

# THE IRRELEVANCE OF NUCLEAR GLOBAL ZERO IN THE CHANGED STRATEGIC DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

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## **Abstract**

*The language of Global Zero (GZ) initiated from the US and got currency particularly after the Obama's Prague speech. The GZ phenomenon is simple to pronounce but gets difficult and complex when it comes to changing contours of the international politics. Although the GZ phenomenon reminds both the nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states of the commitments that they would work for a complete disarmament, which in turn, becomes one of the important ingredients of the non-proliferation regime, both the major and minor nuclear weapons states have yet to work on these commitments. This article is to find out the relevancy of GZ in today's changed strategic environment amongst all nuclear weapons states irrespective of the region, these states belong to. It is to find out the complexities associated with the GZ and what they mean for the world free from nuclear weapons. While analyzing the difficulties the GZ confronts both at the regional and international level, this article aims at finding out whether or not the language of GZ remains any longer relevant in the nuclear politics and ultimately how this would affect the non-proliferation regime.*

**Keywords:** The language of Global Zero; changing contours of nuclear politics; GZ and nuclear weapons states; the GZ and complete disarmament

## **Introduction**

Many think and closely observe that the US and Russia should go for more strategic force reduction after the end of the Cold War. Other think of bringing more openness and greater transparency in terms of nuclear doctrinal posture and yet many others talk about the Global Zero (GZ). Although lots

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have already been written on enhancing the conceptual understanding in the mid and late 1990s, the talk for GZ is speeded up in the 2000s particularly after Obama's Prague speech in 2009 and the development of strategic partnership in the form of New START replacing the older strategic arms reduction talks; that is, START 1. The GZ is a concept that speaks for a nuclear free world, which has a link with the NPT's provisions for disarmament of nuclear weapons by major nuclear weapons states that in reality has not occurred yet. Even if does, the knowledge for re-acquiring nuclear capability cannot simply be eliminated. States forgoing their nuclear weapons today could acquire back when the security threat emerges. It is more to do with the knowledge and greater economy embraced with sophisticated technology that can enable states to acquire nuclear weapons in a shorter period of time.

Little work has been done on the possibility of GZ in the contemporary world. The works that have covered up so far by the Global Zero policy organization co-founded by Bruce Blair depict one-sided picture.<sup>1</sup> It has a little or no policy implications on the US to go for an actual GZ, though Russia and the US are committed to reduce their strategic forces. However, as both the US and Russia tend to reduce their strategic forces to desirable minimum number, more advanced conventional armed forces are acquired by all major powers to replace the level of nuclear deterrence capability, but even the concept of minimum deterrence gets complex when it comes to its actuality. For example, the setting of minimum deterrence for the US and Russia may not be minimum for smaller nuclear weapons states. Therefore, the parameters of minimum deterrence of the major nuclear weapons states may not be applicable on the smaller nuclear weapons states. That said, it is also important to understand how their desired level of strategic reduction, but the continuous and persistent conventional advancement are observed in the real world when it comes to the conceptual understanding of getting other nuclear weapons states on board towards GZ. Both France and Britain retain nuclear deterrence forces. They modernize and upgrade these

deterrent capabilities. Although China has kept its modest number of deterrence forces, it also develops conventional capabilities. None of these major nuclear weapons states have yet crafted a strategy for a universal arms control regime (ACR). Also, smaller nuclear weapons states India, Pakistan and Israel are not part of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Therefore, GZ becomes a complex phenomenon. Is nuclear global zero relevant in the changed strategic environment affecting both major and smaller nuclear weapons states? This is very simple and straight forward question, but there is no simple and straight forward answer to this. It would require deeper and critical understanding of the emerging theoretical and conceptual phenomenon of GZ by analyzing various factors that make the concept of GZ irrelevant and unpersuasive. Hypothetically speaking, the GZ remains an irrelevant concept in the changing contours of international politics where uncertainties prevail and struggle for power remains predominant factor despite the needed cooperation amongst states. As the concept of GZ confronts issues, it may become extremely difficult for the states both at the international and regional level to agree on common mechanism to pave ways towards GZ.

This article closely focuses complexities associated with the conceptual understanding of global zero by unpacking the discussion. In doing so, it begins with a series of articles written by the former US officials who have served the US on the top influential positions asking for a global zero. It then examines the conceptual development of the global zero phenomenon around the world and its implications on major and smaller nuclear weapons states. Also, it analyses the challenges from the nuclear aspirant states and what they could mean for the concept of global zero as a whole. It concludes that global zero confronts complexities and seems irrelevant to both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states and that the goal for a world free from nuclear weapons becomes difficult to achieve in the foreseeable future. Also, it concludes that nuclear zero may not be possible without a conflict-zero world.

