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The GCSP policy brief series publishes papers in order to assess the policy challenges, dilemmas, and policy recommendations in *all aspects* of transnational security and globalization. The series was created and is edited by Dr. Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan, Senior Scholar in Geostrategy and Director of the Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security.

Editorial of GCSP Policy Brief No. 23 Arms Control in a Globalized World

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Review and Critique

Since the end of the Cold War, arms control has slipped from center stage. This is, at least in part, due to the priorities of leading nuclear powers. Rather than being marginalized, nuclear weapons continue to be perceived by some as essential to managing today's security challenges. "Nuclear orthodoxy"¹ has developed through major nuclear powers seeking to retain their global status as a nuclear state on a number of levels. In other words, the development of modern nuclear arsenals, such as China, is countered by the former superpowers desire to maintain nuclear weaponry.

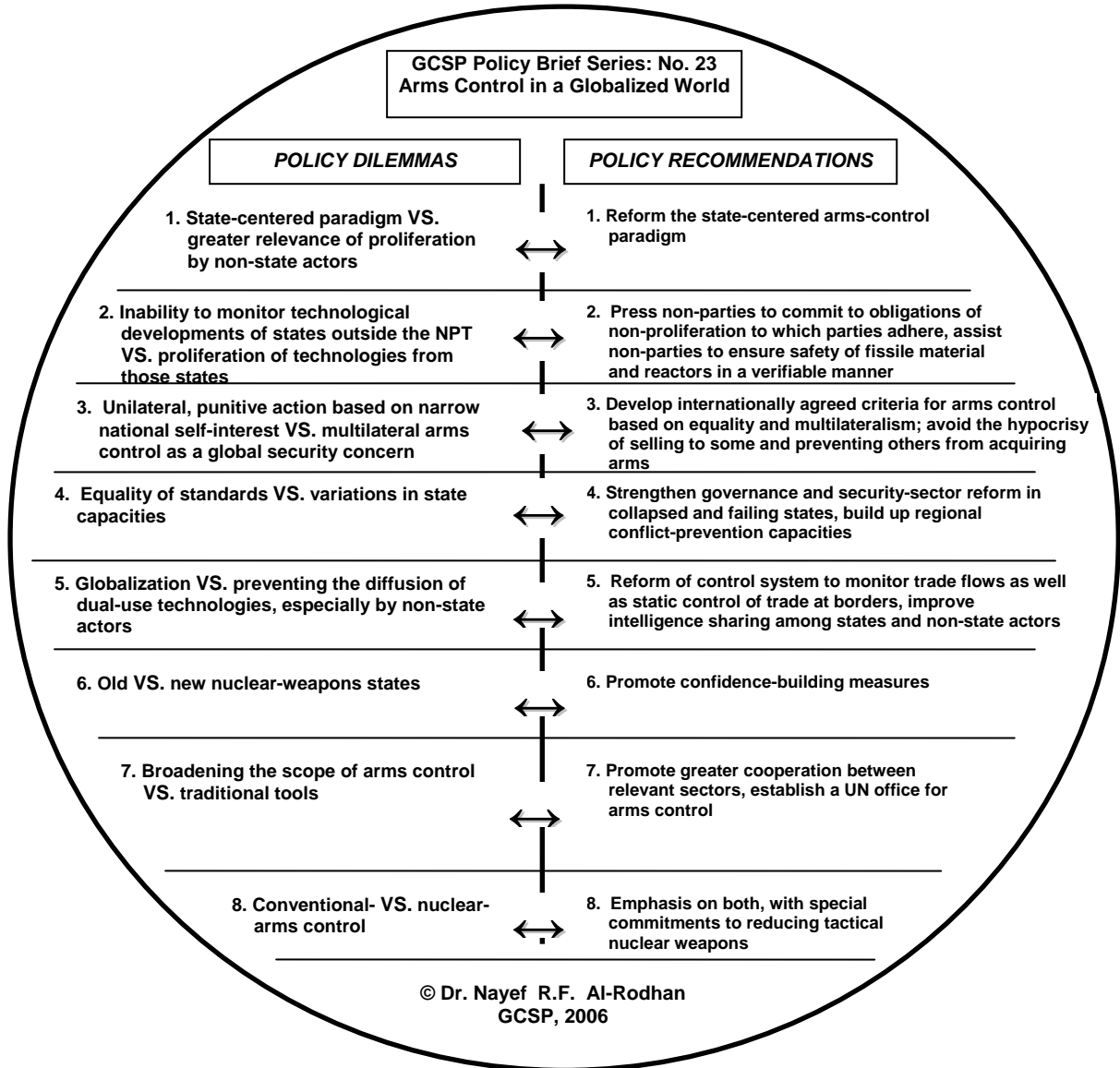
As Brad Roberts notes, there are also states that are determined to gain strategic leverage through the possession of weapons of mass destruction.² Since the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was established in 1968, a number of countries have joined (or will possibly soon join) the ranks of nuclear states (India, Israel, Iran, North Korea, and Pakistan). The possibility of the proliferation of nuclear weapons destabilizing various regions is of paramount concern.³ Yet, arms control has traditionally been centered on Europe. In regions outside of the Euro-Atlantic area, regional arms-control initiatives have been largely confined to participation in global arms-control measures. While some indigenous arms-control measures have emerged, such as confidence-building in border zones in Central Asia, they remain elementary and of marginal importance.⁴

In addition, the risk of non-state actors gaining control of weapons of mass destruction has become an increasing worry.⁵ The diffusion of materials, technologies, and expertise that have both civilian and military use complicates the task of preventing the spread of nuclear technologies or materials to non-state actors.⁶ As Mohamed ElBaradei has pointed out, this is particularly worrisome since the present system of export controls relies on informal arrangements that are non-binding, limited in membership, and, moreover, fail to include many countries with expanding industrial capacities.⁷ New supplier nations also render the task of preventing non-state proliferators all the more complex, given that they are not bound by the non-proliferation obligations to which parties to the NPT adhere to.

