States and its allies started the Manhattan Project to manufacture nuclear weapon in the fear that if they do not initiate their enemies would take the lead. America was the first to make atom bomb in 1945 and also use it the same year on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. USSR was the second to test the nuclear weapons in 1949 followed by Britain in 1952, France in 1960 and China in 1964. These five constituted the Group of Five (G-5) who possessed the nuclear weapons. The victory of USA and its allies in the Second World War following the use of atom bomb by US made other states seek nuclear weapons as guarantee of protecting national interest. But victory in conventional warfare is not the sole reason why states want nuclear weapons because it is unlikely that they could be used as an instrument of direct warfare without destroying the mankind in whole. The question then is why states seek nuclear weapons?

Why the states go nuclear:

In general, analysts proffer four arguments about proliferation of nuclear weapons. They are: (1) **Security concerns:** The first posits that security concerns directly related to state's physical security and survival might drive a state to acquire nuclear weapons. A state, when operating in an environment of anarchy and acute security dilemmas, remains very concerned about national security and survival. Depending on the intensity of security dilemmas, states often resort to developing lethal military forces, including, in some instances, nuclear weapons. For example, the 'first generation' nuclear powers (the USA, the USSR, the UK, China) and the 'second generation' nuclear powers (India, Pakistan, Israel etc.) acquired nuclear weapons because they faced acute security threat from a strategic adversary (Chakma 2005: 189-190).

(2) **Prestige:** The second argument holds that nuclear weapons act as a symbol of prestige for a nation, which tempts a state to build a nuclear arsenal. Building of nuclear weapons, according to this view, bestows great power status or international recognition upon a state. Such status may result from the military power nuclear weapons inherently add, from scientific and industrial strength associated with nuclear forces and from the increased great power attention that nuclear or 'threshold' nuclear states may receive. Britain, France and India are often cited as examples where prestige was an important factor behind their decisions to acquire nuclear weapons.

(3) **Technological imperatives:** Thirdly a state's decision to acquire nuclear weapons is an inevitable outcome of logical momentum created by nuclear research and development programmes and

(4) **Domestic politics:** A fourth argument holds that intra-bureaucratic politics as well as politicians' drive to score domestic political points may lead a state to the nuclear path. According to this perspective bureaucrats acting on the basis of their own individual policy preferences or bureaucracies carrying out their specific institutional interests attempt to influence states' decisions to acquire nuclear weapons. Homi Bhabha in the case of India, and Pierre Taranger in the case of France are often cited as examples of bureaucrats who had played pivotal roles in the proliferation of decisions in their particular countries.

One or a combination of the factors cited above might be responsible for desire among states to go nuclear. Whatever might be the reason but one thing is sure that Nuclear proliferation is likely to be accompanied by fairly intense qualitative and quantitative regional nuclear arms race. There is no reason to believe that major countries in the Middle East, South Asia and the Persian Gulf would accept second-class non-nuclear status vis-à-vis their regional opponents (Dunn)

Nuclear non-proliferation:

Whatever might be the reason for the genesis of nuclear arsenals in the world, one thing is clear that they are the most potent threat to mankind. No matter which country use it the first or second, it would doom the world to devastation. The risks from the nuclear weapons is from its use by the state actors accidentally or deliberately as the last policy option available but is more from its reaching into the hands of the terrorists. The risk is grave and hence the need to take efforts to prevent nuclear weapons from proliferating.

Back in 1963 when President John Kennedy had fretted that 20 to 30 states would build nuclear weapon by the 1970s but today only four countries apart from India, Pakistan and Israel cause proliferation alarm Iran (whose technical capabilities are growing but remain limited), Iraq (whose programme was destroyed), Libya (whose capacities are insignificant) and North Korea (whose programme is frozen, for now) (Perkovich 1998). So as now apart from P 5 states and 3 states outside P 5, no other states possess nuclear weapon. When India and Pakistan tested their nuclear weapons it was felt that it would herald a nuclear arms race in the region but that didn't take place because nuclear capability didn't change the economic

and political problems of India and Pakistan. Also both the countries till date have kept their nuclear arsenals well-guarded. The need is to limit it to this level.