## **The Gang of Four for Global Zero**

The gang of four: William J. Perry, George P. Shultz, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn are the four US influential characters who have served the US administration at the top level and contributed in terms of US strategic and security postures. Since they served the US at the top level, their statements matter a lot, affecting the policy choices of the US. Once used to be hawkish for the US policy advancement, the gang of four greatly desires for a global zero. They contributed few short articles in the *Wall Street Journal* in order to convince the US administration in general and the international community in particular, about the need for a nuclear zero and the relevance and irrelevance of nuclear weapons in the post cold war period. The aim of these influential writings is not merely the review of these pieces, but to systematically unpack the grammar of so-called concept of GZ. For example, the language of GZ remains strong in the initial writings of these four men, but that changes gradually in the favor of beast (nuclear forces) reflecting that without these deterrent forces the world could be more chaotic and unstable. In their first article in 2007, they have asked for change in the nuclear policy; that is, the need for a departure from the Cold War greater reliance on nuclear weapons. They opined that although North Korea's nuclear test and Iran aspiration to acquire nuclear weapons undermine the possibility for a nuclear free world, but the consistent Cold War reliance on nuclear weapons have become "increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective".<sup>2</sup>The central argument of the four men is based on the following futuristic agenda: 1) changing the Cold War posture of deployed nuclear weapons to increase warning time; 2) substantial reduction of the size of nuclear weapons in all states; 3) elimination of short-range nuclear weapons (tactical nuclear weapons) between the US and Russia; 4) ratification of Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT); 5) stopping and banning the production of fissile materials for weapons globally; and 6) achieving the goal of world free from nuclear weapons.<sup>3</sup>

In 2008, the four men stressed on similar points with special emphasis for more strategic reduction of nuclear forces by means of extending the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1) which was due to expire in 2009. They stressed that both the US and Russia need to take lead in terms of reducing their armed forces as only they possessed 95% of the total world nuclear warheads. Another emphasis was the need for improvement of verification mechanism bolstered with trust between the two sides just to follow the maxim of the US President Ronald Reagan: “Trust, but verify”.<sup>4</sup>In 2010, there is a change for the first time in a strategic tune of the four men. They assert that the US needs to retain safe, secure and reliable deterrent forces as long as other states possess nuclear weapons. This reflects barriers in the long road towards nuclear zero and it also indicates ambiguity when it comes to the US nuclear policy orientation towards reduction of strategic forces vis-à-vis Russia. While realizing the complex phenomenon of nuclear zero, the four men asserted that, “we will need to maintain our nuclear arsenal, whatever its size, for as long as the nation’s security requires it.”<sup>5</sup>In 2013, the four men still put emphasis of the non-reliance on nuclear and suggested for improving the verification mechanism. Also, they suggested for inclusion of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) as part of the New START strategic dialogue between the US and Russia.<sup>6</sup>

From 2007 to 2013, these four men urged the US and Russia to reduce the strategic deterrent forces towards the ultimate goal of global zero, but they have also realized the difficulties with this regard as they, at the same times, asserted that the US retain its deterrent forces and extends its deterrence to its allies and partners as long as nuclear weapons exist. The language for the desired GZ changes as the gang of four observes complexities with regard to their individualistic approaches towards the so-called GZ phenomenon. The language in these pieces creates dichotomy and ambiguity with regard to GZ phenomenon. This shows ambiguity within the US nuclear policy. Also, this builds up a dilemma between nuclear zero and nuclear deterrence –that is, the concept of GZ speaks for irrelevance of nuclear weapons

in the post cold war era and nuclear deterrence reemphasizes the significance of these forces for strategic stability. The dilemma consistently exists and it exists in the US President Barak Obama's Prague speech too, when he desired for a nuclear zero, but at the same time asserted that it may not be possible at least in his life time. The ambiguity with regard to nuclear zero enlarges.

### **Obama's Dream for a Nuclear Zero**

Obama highlighted the fear and deadly consequences of these weapons and the risk associated with nuclear proliferation. However, Obama asserted the complexity associated with the world free from nuclear weapons when he stated, "this goal will not be reached quickly...perhaps not in my lifetime." This indicates that on one hand the US desires for a world free from nuclear weapons, but on the other, the US retains safe, secure and reliable deterrent forces as long as nuclear weapons exist; that is, to protect the US heartland and its allies and partners. Paradoxically, global zero is not happening and it would perhaps not occur as long as we have conflicts and security threats around the world. Perhaps, nuclear zero would first require conflict zero world, but in reality, unfortunately, the world would confront with uncertain and unpredictable episodes that would open new avenues for more conflicts. In such a chaotic and uncertain world, nuclear forces become the grammar of deterrence. Nuclear weapons states would consider these weapons for deterrence purposes and greater assets for their ultimate survival.

Obama's Prague speech is encouraging in terms of strengthening the non-proliferation measures and conveying a message to other nuclear weapons states in particular to Russia, that the Cold War greater reliance on nuclear weapons has dramatically changed and the policies of nuclear weapons states with regard to both employment and deployment of these weapons need to be revisited. This may also reflect upon other outstanding challenges emitting from non-state actors, rogue states, and emerging threats of cyber warfare where

sheer reliance on nuclear weapons may not necessarily be required. Nuclear deterrence may not be applicable to successfully counter these emerging challenges which in turn, would require states to craft innovative strategies.

