

BEYOND NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

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The Two Koreas: Between Economic Success and Nuclear Threat

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Growing Support For Moving Away From Nuclear Weapons

GENEVA – Ahead of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) scheduled for April 27 to May 22, 2015 in New York, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) has expressed a clear vision for the future of nuclear disarmament. ➡ Pages 5-6-7



Israel's Obsession for Monopoly on Middle East Nuclear Power

UNITED NATIONS - As the Iranian nuclear talks hurtle towards a Mar. 24 deadline, there is renewed debate among activists about the blatant Western double standards underlying the politically-heated issue, and more importantly, the resurrection of a longstanding proposal for a Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction (WMD). ➡ Pages 8-9-10-11

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UNITED NATIONS - A lawsuit by the Marshall Islands accusing the United States of failing to begin negotiations for nuclear disarmament has been thrown out of an American court. ➡ Pages 12-13-14

What Others Say

U.S. and Russia Once Again Ramping Up Nuclear Arms Race

By LAWRENCE S. WITTNER

A quarter-century after the end of the Cold War and decades after signing landmark nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements, are the U.S. and Russian governments once more engaged in a potentially disastrous nuclear arms race with one another? It certainly looks like it. ➡ Pages 15-16

Obama's Trillion Dollar Nuclear Weapons Gamble

By STEPHEN YOUNG | Senior Analyst at Union of Concerned Scientists

President Barack Obama will propose spending cuts for many federal programs in the 2016 budget request he'll send to Congress on Monday, but not for nuclear weapons. Quite the contrary, Obama's administration is proposing to go on a nuclear weapons spending spree. This is an expensive and profound mistake, and one that ignores the limited contribution that nuclear weapons make to U.S. security. ➡ Pages 17-18

Civil Society Perspective

Nuclear Nations in the Dock

By SUE WAREHAM

A little known court case initiated by an inconspicuous Pacific Island state might not seem very newsworthy, but when there's a David and Goliath element involving some of the world's most powerful nations, with implications for Australia, we should take notice. ➡ Pages 19-20

Largest NATO Expansion Since Cold War 'Inflammatory and Destabilising' - CND ➡ Page 20

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The Two Koreas: Between Economic Success and Nuclear Threat

By AHN MI YOUNG



SEOUL (IPS) - The two Koreas are an odd match – both are talking about possible dialogue but both have different ideas of the conditions, and that difference comes from the 62-year-old division following the 1950-53 Korean War.

During this time, North Korea has become a nuclear threat – estimated to possess up to ten nuclear weapons out of the 16,300 worldwide (compared with Russia's 8,000 and the 7,300 in the United States) according to the Ploughshares Fund's [report](#) on world nuclear stockpiles – and South Korea has become the world's major economic success story.

In a national broadcast on Jan. 16, South Korean president Park Geun Hye presented her vision for reunification by using the Korean word '*daebak*' (meaning 'great success' or 'jackpot'). "If the two Koreas are united, the reunited Korea will be a *daebak* not only for Korea but also for the whole world," she said.

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Since she became leader of the South Korea's conservative ruling party in 2013, Park has been referring to a new world that would come from a unified Korea. Her argument has been that if the two Koreas are reunited, the world could be politically less dangerous – free from the North Korea's nuclear threat – and a united Korea could be economically more prosperous by combining the South's economic and cultural power and the North's natural resources and discipline. ☺

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Denuclearisation has been set as a key condition for *daebak* to come about. At a Feb. 9 forum with high-ranking South Korean officials, President Park said that “North Korea should show sincerity in denuclearisation efforts if it is to successfully lead its on-going economic projects. No matter how good are the programmes we may have in order to help North Korea, we cannot do so as long as North Korea does not give up its nuclear programme.”

However, observers have said North Korea has no reason to give up its nuclear weapons as long as it depends on its nuclear capability as a bargaining chip for political survival. “Nuclear capabilities are the North’s only military leverage to maintain its regime as it confronts the South’s economic power,” said Moon Sung Muk of the Korea Research Institute of Strategies (KRIS).

In fact, there are few signs of changes. North Korea has conducted a series of rocket launches, as well as three nuclear tests – all in defiance of the U.S. sanctions that are partially drying up channels for North Korea’s weapons trade.

Amid recent escalating tension between Washington and Pyongyang over additional sanctions, activities at the 5-megawatt Yongbyon reactor in North Korea which produces nuclear bomb fuel are being closely watched to monitor whether the North may restart the reactor.

In the meantime, South Korea has been denying the official supply of food and fertilisers to North Korea under the South Korean conservative regimes that started in 2008. During the liberal regime of 2004-2007, South Korea was the biggest donor of food and fertilisers to North Korea.

Then there appeared to be a glimmer of hope when North Korea’s enigmatic young leader Kim Jong Un presented a rare gesture of reconciliation towa-

ards South Korea in his 2015 New Year’s speech broadcast on Korean Central Television on Jan. 1.