This does not mean, however, that arms control has ceased to be relevant. The demise of the superpower arms race has simply resulted in its being deployed in less prominent areas than before. Arms control today tends to be associated with the concept of human security and security-sector reform.⁸ As Pál Dunay points out in his policy brief, one of the major dilemmas facing arms control is whether to redefine itself in broader terms by integrating arms-control-relevant activities or to continue to be defined in narrow terms and accept a certain loss of relevance, at least in relative terms.⁹

Dilemmas and Our Recommendations

The emergence of new nuclear nations implies that arms control must expand its geographical scope. It must also adjust to changes in the fundamental conflicts underlying arms control. In what follows, we highlight eight dilemmas related to this issue and eight corresponding recommendations that may contribute to appropriate policy choices.



A major challenge facing arms control is the difficulty posed by the de facto nuclear-weapons states. As non-members of the NPT, monitoring technological developments within these states and preventing them from proliferating further is, as mentioned, particularly difficult. Responding appropriately to these new nuclear-weapons powers will be vital to encouraging regional arms-control measures. Yet, members of the NPT face the problem of effectively dealing with the three nuclear states that remain outside the Treaty without appearing to reward them with cooperation. First, outstanding conflicts should be resolved in order to lessen the perceived need for nuclear deterrence. Regional conflict prevention, including

confidence-building measures, should also be encouraged. As Pál Dunay suggests, these states ought to be pressed to commit to the non-proliferation obligations that the parties to the NPT adhere to. Since the ability of states to do so is likely to vary, assistance should be given to those with limited governance capacities to help them to ensure the safety of fissile material and reactors in a verifiable manner.

As alluded to earlier, one of the major problems facing the arms-control regime is the increased relevance attached to non-state actors. Preventing proliferation of dual-use technology to these actors, which escape the state-based NPT, is an especially thorny issue. We suggest that multilateral security cooperation should be encouraged. One option would be to reform the control system in order to better monitor trade flows, as well as to improve intelligence sharing among states and non-state actors. Preventing proliferation to non-state actors will also require long-term measures aimed at preventing states from selling to them.

A sizeable dilemma faced by policy makers is whether to continue to use traditional arms-control tools or whether to broaden the scope of arms control. Preventing non-state actors from acquiring nuclear weapons ultimately means reducing the gap between rich and poor within and between states. This implies expanding arms control to encompass a broader range of activities that will overlap, at the very least, development concerns. It is, therefore, imperative to promote greater cooperation between relevant sectors. The establishment of a United Nations (UN) office for arms control would also encourage the implementation of comprehensive, coordinated, multilateral arms-control efforts.

Faced with new actors, including the new nuclear states and non-state actors, some states may be tempted to engage in unilateral, punitive action based on narrowly defined self-interest. Yet, this threatens to undermine the effectiveness and credibility of multilateral arms-control endeavors. In order to prevent this from occurring, states should develop agreed criteria for multilateral arms control based on equality between states. They should also avoid the hypocrisy of selling to some states and preventing proliferation to others.

Conclusion

Perhaps the biggest difficulty facing arms control is the lack of consensus on how best to respond to threats to security and stability. No agreement exists as yet as to how to respond to determined state proliferators, as well as non-state proliferators. This has resulted in new-found rationales for nuclear weapons among some of the original nuclear powers. If arms control is to retain its relevance, it must expand its geographical scope. It must also embrace non-traditional activities that overlap with development and security-sector reform.

References

¹ J. Krause, "The Crisis in Nuclear Arms Control," in J. Krause and A. Wenger (eds.), *Nuclear Weapons into the 21st Century: Current Trends and Future Prospects* (Bern, etc.: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 26.

² B. Roberts, "Rethinking N + 1," *National Interest*, Spring 1998.

³ Krause and Wenger, *op. cit.*, note 1, pp. 17-19.

⁴ For the brief in its entirety, please see the policy brief series as a part of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy's Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security at <http://www.gcsp.ch/e/publications/Globalisation/index.htm>.

⁵ See, for instance, A.B. Carter, J. Deutch, and P. Zelikow, "Catastrophic Terrorism: Tackling the New Danger," *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 1998; Roberts, *op. cit.*, note 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ M. ElBaradei, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation: Global Security In A Rapidly Changing World," Statements of the Director General (IAEA), Washington, DC, June 21, 2004, available at <http://www.iaea.org/NewsCenter/Statements/2004/ebsp2004n004.html>.

⁸ See N. MacFarlane, "Arms Control, Conflict and Peace Settlements: The Caucasus," in K. Krause and F. Tanner (eds.), *Arms Control and Contemporary Conflicts: Challenges and Responses* (Geneva: HEI, 2001).