Apparently, Obama's Prague speech calling for a nuclear zero becomes logical for the US when the US makes remarkable endeavors in terms of conventional weaponry; that is, the US technological innovation makes its conventional weaponry system more unique and stronger than other nuclear weapons states. This provides the US an extra confidence to quicken the process for strategic force reduction with its counterpart Russia. Russia, unlike the Cold War time, is weak in conventional innovations against both the US and its NATO allies in Europe.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, the Russians stride for MIRVing –increasing the lethality and sophistication of Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) because it is considered that increasing the number of warheads on MIRV is cheaper than building an intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and/or making anti-ballistic missile complexes. Also, given the increasing conventional disparity between the US and Russia, the Russia might not agree to reduce further its strategic forces including the non-strategic weapons which have not yet become part of the New Start treaty. Presumably, the more the US increases its conventional capability, the more it gives itself a confidence to decrease its strategic forces with Russia. It is observed that the US has used its advanced conventional capability in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya and currently against the Islamic States (ISIS) forces in the Middle East. Seemingly, the US remains comfortable in terms of archiving its geopolitical and military goals through its advanced conventional forces. Why to rely on nuclear forces? Arguably, the more the conventional force disparity increases between the US and Russia, the more the Russians rely on nuclear forces to offset the conventional stronger side. In this context, the Russians have got two possible options. First, try not to decrease their strategic forces to the US desired level which could undermine the Russian deterrence capability. Therefore, Russia would retain some form of both strategic and non-strategic

deterrence forces to offset the rising US conventional might. Second, deploy its offensive forces closer to the Eastern border as part of escalation tactics to put pressure on the US to restrain from any military adventurism vis-à-vis the Russian interest.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, Obama's Prague speech paved the way for building a strategic partnership with Russia regarding the renewal of START I by the New START to reduce the strategic forces to 1550. This would be a remarkable strategic achievement, but the world free from nuclear weapons is yet to be witnessed. Even if one closely and critically analyzes the New START, one can find certain weaknesses that could make other states ponder whether or not the New START between the two sides (i.e., the US and Russia) would last longer. For instance, the New START does not include: first, the strategic discussions about the future of TNWs. It is considered that US has got approximately 200 TNWs placed in Europe, but the Russians believe that it is more than that. On the other hand, the US believes that the Russians have got about 2000 TNWs. The possibility and the danger associated with the TNWs use in the direct limited war between the US/NATO and Russia still exist, although these weapons have not been used yet. Second, the New START does not include the talks on ballistic missile defense (BMD). The US had withdrawn from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty (ABM) in 2002 showing the desire to build defense shield both within the US and in Europe against the possible missile threats from North Korea and Iran. Both Russia and China look at this US development with suspicion. Third, the New Start does not prohibit both the US and Russia for modernizing their strategic and conventional forces. Also, it does not prohibit either side from deploying conventional warheads on long-range ballistic missiles. This provides both the US and Russia an excuse for modernizing conventional forces and introducing new technologies into their strategic innovations. Last but not least, the member can withdraw from the New START on the extraordinary rise of threat that undermines each security.



The analysis reflects difficulties the global zero would confront when it comes to more clear conceptual and practical understanding of the possibility of a nuclear free world. The process is difficult if not impossible, but the world may not expect the GZ very soon, not at least in the near future. To understand this, we need to closely see what is happening between the major nuclear weapons states at the international level and smaller nuclear weapons states at the regional level. Are they, seriously engaged to meet the provisions of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which they pledged at the time of its creation? Is the complete disarmament happening? Is there a fair and non-discriminatory treatment of the major powers towards minor nuclear weapons states? Is there occurrence of any major breakthrough between the major and smaller nuclear weapons states in terms of the creation of a universal arms control regime? What would be the future of CTBT? These are some of the key areas, which ultimately could be linked in an effort for the concept of GZ.

### **Conceptualizing the Challenges for Global Zero**

Conceptually crafting strategies for global zero is a complex phenomenon, though it appears extremely innocuous. Initially, it may not be applicable for those regions particularly that comprise smaller nuclear weapons states because of the acuteness of security dilemma and the embryonic stages of their nuclear development programs. Apparently, if the ambitious program GZ is to be strategized, it would possibly involve major nuclear weapons states more particularly the US and Russia to begin with. In the meantime, there are some conceptual and practical issues with regard to nuclear free world. We need to consider the challenges the goal for GZ may confront; that is, major nuclear weapons states role, the weaknesses within the non-proliferation regime, the small nuclear weapons states grievances, and the challenges emitting from the nuclear aspirant states.