“North and South should no longer waste time and efforts in (trying to resolve) meaningless disputes and insignificant problems,” he said. “Instead, we both should write a new history of both Koreas ... There should be dialogue between two Koreas so that we can re-bridge the bond that was cut off and bring about breakthrough changes.”

In his speech, the North Korean leader even went as far as suggesting a ‘highest-level meeting’ with the South Korean president. “If the South is in a position to improve inter-Korean relations through dialogue, we can resume high-level contacts. Also, depending on some circumstances and atmospheres, there is no reason we cannot have the highest-level meeting (with the South).”

In South Korea, hopes for possible inter-Korean talks have been subdued. “What North Korea wants from dialogue with the South is not to talk about nuclear or human rights, but to have the South resume economic aid,” said Lee Yun Gol, director of the state-run North Korea Strategic Information Centre (NKSIS).

The government in Seoul remains cautious about Pyongyang’s peace initiatives. “We are seeing little hope for any rosy future in inter-Korean relationships in the near future, although we are working on how to prepare for the vision of ‘*daebak*’,” said Ryu Gil Jae, South Korean reunification minister, in a Feb. 4 press conference.

North Korean observers have said that economic difficulties have been pushing the North Korean government to relax its tight state control over farm private ownership. North Korean farmers can now sell some of their products in markets nationwide, in a gradual shift towards privatised markets. ☺

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Further, according to Chinese diplomatic academic publication ‘Segye Jisik’ (세계 지식), quoted by the South Korean news agency Yonhap News, the North Korean economy has improved since its new leader took office in 2012. From a 1.08 million ton deficit in stocks to feed the 20 million North Koreans in 2011, the deficit now stands at 340,000 tons.

According to observers, this report, if true, could send the signal that if North Korea is economically better off, it may be politically willing to reduce its dependence on the nuclear card in any bargaining process with South Korea.

U.S. sanctions have been used in the attempt to force North Korea to denuclearise, thus restricting North Korea’s trade, and the U.S. government levied new sanctions against North Korea on Jan. 2 this year in response to a cyberattack against Sony Pictures Entertainment. The FBI accused North Korea of the attack in apparent retaliation for the film, *The Interview*, a comedy about the assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

But, while sanctions may work in troubling ordinary North Koreans concerned with meeting basic

food needs, they have little impact on the North Korean government. “North Korea’s trade with China has become more prosperous and most of North Korea’s deals with foreign partners are behind-the-scene deals,” said Hong Hyun Ik, senior researcher at the Sejong Research Institute.

And, in response to the threat that it may be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC), on the basis of U.N. findings on human rights, Kim Jong Un reiterated: “Our thought and regime will never be shaken.”

South Korea may now stand as the only hope for North Korea, as the United States and the United Nations gather to turn tough against the country over the human rights issue, and South Korea may find itself faced with a ‘two-track’ diplomacy between the hard-liner United States and its sympathy for the North Korean people.

In past decades, North Korea has usually played out a game with the United States and South Korea. “In recent year, the United States has been using ‘stick diplomacy’ against the North Korea, while South Korea may want to shift to ‘carrot diplomacy’,” said Moon Sung Muk of the Korea Research Institute of Strategies (KRIS).

“The Seoul government knows that the pace of getting closer to the North should be constrained by U.N. or U.S. moves,” Moon added. (IPS | 18 February 2015) ❖

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Growing Support For Moving Away From Nuclear Weapons

By JAMSHED BARUAH



CELAC Meeting in San José | Credit: ICAN

GENEVA (IDN) - Ahead of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) scheduled for April 27 to May 22, 2015 in New York, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) has expressed a clear vision for the future of nuclear disarmament

The 33-member CELAC formally endorsed at its third annual summit in San José on January 28-29 the 'Austrian Pledge' delivered at the close of the Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons (HINW) last December in Vienna.

The Austrian Pledge, delivered by Secretary-General of Austria's Foreign Ministry Michael Linhart on December 9, 2014 explained that the facts and findings of the Vienna Conference – as

well as previous HINW conferences held in [Oslo](#), Norway, on March 4-5, 2013 and [Nayarit](#), Mexico, on February 13-14, 2014 – had shown that more diplomatic action was needed.

The Austrian Pledge recognised the existence of a "legal gap" in the international framework regulating nuclear weapons and called on all states to join in efforts to fill this legal gap by pursuing measures, which would stigmatise, prohibit and lead to the elimination of nuclear weapons. ➡

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While delivering the Austrian Pledge, Linhart also called on “nuclear weapons possessor states” to take “concrete interim measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons detonations, including reducing the operational status of nuclear weapons and moving nuclear weapons away from deployment into storage, diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in military doctrines, and rapid reductions of all types of nuclear weapons.”