The danger of nuclear proliferation is not from the present nuclear weapon states but from the international community losing interest in the idea of nuclear non -proliferation regime. It was with this intention that the nuclear non-proliferation Treaty was mooted. The essential non-proliferation obligations as contained in the various articles of NPT are (Goldblat 2002):

- A nuclear-weapon state was defined as one that had exploded a nuclear explosive device prior to 1 January 1967.
- Research relevant to nuclear weapons and their components is not explicitly prohibited.
- The nuclear-weapon states have undertaken not to transfer 'to any recipient whatsoever' nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over them, and not in any way to 'assist, encourage, or induce' any non-nuclear-weapon state to manufacture or acquire such weapons or devices. The non-nuclear-weapon states have pledged not to receive nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over them, as well as not to manufacture them or receive assistance in their manufacture.
- Another deficiency is the lack of an explicit ban on the provision of assistance in the manufacture of nuclear weapons by the non-nuclear-weapon parties to the NPT to non-nuclear-weapon states not party to the NPT. This omission, if taken advantage of, could enhance proliferation. However, as early as 1968, the Soviet Union and the United States, the powers responsible for the formulation of the relevant clauses of the NPT, expressed the opinion that such assistance would constitute a violation of the Treaty. This interpretation appears to have been accepted by all parties.
- In the process of ratification of the NPT by the US Congress, the US government made a declaration of interpretation, according to which the Treaty would cease to be valid in time of war. This so-called 'war reservation' is highly controversial, as it contradicts the essential provisions of the NPT. It should, however, stand to reason that an arms control treaty that imposes restrictions on the possession of a certain type of weapon with a view to minimizing the risk of its use must remain in force during armed conflict, even if the verification and certain other provisions of the treaty have ceased to function. The NPT clearly belongs to this category of treaties.

- Should a non-nuclear-weapon state decide to produce a nuclear weapon, it would need the requisite quantity of weapon-grade fissile material. The availability of this material is of crucial significance; hence the need for international control. The verification functions are performed by the IAEA, which is an autonomous intergovernmental organization founded in 1957 to promote peaceful uses of nuclear energy.
- The NPT affirms the right of the parties to develop and use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.
- While initially the Treaty was concluded for a period of 25 years but on 11th May 1995 the parties decided unanimously to continue the treaty indefinitely.

Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which was signed on 1st July 1968 and remained in force till 1970 was unique in the sense that it prohibits possession of the most destructive weapons yet invented by an overwhelming majority of states while tolerating possession of the same weapons for an undefined period by a handful of states. In addition to retaining their nuclear arsenals, the Nuclear Weapon Powers are free to assist each other in developing nuclear warheads and testing them, to receive from any state the material necessary to pursue their nuclear weapon programmes, to deploy nuclear weapons on the territories of other states and to decide by themselves whether and to what extent accept international controls over their peaceful nuclear activities (Goldblat 2002). Most of the 188 signatories are small weak countries that never had any intention of developing nuclear weapons and signed mainly to please bigger powers on which they were dependent for aid and trade.

The NPT is a complex bargain that discriminates between the have and have not countries. The have not nations have agreed not to receive nuclear weapons, their components or relevant information, whereas the Nuclear Weapon states have agreed not to furnish these items. In order to decrease the discriminatory nature of the agreement, the nations' possessing nuclear weapons are obligated to assist other nations in the peaceful applications of nuclear energy. And, most important of all, the nuclear weapons have agreed to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in international relations and to work in good faith towards their elimination.

Conclusion:

Thus one finds that while world agrees to the notion of a nuclear disarmament, the NPT fails to create equality between the NPS and NNWP. Till the NWP enforce the terms of treaty

honestly and try to address the inequities inherent in the Treaty, proliferation will pose a question. One needs to understand that possession of nuclear weapon don't ensure safety of the boundaries but definitely enhance the risk of destruction. A nuclear free world is the only answer to safety of the humanity and one needs to pursue it honestly.

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