### **Major Nuclear Weapons States and Global Zero**

Besides the US and Russia, other established nuclear

weapon states namely France, UK, and China are in possession of hundreds, if not thousands of nuclear weapons with sophisticated delivery systems. Like the US and Russia, they also modernize, upgrade and procure more sophisticated deterrent forces. For instance, UK spends billions of pounds in developing new nuclear submarine to replace its aging nuclear submarines. France replaces its *Rubis-Class* submarine with the modernized *Suffren* nuclear submarine.<sup>9</sup> China has recently developed anti-satellite missile vis-à-vis the US ballistic missile system and spends on modernization of its nuclear submarines.<sup>10</sup> Also, as it feels threatened, it develops Multiple Independently Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) to increase the lethality and credibility of its deterrent forces.<sup>11</sup> Both France and the UK retain deterrent forces despite having no major nuclear threat unlike the US and Russia and/or India and Pakistan. All the three states (i.e., France, UK and China) have not yet become the part of the wider international or regional arms control and disarmament processes. Perhaps, one day soon the US and Russia would urge these tiers of nuclear weapons states to become part of the universal strategic partnership when it comes to a proposed universal arms control and disarmament. Given this, the minor nuclear weapons states urge the major nuclear weapons states to play a meaningful role for a complete and verified non-proliferation, thus, providing an incentive to smaller nuclear weapon states to be part of the process of non-proliferation. So long as the established nuclear weapon states keep and plan to upgrade and modernize their deterrence forces, it becomes very difficult for minor nuclear weapons states to forgo their nuclear weapons and sign the NPT.<sup>12</sup> Besides, there is a danger of more withdrawal of the NPT member states to develop and acquire nuclear weapons for security purposes. This depicts that the US has adopted a policy of ‘engagement’ – that is, on the one hand it makes efforts towards non-proliferation calling for a Global Zero. On the other hand, it does not only modernize its deterrence forces and work on a national missile defense system, but also extends its nuclear deterrence to its NATO allies and partners.<sup>13</sup>

The major powers role in terms of arms control and

disarmament, as it promises before the non-proliferation regime becomes more responsible. At present, they affect the policies of other nuclear weapons states at the regional level. The smaller nuclear weapons states feel that they are affected one way or the other by not only the offensive policies of the major nuclear weapons states, but also, their sophisticated advancement and modernization of their deterrent forces at all major level of deterrence. These are threatening for both smaller nuclear weapons states and those within the non-proliferation regime who have not yet acquired nuclear weapons.

### **The Weakness within Non-Proliferation Regime**

Despite heavy weight membership and life extension of NPT since 1995, the NPT is largely considered a weak regime to help achieve the GZ. Often, it is considered that states in the past accessed to the NPT not because that NPT had the greater influences in terms of compelling states to become part of the NPT, but largely number of states accessed to the non-proliferation regime because of geo-political dynamics; that is, these states did not confront security threats.<sup>14</sup> That said, states with greater security concerns have not yet become part of the treaty and the treaty has failed to prohibit them to go nuclear. Even the treaty faces similar practical issues halting withdrawal of the states. For example, North Korea withdrew from the NPT before it tested nuclear capability and Iran could be the next challenge if it desires to acquire and test its nuclear capability. The NPT fails to craft a strategy to deal with these emerging challenges in the changing contours of international politics.

First, the provisions within the formation of the NPT seemed blurred and create contradiction for the future survival of the NPT. For example, article 1 of the NPT directs the nuclear weapon states party to the NPT to “undertake not to transfer to any recipient whatsoever nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or control over such weapons of explosive devices directly or indirectly”.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in accordance with article 2 of NPT, “the non-nuclear weapons

states party to the treaty undertake not to receive the transfer from any transferor whatsoever of nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices or of control over such weapons or explosive devices directly or indirectly”.<sup>16</sup> It may be considered that the US transfer and its NATO-led European allies being the recipient of TNWs may somewhat violate the provisions of the NPT, though these types of nuclear weapons could be under direct command and control of the US.<sup>17</sup>

Second, the US-India nuclear deal involves the transfer of nuclear technology to India which encourages Russia and Australia to strike similar deals with India, is considered a violation of the NPT made by the NPT members to a non-NPT nuclear weapon state which, in turn, provides an incentive for other established nuclear weapons states of the NPT to assist states outside the treaty.<sup>18</sup> At the same time, both member states party to the NPT and non-NPT nuclear weapons states can claim the possession of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes as their “inalienable right” which, in turn, can be converted into military purposes as both the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the NPT have not developed a thorough safeguards procedures due to which member states can cheat.<sup>19</sup> On one hand, NPT prevents states from transferring nuclear weapons and their related technology to other states directly or indirectly. On the other, it makes a provision for securing the similar technology as an “inalienable right.” There exists ambiguity with NPT provisions which perhaps needs further elaboration and modification to satisfy the concerns of the smaller nuclear weapon states such as Pakistan.