The heads of state of CELAC countries issued a declaration at their third annual summit on January 28-29 in San José, Costa Rica, fully supporting the outcomes of the Vienna conference. In doing so, CELAC became the first regional group of states to recognise that a treaty banning nuclear weapons is the best option to fill the legal gap:

“As has been demonstrated by the testimonies of survivors and evidence and scientific data, nuclear weapons constitute a serious threat to security, development of peoples and civilization in general. Being consistent with our declarations, in this purpose we reiterate our strong support to call made in Vienna and Nayarit to initiate a diplomatic negotiation process of an internationally legally binding instrument for the prohibition nuclear weapons.”

Commenting the San José declaration, Carlos Umaña of the Costa Rican branch of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) said:

“With the CELAC Declaration, Latin American and Caribbean states have recognised they intend to remain at the forefront of efforts which bring us closer to a world without nuclear weapons. The Treaty of Tlatelolco, which established a nuclear weapons free zone across the region, was the first multilateral treaty to prohibit nuclear weapons in a region — now Latin American and Caribbean states intend to work to promote a simi-

lar process that bans nuclear weapons internationally.”

According to the [Ploughshares Fund](#), Russia, United States, France, China, Britain (five permanent members of the UN Security Council) and Pakistan, India, Israel and North Korea possess a total of 16,300 nuclear weapons.

“Of these, around 4,100 warheads are considered operational, of which about 1,800 US and Russian warheads are on [high alert](#), ready for use on short notice,” says the [Federation of American Scientists](#).

While the few nuclear-armed states have dominated the discussions on atomic weapons for decades, the humanitarian initiative on nuclear weapons has prompted a fundamental change in this conversation, with non-nuclear armed states leading the way in a discussion on the actual effects of the weapons, notes the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons ([ICAN](#))

“The Austrian Pledge is a rallying call for states to demand action to fill an unacceptable legal gap. The momentum generated by the humanitarian initiative is paving the way for the commencement of a process to ban nuclear weapons. CELAC states have added their voices to the call. We expect other regions to do the same,” says Daniel Högsta of ICAN.

Growing support in Britain

There are indications of growing support for banning the bomb in Britain too. ICAN UK and the All Party Group on Weapons and the Protection of Civilians discussed in a parliamentary briefing on January 21 the implications for the UK’s own nuclear weapons. ☞

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The meeting came just a day after a parliamentary debate on the renewal of Trident. During the debate, called by the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party, many members of parliament (MPs) pointed to the catastrophic risk of nuclear weapons due to intentional and accidental detonation.

The Labour Party's Katy Clarke noted that the abandonment of Trident would not only be a significant symbolic step towards nuclear disarmament, but would also have a significant impact internationally.

Another Labour Party MP Paul Flynn pointed out that the continued possession of nuclear weapons by certain states also tacitly encourages other states to maintain and develop their own, thereby actively thwarting disarmament efforts.

Other speakers during the debate also noted that, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, the UK has an obligation to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith, and this obligation should be met by a nuclear weapons ban. "It is high time the Government stated their support for a new legal instrument prohibiting nuclear weapons that would complement our disarmament commitment under Article 6 of the non-proliferation treaty", said Scottish National Party MP Angus Robertson.

Many at the meeting agreed that now – after the Vienna Conference and before the NPT Review at the UN headquarters in New York – is the time to push through the agenda.

Article VI of the 1970 NPT obliges all Parties to the Treaty to undertake "to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control". This is the world's only legally binding obligation on Nuclear Weapons States to reduce and ultimately eliminate their nuclear weapons. At the 2000 NPT Review Conference, State Parties to the Treaty agreed on "[13 practical steps](#)" to meet their disarmament commitments.

These include entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), moratorium on nuclear-weapon test explosions pending the CTBT taking effect, and negotiating in the Conference on Disarmament (CD) a non-discriminatory, multilateral and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty (FMCT) within five years. FMCT would prohibit the production of the two main components of nuclear weapons: highly-enriched uranium (HEU), and plutonium. [IDN-InDepthNews – February 14, 2015] ❖

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Israel's Obsession for Monopoly on Middle East Nuclear Power

By THALIF DEEN

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - As the Iranian nuclear talks hurtle towards a Mar. 24 deadline, there is renewed debate among activists about the blatant Western double standards underlying the politically-heated issue, and more importantly, the resurrection of a longstanding proposal for a Middle East free from weapons of mass destruction (WMD).



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (left) jointly addresses journalists with Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, in Jerusalem, on Oct. 13, 2014. Credit: UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Asked about the Israeli obsession to prevent neighbours – first and foremost Iran, but also Saudi Arabia and Egypt – from going nuclear, Hillel Schenker, co-editor of the Jerusalem-based Palestine-Israel Journal, told IPS, “This is primarily the work of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has built his political career on fanning the flames of fear, and saying that Israel has to stand pat, with a strong leader [him] to withstand the challenges.” ☞

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And this is the primary motivation for his upcoming and very controversial partisan speech before the U.S. Congress on the eve of the Israeli elections, which has aroused a tremendous amount of opposition in Israel, in the American Jewish community and in the U.S. in general, he pointed out.