Third, NPT creates discrimination between nuclear “haves and have nots”. It permits all the major nuclear weapons such as the US, Russia, UK, France, and China to be legitimate nuclear weapon states, but denies this legitimacy not only to the member states of NPT, but also non-member of the NPT nuclear weapon states. It is one of the major obstacles to non-member NPT nuclear weapon states signing the treaty and loopholes within the treaty that could allow other states to develop and acquire their own nuclear weapons.<sup>20</sup> The

weaknesses within the NPT, which urges the major nuclear weapons states to work for a complete disarmament, pose a challenge to the so-called conceptualization of the GZ. The language of GZ seems irrelevant for smaller nuclear weapons states that consider themselves to be more vulnerable without nuclear weapons with poor conventional capabilities.

### **Smaller Nuclear Weapons States and Global Zero**

Since the major nuclear weapons states confront issues of nuclear transparency and verification mechanism and since nuclear ambiguity exists in their nuclear policy framework despite the official documentations, the smaller nuclear weapons states confront the similar challenges. The gap between the major and smaller nuclear weapons states is enormous in term of nuclear and conventional forces. The concept of GZ may not initially be applicable to smaller nuclear weapons states given the deterrence force disparity, security dilemma, and changing security dynamics where inter-state rivalry continues to prevail. Arguably, it would be too early crafting and conceptualizing strategies for a nuclear zero for smaller nuclear weapons states when, in fact, the major nuclear weapons states have not crafted one for themselves yet; that is, how they could agree for a road towards nuclear free world; which states would be the first in this process; what would be the possible verification mechanism; how the trust amongst all nuclear weapons states could possibly be built; and whether or not this could possibly be accomplished. These are some of the rudimentary queries; smaller nuclear weapons states may ponder before they become part of this visionary GZ process. In the meantime, the smaller nuclear weapons states would wait and see how the major powers behave in the changing security dynamics of international politics and how they treat the smaller powers.

Given the logic of extra-regional-link factor, smaller nuclear weapons states are affected directly and indirectly by the deterrent policies of the major nuclear states. For example, whatever happens between the US and Russia, it affects China. China affects India and India then affects

Pakistan. The extra-regional-link factor does not only work in terms of replacing, modernizing, and procuring of deterrent forces, but also in terms of non-proliferation efforts. That said, if there are strategic restraint measures amongst the major nuclear weapons states, this would reduce the pressure at the lower trajectory. The reduction of this strategic pressure promotes deterrent stability that, in turn, enhances the possibility for crafting a framework for universal arms control regime in general and regional arms control regime in particular. However, the phenomenon of universal arms control regime remains ambitious and complex. It would require greater flexibility and transparency within nuclear weapons states doctrinal postures both in terms of employment and deployment of deterrent forces. Also, smaller nuclear weapons states may not be taken on board with regard to non-proliferation measures and ultimately for a complete disarmament unless the efforts become incentive and criterion based strategy; that is, smaller nuclear weapons states may demand for equal treatment and even nuclear recognition. They may not desire diplomatic pressures and economic sanctions on them as part of the major powers non-proliferation efforts. To show more responsibility, the smaller nuclear weapons states may convey to the major powers that they follow minimum deterrence; they are not interested in testing nuclear weapons anymore; they can better protect and secure their nuclear weapons given the lessons learned from the Cold War hot strategic environment; their nuclear command and control would remain robust and effective because they would possess only small number unlike the two superpowers (i.e., the US and the Soviet Union) during the peak of the Cold War; they would keep their nuclear weapons in de-mated position to avoid the accidental use of nuclear weapons; and they would also say that they are responsible and rational actors when it comes to inter-state crisis. Conceptually, the major nuclear weapons states may get convinced as the small nuclear weapons states get to level of maturity and they demonstrate to be rational and responsible nuclear states, but major powers may not desire the nuclear aspirant states to acquire nuclear capabilities because it would further undermine their efforts for a complete disarmament;

that is, a nuclear zero. What strategy needs to be crafted for nuclear aspirant states: diplomatic and political approaches or options to strike?

### **Nuclear Aspirant States and Global Zero**

It was once considered during the peak of Cold War when the US President John F. Kennedy stated that there could be more than a dozen of nuclear weapons states. Therefore, the efforts for non-proliferation were speeded up to contain such a scenario. Today, the good news is that amongst 190 members of the NPT, only nine acquired nuclear capability. It is considered that anyone country desiring to go nuclear would be from within the NPT and they would acquire nuclear weapons either by commencing its nuclear weapons programme clandestinely or quitting the NPT by giving a three-month advance notice as part of the provision of the NPT if a state confronts an acute security threat. The challenge for the major powers including the non-proliferation regime is what measures need to be taken and how these nuclear aspirant states may be contained before they actually acquire the nuclear weapons capability. Theoretically, state's acquisition of nuclear weapons is predominately linked with the security threats emitting from within the hostile neighbourhood that the state perceives. The US feared that the Germans would acquire and threaten the US security; the Soviet Union acquired because of the US; the Chinese did because of the Soviet Union; both France and Britain acquired nuclear capabilities because they felt vulnerable to both the Soviet Union growing conventional and nuclear deterrent forces; India did because of the threat from China as they fought a short war in 1962; and Pakistan acquired nuclear weapons capability because of the rise of acute security threat from the growing India's conventional forces and nuclear weapons acquisition. The growing conventional capabilities and security dilemma between the states played a significant role in terms of state's acquisition of nuclear weapons. The nuclear aspirant states such as Iran, South Korea, and Japan have shown their willingness to acquire nuclear weapons capabilities to meet their security

needs. Iran desires to acquire nuclear weapons capability to retain a strategic balance in the Middle Eastern region vis-à-vis Israel who has had nuclear weapons capability since 1960, but has not yet tested its nuclear weapons capability. Although the P-5+1 (i.e. the US, Russia, China, UK, France and Germany) have reached a historic deal in terms of successfully prohibiting Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons capability, It is observed that this joint comprehensive plan of action does not eliminate Iran's nuclear programme rather it substantially slows down Iran's nuclear weapons capability for at least fifteen years.<sup>21</sup> Israel largely practices nuclear opacity.<sup>22</sup> Both Japan and South Korea have desired to go nuclear given the recent development of strategic dynamics in their periphery, which could turn into military escalation. Both the states have the potential to go nuclear in a very short period of time. However, the major nuclear weapons states including the US do not desire the South Korea and Japan to go nuclear as part of the non-proliferation pledges to the NPT and also the kind of nuclear security guarantee provided to these states. The major powers can adopt certain practical measures to discourage the nuclear aspirants: 1) the major powers can provide a negative security assurance, that is, that nuclear weapons would not be used against them in the event of crisis; 2) major economic and military assistance including the peaceful uses of nuclear facilities under a strict verification mechanism can also discourage aspiring states to go nuclear; and 3) decreasing the security threat environment both at the regional and international level and increasing the possibilities for crafting several prolific strategies to help resolve the issues peacefully without the use of force.

### **Futuristic Aspects of Nuclear Zero**

Following the dictum of a renowned military strategist Carl Von Clausewitz that "Everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean everything is very easy."<sup>23</sup>It may be safe to argue that any strategy for nuclear zero might be easy to craft, but difficult to execute given the strategic complexities and security issue of each individual states. States that have already acquired nuclear weapons may not desire to abandon



them unless others do so first. This is expressed by the major nuclear weapons states, say, the US who has emphasized the security need for retaining some nuclear weapons despite its efforts for reducing their number vis-à-vis its counterpart Russia. The US has clearly expressed that as long as nuclear weapons exist, it would retain its nuclear weapons capability. This indicates that the US would like to see other nuclear weapons states to get on board for an idealistic goal of nuclear zero. It means the US would not be the first to forgo its nuclear weapons capability unilaterally. Also, this indicates the growing level of mistrust, lack of transparency in nuclear policies of nuclear weapons states and the absence of a clear theoretical and conceptual mechanism for nuclear zero. The dichotomy and ambiguity with regard to nuclear zero enlarge when on the one hand, talks for promoting the concept of nuclear zero amongst nuclear weapons states are initiated, but on the other, nuclear weapons states consistently retain their nuclear weapons along with development of advanced conventional weapons capability.

Security remains a predominant factor for states to retain nuclear weapons for their ultimate survival. International politics teaches the dictum of uncertain world where each state prioritizes its national interest. States would weigh the cost and benefit analysis, that is, how much they would gain and how much they would lose by abandoning their nuclear weapons capability. If states would lose much and if their security would be undermined absent from nuclear guarantee, they would not forego their deterrent forces for the sake of idealistic conceptualization of global zero. Idealistically, the goal for a nuclear zero may be attained if international community comes up with such a framework based on nuclear free world that is unanimously accepted both by nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states. First, nuclear weapons states would need to resolve the issues of states that fall within security dilemma. The security concerns of these states vulnerable to security threats and pre-emptive strikes by the adversaries can be resolved when and if nuclear weapons states execute the strategy of negative security assurances – that is, these states would not strike other states with their

nuclear weapons. Second, all the major nuclear weapons states party to the NPT would meet the promises of nuclear disarmament that they have made at the initiation of this treaty. Also, they would attempt to strengthen the non-proliferation regime by not only eliminating their nuclear weapons, but also urging others to do so. Third, before the GZ to occur, there is a need for a conflict free world that in reality may not be possible because of greater security issues of greater number of states. Each one of these belongs to threatening scenarios and each of these states confronts security issues against the others. The resolution of these conflicts confronting each individual states becomes so complex that conflict remains inevitable, though these states may not desire to be trapped by these security issues.

That said, it is simple to conceptualize the phenomenon of nuclear zero or nuclear free world. Also, it might be simple to theorize what needs to be done for achieving the perimeters of global zero. However, the difficulty comes in the strategic execution of this conceptualized phenomenon. Idealistically, GZ may be possible in terms of conceptualizing the phenomenon, but in reality, it becomes vague, ambiguous and complex which in turn makes the concept of GZ irrelevant in the changing contours of international politics.