Iran, which has consistently denied any plans to acquire nuclear weapons, will continue its final round of talks involving Germany and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council: the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia (collectively known as P-5, plus one).

Last week, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani asked the United States and Israel, both armed with nuclear weapons, a rhetorical question tinged with sarcasm: “Have you managed to bring about security for yourselves with your atomic bombs?”

The New York Times quoted the Washington-based Arms Control Association as saying Israel is believed to have 100 to 200 nuclear warheads.

The Israelis, as a longstanding policy, have neither confirmed nor denied the nuclear arsenal. But both the United States and Israel have been dragging their feet over the proposal for a nuclear-free Middle East.

Bob Rigg, a former senior editor with the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) (OPCW), told IPS the U.S. government conveniently ignores its own successive National Intelligence Estimates, which represent the consensus views of all 13 or so U.S. intelligence agencies, that there has been no evidence, in the period since 2004, of any Iranian intention to acquire nuclear weapons.

“If Israel is the only nuclear possessor in the Middle East, this combined with the U.S nuclear and conventional capability, gives the U.S. and Israel

an enormously powerful strategic lever in the region,” Rigg said. He said this is even more realistic, especially now that Syria’s chemical weapons (CW) have been destroyed. They were the only real threat to Israel in the region.

“This dimension of the destruction of Syria’s CW has gone strangely unnoticed. Syria had Russian-made missiles that could have targeted population centres right throughout Israel,” said Rigg, a former chair of the New Zealand Consultative Committee on Disarmament.

A question being asked by military analysts is: why is Israel, armed with both nuclear weapons and also some of the most sophisticated conventional arms from the United States, fearful of any neighbour with WMDs?

Will a possibly nuclear-armed Iran, or for that matter Saudi Arabia or Egypt, risk using nuclear weapons against Israel since it would also exterminate the Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied territories? ask nuclear activists.

Schenker told IPS: “I believe that if Iran were to opt for nuclear weapons, the primary motivation would be to defend the regime, not to attack Israel. Still, it is preferable that they not gain nuclear weapons.”

Of course, he said, the fundamental solution to this danger would be the creation of a Weapons of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Middle East.

That will require a two-track parallel process: One track moving towards a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the other track moving towards the creation of a regional regime of peace and security, with the aid of the Arab Peace Initiative (API), within which a WMD Free Zone would be a major component, said Schenker, a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament. ☺

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As for the international conference on a nuclear and WMD free zone before the next NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) Review Conference, scheduled to begin at the end of April in New York, he said, the proposal is still alive.

In mid-March, the Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East initiative will convene a conference in Berlin, whose theme is “Fulfilling the Mandate of the Helsinki Conference in View of the 2015 NPT Review Conference”.

It will include a session on the topic featuring Finnish Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, the facilitator of the conference, together with governmental representatives from Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Germany.

There will also be an Iranian participant at the conference, said Schenker.

Rigg told IPS Israel’s first Prime Minister Ben Gurion wanted nuclear weapons from the outset. Israel was approved by the new United Nations, which then had only 55 or so members. Most of the developing world was still recovering from World War II and many new states had yet to emerge.

He said the United States and the Western powers played the key role in setting up the U.N. “They wanted an Israel, even though Israeli terrorists

murdered Count Folke Berdadotte of Sweden, the U.N. representative who was suspected of being favourable to the Palestinians,” Rigg said.

The Palestinians were consulted, and said no, but were ignored, he said. Only two Arab states were then U.N. members. They were also ignored. Most of today’s Muslim states either did not exist or were also ignored.

“When the U.N. approved Israel, Arab states attacked, but were beaten off. They did not want an Israel to be transplanted into their midst. They still don’t. Nothing has changed.”

Given the unrelenting hostility of the Arab states to the Western creation of Israel, he said, Israel developed nuclear weapons to give itself a greater sense of security.

“If Israel lost its regional monopoly on nuclear weapons, it would be vulnerable. So the U.S. goes all out to block nuclear weapons – except for Israel,” he added. Not even Israel argues that Iran has nuclear weapons now.

“A NW free zone in the Middle East is simply a joke. If Israel joined the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), it would have to declare and destroy its nuclear arsenal.”

The U.S. finds excuses to avoid prodding Israel into joining the NPT. The U.S. is effectively for nuclear proliferation in the Middle East, but successive U.S. presidents have refused to publicly say that Israel has nuclear weapons, he added.

Because of all this, a NWF zone in the ME is not a real possibility, even if U.S. President Barack Obama and Netanyahu are at each other’s throats, said Rigg. ☺

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Schenker said Netanyahu's comments come at a time when the 22-member League of Arab States, backed by the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have, since 2002, presented Israel an Arab Peace Initiative (API).

The API offers peace and normal relations in exchange for the end of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and an agreed upon solution to the refugee problem.

This doesn't mean that the danger of nuclear proliferation isn't a problem in the Middle East, said Schenker. "As long as Israel has retained a monopoly on nuclear weapons, and promised to

use them only as a last resort, everyone seemed to live with the situation."

The challenge of a potential Iranian nuclear weapons programme would break that status quo, and create the danger of a regional nuclear arms race, he noted. Unfortunately, the global community is very occupied with the challenge of other crises right now, such as Ukraine and the Islamic State.

"So it is to be hoped the necessary political attention will also be focused on the challenges connected to the upcoming NPT Review conference, and the need to make progress on the Middle Eastern WMD Free Zone track as well," he declared. (IPS | 13 February 2015) ❖

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Marshall Islands Nuclear Proliferation Case Thrown Out of U.S. Court

By JOHN BUTLER

UNITED NATIONS (IPS) - A lawsuit by the Marshall Islands accusing the United States of failing to begin negotiations for nuclear disarmament has been thrown out of an American court.

The Marshall Islands is currently pursuing actions against India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom in the International Court of Justice, for failing to negotiate nuclear disarmament as required in the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.



Mushroom cloud from the largest nuclear test the United States ever conducted, Castle Bravo.

Credit: Wikimedia Commons

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Action against the U.S. had been filed in a federal court in California, as the United States does not recognise the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ.

David Krieger, president of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation, said the U.S. conducted 67 nuclear weapons tests in the Marshall Islands between 1946 and 1958, the equivalent of 1.6 Hiroshima bombs detonating daily for 12 years.

Despite documented health effects still plaguing Marshallese islanders, U.S. Federal Court judge Jeffrey White dismissed the motion on Feb. 3, saying the harm caused by the U.S. flouting the NPT was “speculative.”

White also said the Marshall Islands lacked standing to bring the case, and that the court’s ruling was bound by the “political question doctrine” – that is, White ruled the question was a political one, not a legal one, and he therefore could not rule for the Marshalls.

Absurd

Krieger, whose Nuclear Age Peace Foundation supports Marshall Islands in its legal cases, called the decision “absurd.”

“I think it was an error in his decision. There were very good grounds to say the Marshall Islands had standing, and this shouldn’t have been considered a political question,” he told IPS.

“The Marshall Islands know very well what it means to have nuclear bombs dropped on a country. They’ve suffered greatly, it’s definitely not speculative.”

The foundation of the multiple cases brought by the Marshall Islands was that the U.S., and other nuclear powers, had not negotiated in good faith to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

White ruled it was “speculative” that the failure of the U.S. to negotiate nuclear non-proliferation was harmful. Krieger said the Marshalls would appeal the decision to the Ninth Circuit of Appeals. He said the decision set a troubling precedent regarding U.S. adherence to international agreements.

“The U.S. does not accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ, and in this case, the judge is saying another country does not have standing [in an American court]. In essence, it means any country that enters into a treaty with the U.S. should think twice,” he said.

“Another country will be subject to the same decision of the court. Where does that leave a country who believes the U.S. is not acting in accordance with a treaty?”

“By side-stepping the case on jurisdictional grounds, the U.S. is essentially saying they will do what they want, when they want, and it’s not up to the rest of the world whether they keep their obligations.”

Krieger said that the judge’s comments about the “speculative” nature of the case meant essentially that a nuclear accident or war would have to break out before such a case for damages could be heard.

“It’s saying a state must wait until some kind of nuclear event, before damages won’t be speculative,” he said. “It’s absurd that the claim that the U.S. has not fulfilled its obligations to negotiate in good faith to end the nuclear arms race, is called ‘speculative’ by the judge.”

Marshall Islands had intended to pursue all nine nuclear powers – the U.S., China, Russia, Pakistan, India, the U.K., France, North Korea and Israel – in the ICJ on their failure to negotiate for nuclear non-proliferation. ➡

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The Marshall Islands is still pursuing cases in the ICJ against Pakistan, India and the U.K., but John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, said the other cases had stalled as those nations did not accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the ICJ.

“The other six states, the Marshall Islands invited and urged them to come before the court voluntarily, which is a perfectly normal procedure, but none of them have done so,” Burroughs told IPS.

Burroughs, also a member of the international team in the ICJ, said China had explicitly said it would not appear before the court.

“Any of those countries could still agree to accept the court’s jurisdiction,” he said.

He said preliminary briefs had been filed in the India and Pakistan cases, with responses due by mid-2015. A brief will be served on the U.K. case in March.