## **Conclusion**

The phenomenon of global zero got famous at the US president Obama's Prague speech. Conceptually, it basically aimed at reminding both major and smaller nuclear weapons states to become part of the arms control and disarmament discussions both at the regional and international level in order to fulfill their commitments for a complete nuclear disarmament. Also, it aimed at encouraging the strategic relationship between the US and Russia to strike meaningful deals towards more and/or deep reduction of their deterrent forces. The language of global zero meant for a world free from nuclear weapons seems simple and idealistically attractive for both the major and smaller nuclear weapons states, but it becomes difficult and complex when it comes to

the changed and/or changing strategic environment of each nuclear weapons state confronts. In other words, the goal for a global zero is simple to pronounce, but difficult to achieve. Scrutinizing the complexities closely of both nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states can assess this. First, although both the US and Russia have agreed to reduce their strategic forces by striking a New Start treaty, there is no deep reduction taking place. Both states still rely on nuclear forces in the event of war. Both the sides pursue a policy of first use nuclear option. Both the US and Russia are modernizing and advancing their conventional forces. Both are still keeping tactical nuclear weapons. Second, despite the NPT's life extension and expansion in terms of its membership, the NPT confronts challenges. For instance, there is still no talk on how to construct a dynamic mechanism under which both major and smaller nuclear weapons states would work for a complete disarmament. In addition, India, Pakistan and Israel are not part of the NPT. North Korea withdrew from the treaty and tested its nuclear capability. Iran could be next. Also, the future nuclear aspirant states would be from within the NPT. Third, member states have yet to work on the possible creation of universal arms control regime, which could involve both the major and smaller nuclear weapons states. But this is easier said than done. Security interest, security dilemma, deterrence stability, and equal treatment are some of the major ingredients that would become part and parcel of the establishment of universal arms control regime and states would play around these essentials as part of the nuclear politics. Last but not least, given these challenges arising both from nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states, the phenomenon of global zero becomes irrelevant. It remains difficult and complex to achieve. Since the Obama's Prague speech, the talks on global zero seem to be losing strength which in turn, indicates that both the major and smaller nuclear weapons states may not be ready to develop a concrete mechanism for a complete disarmament which idealistically leads these states towards a world free from nuclear weapons.

## **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> For details see, James Cartwright, Richard Burt, Chuck Hagel, Thomas Pickering, Jack Sheehan, Bruce Blair, “*Global Zero US Nuclear Policy Commission Report: Modernizing US Nuclear Strategy, Force Structure and Posture*,” (Global Zero, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 04, 2007

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>4</sup> George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “Towards a Nuclear Free World,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2008

<sup>5</sup> George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “How to Protect our Deterrent,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2010

<sup>6</sup> George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, Sam Nunn, “Next Steps in Reducing Nuclear Risks: The Pace of Nonproliferation Work Today Doesn't Match the Urgency of the Threat,” *The Wall Street Journal*, March 06, 2013

<sup>7</sup> For interesting discussion see, Michael Peck, “Five NATO Weapons of War Russia Should Fear,” July 01, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/five-nato-weapons-war-russia-should-fear-10769> (accessed on November 16, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Along with keeping some form of both strategic and non-strategic deterrent forces, Russia plans to increase its conventional forces to recall the Cold War era when the former Soviet Union (now Russia) were superior in terms of conventional forces. For interesting discussion on this see, Nikolas K. Gvosdev, “The Bear Awakens: Russia's Military is Back,” *The National Interest*, November 12, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/russias-military-back-9181> (accessed on November 16, 2014).

<sup>9</sup> For details see, “France Submarine Capabilities,” August 15, 2013, available at: <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/france-submarine-capabilities/> (accessed January 06, 2015)

<sup>10</sup> Zachary Keck, “China conducted anti-satellite missile test,” July 29, 2014, available at: <http://thediplomat.com/2014/07/china-conducted-anti-satellite-missile-test/> (accessed January 06, 2015)

<sup>11</sup> For details see, “China's ICBM with MIRV warheads will be commissioned soon,” April 05, 2013, available at: <http://chinadailymail.com/2013/04/05/chinas-icbm-with-mirv-warheads-will-be-commissioned-soon/> (accessed January 06, 2015)

<sup>12</sup> ‘Pakistan Rules out Joining Non-Proliferation Treaty’ (23 Feb. 2010), available at: [www.nti.org/gsn/article/pakistan-rules-out-joining-nonproliferation-treaty/](http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/pakistan-rules-out-joining-nonproliferation-treaty/) (accessed on 14 May 2012).