Burroughs said he doubted the decision in U.S. federal court would impact the cases in The Hague. “I don’t see the decision having any effect at all,” he said. (IPS | 12 Feb 2015) ❖



US troops inspecting an enemy bunker, Kwajalein Atoll. 1944. | Credit: Wikimedia Commons

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What Others Say

U.S. and Russia Once Again Ramping Up Nuclear Arms Race

By LAWRENCE S. WITTNER*

A quarter-century after the end of the Cold War and decades after signing landmark nuclear arms control and disarmament agreements, are the U.S. and Russian governments once more engaged in a potentially disastrous nuclear arms race with one another? It certainly looks like it.

With approximately 15,000 nuclear weapons between them, the United States and Russia already possess about 93 percent of the world's nuclear arsenal, making them the world's nuclear hegemon. But, apparently, like great powers throughout history, they do not consider their vast military might sufficient, especially in the context of their growing international rivalry.

Although, in early 2009, President Barack Obama announced his "commitment to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons," the U.S. government today has moved well along toward implementing an administration plan for U.S. nuclear "modernization." This entails spending \$355 billion over a 10-year period for a massive renovation of U.S. nuclear weapons plants and laboratories. Moreover, the cost is scheduled to soar after this renovation, when an array of new nuclear weapons will be produced. "That's where all the big money is," noted Ashton Carter, recently nominated as U.S. secretary of defense. "By comparison, everything that we're doing now is cheap."

The Obama administration has asked the Pentagon to plan for 12 new nuclear missile-firing submarines, up to 100 new nuclear bombers and 400 land-based nuclear missiles. According to outside experts and a bipartisan, independent panel commissioned by Congress and the Defense Department, that will bring the total price tag for the U.S. nuclear weapons buildup to approximately \$1 trillion.

For its part, the Russian government seems determined to match — or surpass — that record. With President Vladimir Putin eager to use nuclear weapons as a symbol of Russian influence, Moscow is building, at great expense, new generations of giant ballistic missile submarines, as well as nuclear attack submarines that are reportedly equal or superior to their U.S. counterparts in performance and stealth. Armed with nuclear-capable cruise missiles, they periodically make forays across the Atlantic, heading for the U.S. coast. Deeply concerned about the potential of these missiles to level a surprise attack, the U.S. military has already launched the first of two experimental "blimps" over Washington, D.C., designed to help detect them.

The Obama administration also charges that Russian testing of a new medium-range cruise missile is a violation of the 1987 Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty. Although the Russian government denies the existence of the offending missile, its rhetoric has been less than diplomatic.

As the Ukraine crisis developed, Putin told a public audience that "Russia is one of the leading nuclear powers" and foreign nations "should understand it's best not to mess with us." Pravda was even more inflammatory. In an article published last November, "Russia prepares a nuclear surprise for NATO," it bragged about Russia's alleged superiority over the United States in nuclear weaponry. ☹

*Lawrence Wittner, syndicated by PeaceVoice, is professor of history emeritus at SUNY/Albany.

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Not surprisingly, the one nuclear disarmament agreement signed between the U.S. and Russian governments since 2003 — the New START treaty of 2011 — is being implemented remarkably slowly. New START, designed to reduce the number of deployed strategic nuclear weapons (the most powerful ones) in each country by 30 percent by 2018, has not led to substantial reductions in either nation's deployed nuclear arsenal.

Indeed, between March and October 2014, the two nations each increased their deployed nuclear forces. Also, they maintain large arsenals of nuclear weapons targeting one another, with about 1,800 of them on high alert, ready to be launched within minutes against the populations of both nations.

The souring of relations between the U.S. and Russian governments has been going on for years, but it has reached a very dangerous level during the current confrontation over Ukraine. In their dealings with this conflict-torn nation, there's plenty of fault on both sides.

U.S. officials should have recognized that any Russian government would have been angered by NATO's steady recruitment of East European countries — especially Ukraine, which had been united with Russia in the same nation until recently, was sharing a common border with Russia and was housing one of Russia's most important naval bases (in Crimea). For their part, Russian officials had no legal basis for seizing and annexing Crimea or aiding heavily armed separatists in the eastern portion of Ukraine.

Source:

http://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2015/02/opinion_us_and_russia_once_again_ramping_up_nuclear.html

However reckless the two nuclear behemoths have been, this does not mean they have to continue this behavior. Plenty of compromise formulas exist — for example, leaving Ukraine out of NATO, altering that country's structure to allow for a high degree of self-government in the war-torn east and organizing a U.N.-sponsored referendum in Crimea. And possibilities for compromise also exist in other areas of U.S.-Russian relations.

Failing to agree to a diplomatic settlement of these and other issues will do more than continue violent turmoil in Ukraine. Indeed, the disastrous, downhill slide of both the United States and Russia into a vastly expensive nuclear arms race will bankrupt them and, also, by providing an example of dependence on nuclear might, encourage the proliferation of nuclear weapons to additional nations.

After all, how can they succeed in getting other countries to forswear developing nuclear weapons when — 47 years after the U.S. and Soviet governments signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, in which they pledged their own nuclear disarmament — their successors are engaged in yet another nuclear arms race?

Finally, of course, this new arms race, unless checked, seems likely to lead, sooner or later, to a nuclear catastrophe of immense proportions.

Let's hope the U.S. and Russian governments calm down, settle their quarrels peacefully and return to a policy of nuclear disarmament. ❖

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What Others Say

Obama's Trillion Dollar Nuclear Weapons Gamble

By STEPHEN YOUNG | Senior Analyst at Union of Concerned Scientists

Why is the president is proposing a multi-billion dollar nuclear arsenal overhaul that is expensive, dangerous, and does nothing to make the United States safer?



A U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress from the 20th Expeditionary Bomb Squadron, Barksdale Air Force Base, La., flies a mission in support of Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2010 over the Pacific Ocean July 10, 2010.

President Barack Obama will propose spending cuts for many federal programs in the 2016 budget request he'll send to Congress on Monday, but not for nuclear weapons. Quite the contrary, Obama's administration is proposing to go on a nuclear weapons spending spree. This is an expensive and profound mistake, and one that ignores the limited contribution that nuclear weapons make to U.S. security.

The administration's costly plan proposes to rebuild the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal, including the warheads, and the missiles, planes and submarines that carry them. These plans will cost \$348 billion over the next 10 years, according to a Congressional Budget Office estimate released last week. The National Defense Panel, appointed by Congress, found that the price tag over 30 years could be as much as a \$1 trillion.

What will taxpayers get for that money? Not much. Nuclear weapons do precious little to address the real threats we and our allies face today, and do nothing to address the threat of terrorism. Nothing to counter Islamic State forces in Iraq and Syria. Nothing to counteract the growing risk of cyber attack. ☹

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And, while recognizing the very problematic behavior of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the truth is U.S. nuclear forces did not stop the Russian military from invading Ukraine either.

Spending more money on nuclear weapons would not turn them back. The conventional forces that the United States and its allies have at their disposal are more than sufficient to respond to any Russian provocation, should policy makers decide to use them.

This is not to say U.S. nuclear weapons have no role. Their job is to deter a nuclear attack on us and our allies. Today, the United States has some 2,000 deployed nuclear weapons and more than that in reserve.

The New START agreement with Russia will reduce the number of long-range warheads each country deploys to 1,550 by 2018. Yet the U.S. military has already concluded that the United States does not need more than 1,000 such weapons.

In fact, the United States could maintain a fully capable deterrent without the unnecessary and redundant weapons or spending. No current or conceivable future threat requires the United States to maintain more than a few hundred survivable warheads. As a first step in this direction, the Obama administration should limit its total nuclear arsenal to 1,000 weapons, including both long- and short-range weapons, deployed and reserve.

Not only would reducing our bloated arsenal save U.S. taxpayers hundreds of billions of dollars, it

would make us safer. Nuclear weapons are the only threat to the survival of the United States. By reducing the role they play in global affairs, we increase our security. Specifically, U.S. reductions also enhance our efforts to eliminate North Korea's limited arsenal, head off potential increases in China's stockpile and limit Iran's potential program.

As they have in the past, U.S. cuts could prompt Russia to reduce its stockpile, particularly as the tumbling price of oil wreaks havoc on its economy. Even Putin's decision to end cooperative programs to lock down Russian nuclear material and U.S. statements that Russia has violated the Intermediate Forces Treaty do not rule out such an outcome.

The Obama administration plans to develop and build new kinds of warheads rather than refurbish and rebuild the ones we already have. Again, not only is this an unnecessary expense, it undermines national security. The United States can maintain an effective and reliable arsenal at a reasonable cost, for as long as needed.

But spending money on new types of warheads undermines efforts to stop additional countries from pursuing these weapons. Rather than an asset that increases national security, nuclear weapons are now our greatest security liability.

It is too late to improve this budget request. And sadly, this Congress is unlikely to make sensible changes to it. But as the limited value of nuclear weapons becomes clearer, smarter budgeting will involve budgets with smaller, more reasonable investments in our nuclear arsenal. ❖

Source:

<http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/02/obamas-trillion-dollar-nuclear-weapons-gamble/104217/>

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Civil Society Perspective

Nuclear Nations in the Dock

By SUE WAREHAM

A little known court case initiated by an inconspicuous Pacific Island state might not seem very newsworthy, but when there's a David and Goliath element involving some of the world's most powerful nations, with implications for Australia, we should take notice.

The small nation state of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, with a population of just over 50,000 people, is taking the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, France, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). What do this motley lot have in common? Between them, they possess the world's 16,300 most destructive, horrific and indiscriminate weapons, nuclear weapons.