<sup>13</sup> The term conengagement is an economic term, which is the amalgamation of both connection and engagement. I have borrowed this term from ZalmayKhalilzad's two influential pieces: see for example,

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ZalmayKhalilzad, 'Congage China', Rand Issue Paper (1999), available at [www.rand.org/pubs/issue\\_papers/2006/IP187.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/2006/IP187.pdf) (accessed on 23 May 2012); and ZalmayKhalilzad, 'A Strategy of 'Congagement' toward Pakistan', *Washington Quarterly* 35/2 (Spring 2012) pp.107–19

<sup>14</sup> Christine M. Leah and Andreas Lutsch, "To Go Nuclear or Not: Does the Non-Proliferation Treaty Really Matter?" *The National Interest*, November 18, 2014, available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/go-nuclear-or-not-does-the-non-proliferation-treaty-really-11698?page=2> (accessed on November 20, 2014)

<sup>15</sup>See the NPT article I 'Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons,' IAEA (22April 1970), available at [www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infocircs/Others/infocirc140.pdf](http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infocircs/Others/infocirc140.pdf)(accessed on 14 May 2012).

<sup>16</sup>See the NPT article II, Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>The Iranian Ambassador, Ali AsgharSoltanieh, to International Atomic Energy Commission(IAEA) has recently stated during the first session of the NPT Preparatory Committee in Vienna that, 'The deployment of hundreds of the US tactical nuclear weapons in EU states is a blatant violation of the NPT by the US and the host countries.' See, for example, 'US, EU Worst Nuclear Proliferators, NPT Violators, Iran Says' (7 May 2012), [www.presstv.com/detail/240046.html](http://www.presstv.com/detail/240046.html)(accessed on 3 Aug. 2012).

<sup>18</sup>Many in Pakistan accuse the US of violating not only the NPT but also UN Security Council Resolution 1172, which was adopted after the South Asian nuclear adversaries tested nuclear weapons in May 1998, to deter them from carrying out more tests. See, Bast, 'Pakistan's Nuclear Calculus' p.79; For useful readings on the Indo-US Nuclear Deal see, for example, M.V. Ramana, 'The Impact of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal on the NPT and the Global Climate Regime' (8 Dec. 2009), available at [www.boell.de/intlpolitics/security/foreign-affairs-security-7983.html](http://www.boell.de/intlpolitics/security/foreign-affairs-security-7983.html)(accessed on 7 Aug. 2012); JayshreeBajoria, 'The US-India Nuclear Deal' (2010), available at [www.cfr.org/india/usindia-nuclear-deal/p96663](http://www.cfr.org/india/usindia-nuclear-deal/p96663)(accessed on 7 Aug. 2012); Sharon Squassoni, 'The US-Indian Deal and Its Impact', *Arms Control Today*, July/ Aug. 2010; and NasrullahMirza and M. Sadiq, 'Indo-US 123 Agreement: Impacts on Deterrence Stability in South Asia' (January 2008), available at [www.sassu.org.uk/pdfs/Research\\_Report\\_7.pdf](http://www.sassu.org.uk/pdfs/Research_Report_7.pdf) (accessed on 7 August 2012).

<sup>19</sup>For details, see Henry Sokolski, 'The Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty's Untapped Potential to Prevent Proliferation' in Henry Sokolski (ed.), *Reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty* (Carlisle, PA: US Strategic Studies Institute 2010) pp.10–11.

<sup>20</sup>It is clearly stated in the NPT's article IX that, 'for the purposes of this Treaty, a nuclear weapon state is one which has manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon or other nuclear explosive device prior to January 1, 1967', see for example, 'Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons', IAEA (22 April 1970), available at:

[www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infocircs/Others/infocirc140.pdf](http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Infocircs/Others/infocirc140.pdf) (accessed on 14 May 2012). It depicts that those who have, or will have acquired nuclear weapons are not nuclear weapon states in light of article IX of the NPT despite their nuclear weapon acquisition and when they join the treaty, they will have to forgo their acquired nuclear technology.

<sup>21</sup> For interesting analysis on this see, Daniel R. DePetris “Israel’s Master Plan to Crush Iran’s Nuclear Program,” *The National Interest*, (July 22, 2015), available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/israels-master-plan-crush-irans-nuclear-program-13392> (accessed on July 24, 2015); John Allen Gay, “Iran: A Deal Worth Celebrating?” *The National Interest*, July 17, 2015, available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/iran-deal-worth-celebrating-13365> (accessed on July 24, 2015); ZalmayKhalilzad, “Congress Must Strengthen Iran Deal,” *The National Interest*, July 14, 2015, available at: <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/congress-must-strengthen-iran-deal-13335> (accessed on July 24, 2015)

<sup>22</sup> Although it is considered that Israel has achieved nuclear capability in the 1960s, it does not declare that it has got nuclear weapons. Israel only claims that it would not be the first one to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East. There is no evidence of nuclear policy and nuclear policy remains largely ambiguous. For interesting readings see, Avner Cohen, *Israel and the Bomb*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); also see, Cohen *The worst kept secret: Israel’s bargain with the bomb* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, (trans.) M. Howard and P. Paret (NJ. Princeton, 1976), p. 178