No nation has a stronger moral claim to call the nuclear armed states to account than the Marshall Islands. From 1946 to 1958, the US conducted 67 nuclear weapons tests there, all the while reassuring the local people that the tests would "with God's blessing, result in kindness and benefit to all mankind". Instead they resulted in dispossession, destruction of atolls and long term radioactive contamination.

However Marshall Islands' Foreign Minister Tony de Brum says that the lawsuit is not about compensation for past wrongs, but is an attempt to draw attention to the nuclear sword of Damocles still poised over all of humanity. He reflects the grave concern of many nations. A recent series of government conferences – in Norway in 2013, Mexico in early 2014 and Austria in December, the latter attracting 159 governments – has examined the

humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, with the unequivocal conclusion that any use of these weapons would cause human suffering on an unimaginable scale, far beyond any capacity for humanitarian response. The impacts on health, the environment, agriculture, food security, and the economy would be catastrophic, widespread and long term. There would be no winners.

The Marshall Islands claims that all nine nuclear armed states violate their legal duty to get rid of their weapons. The claim rests in part on the 1996 advisory opinion of the ICJ on the legal status of nuclear weapons, which included the judges' unanimous declaration that "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.....". This judgement in turn drew on the disarmament obligation enshrined in article 6 of the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). After nearly 45 years, and endless platitudes, it remains unfulfilled. The 5-yearly NPT review conference will be held in New York in April; signs that article 6 will be given the pre-eminent focus it deserves are not strong.

For Australia, this is anything but a quaint and esoteric legal exercise, and we are anything but an innocent bystander. Successive Australian governments pay lip service to the goal of a nuclear weapons free world, while simultaneously giving support to US nuclear weapons, under the extraordinarily foolish notion that they protect us. Goliath, with his genocidal weapons, has our unbridled loyalty and complicity. We are in fact part of the problem. ☹

This article was originally published by ON LINE Opinion (Australia's e-journal of social and political debate), and posted in Nuclear Abolition and tagged nuclear zero on February 23, 2015.

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The Marshall Islands' case faces big hurdles in The Hague, including acceptance of the jurisdiction of the ICJ. However, in the court of public opinion there is no doubt. Nuclear armed states have escaped accountability for far too long.

De Brum, along with many other governments, leaders and a large civil society movement, are urging a new approach – a treaty to ban nuclear weapons, just as chemical and biological weapons are banned by treaty. Such an achievement would not be a panacea (for we have none), but it would be a powerful tool, probably the best available, to delegitimise the weapons and stigmatise any nation with the deluded belief that it has a right to retain the worst of all weapons of mass destruction.

There is a sense of urgency about this, which is hardly surprising. In January the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists moved the hands of its Doms-

day Clock to three minutes to midnight, the closest they've been to nuclear catastrophe since 1984. Meanwhile, the major nuclear armed states, meeting in London on 6 February ahead of the NPT review in April, noted their progress on a glossary of key nuclear terms. Deck chairs on the Titanic come to mind.

This year marks the 70th anniversaries, in August, of the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, an appropriate if somewhat belated time to act. Decades after their own nuclear nightmares, the people of the Marshall Islands are to be applauded and supported as they attempt to hold the nuclear armed Goliaths accountable for their flagrant violation of the global norm against weapons of mass destruction. The message should be heeded by countries such as Australia, for whom a nuclear alliance blinds us to the possibility of real progress. ❖

Largest NATO Expansion Since Cold War 'Inflammatory and Destabilising' - CND

CND has condemned NATO's 'aggressive expansion' into eastern Europe as a 'destabilising and provocative manoeuvre'. NATO has announced that it will establish six new military bases: in Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania, as part of what NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has described as the 'biggest reinforcement' since the end of the Cold War. The military alliance has also revealed plans to open a training facility in Georgia, as well as doubling the size of its rapid reaction force from 13,000 to 30,000 – led by a "spearhead" force of 5,000 troops (including UK forces) which would be able to deploy within 48 hours.

CND General Secretary Kate Hudson said: 'If Russia opened up a military facility in Mexico, it would be quite rightly decried as an aggressive act. Yet this is precisely the equivalent of what NATO is doing. The BBC's Diplomatic Correspondent

Jonathan Marcus points out that the opening of a training centre in Georgia is 'ringing alarm bells' in Russia, and that while 'NATO sees its actions as entirely defensive – this is not the way they will be seen in Moscow'.

'Is this any surprise? This aggressive expansion, with troop build-ups and new military bases flanking Russian territory, is a destabilising and provocative manoeuvre – precisely at a time when what is needed is cool-headed diplomacy and a thawing of relations.

'The situation in Ukraine is deplorable – and neither Western nor Russian intervention there holds any solution for the people of Ukraine – but ratcheting up tensions through military build-ups the scale of which haven't been seen since the Cold War is nothing short of inflammatory and destabilising – with very dangerous global implications.' (February 6, 2015) ❖