

House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry into Global Security: Non-Proliferation

*Written Evidence from Dr Dan Plesch
(Director, Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy, School of
Oriental and African Studies)*

Summary of main points

- Policy on nuclear and other WMD non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament should be integrated with strategy on conventional weapons to implement a holistic approach within a new Strategic Concept for the Regulation of Arms Possession and Proliferation.
- Existing agreements on non-proliferation, arms control, and disarmament should be viewed as platforms for expansion rather than relics in need of repair.
- The NPT regime faces an uncertain future and the importance of the 2010 meeting hinges on all states parties (and those 3 outside) working cooperatively to address the issue of nuclear weapons and civil energy in the context of global and regional security needs.
- Non-proliferation policy has produced useful innovations in law-based approaches but needs to be reconnected to the strategy of security through effective and verifiable agreements.

1. The UK Government initiatives on nuclear disarmament, WMD, cluster munitions and the Arms Trade Treaty show a significant commitment across the spectrum of the non-proliferation and disarmament agenda. It has been [noted before](#) that WMD disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin. Similarly, while there is no linkage between conventional and WMD control strategies there is much to be gained to developing them in a mutually reinforcing manner. There are now latent and converging interests in addressing major conventional weapons holdings and proliferation as well as WMD. Globally, the core constituency actively pursuing nuclear and WMD non-proliferation and disarmament can usefully combine with the broader coalitions interested in controls on conventional armaments.

2. President-elect Obama's public commitment to a world with no nuclear weapons is the first time that an American President has been elected with such an explicit commitment

to disarmament; with far less public attention Russia appears to have made a range of proposals on security and disarmament. Barack Obama has given support to issues such as removing nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert that have not been accepted by the Department of Defence despite decades of pressure from the NGOs. The international challenge is to ensure that initiatives such as this, helped by former senior officials, are not a false dawn similar to the rejection of nuclear weapons by General Butler and others in the mid-1990s. Much of the outcome will depend on internal U.S. dynamics. However a nuclear-only approach will need to be complemented by a broader approach to security so that nuclear-only initiatives do not founder on a lack of integration with wider issues, not least in the Middle East.

Developing a strategy on conventional arms.

3. There are a number of convergent global issues and interests that favour the development of a global approach to the regulation of the possession and proliferation of major conventional weapons. These include: (1) nuclear and other WMD disarmament requires attention to regional security issues that include a conventional focus; (2) holdings and production of conventional arms in general are emerging as an issue in debates on the Arms Trade Treaty and on weapons systems or categories under SALW and Cluster Munitions; (3) some states see progress on 'General and Complete Disarmament' as linked to nuclear disarmament in Article VI of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – and globalisation of some provisions of the CFE/CSBMs and Open Skies offer a means of realising this NPT provision rather than regarding it as an obstacle to progress on nuclear disarmament. (4) Recession driven defence cuts in the shorter term will provide strains on U.S. international commitments that regional agreements may ameliorate. (5) An major expansion of effective arms control is an effective preventive measure to the well-known conflict pressures arising from international economic slump. (6)The European agreements on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE) and the associated Confidence- and Security-Building Measures (CSBMs) and Open Skies regime provide a strong and unprecedented institutional platform for expansion that should not be allowed to collapse through NATO-Russia disputes.

From START to SCRAP

4. The next NPT meeting is scheduled for 2010 and much needs to be done to avoid the problems of 2005. The international community's earlier breakthroughs are again an inspiration here: for the long-standing legal commitment (embodied in the [nuclear non-](#)

[proliferation treaty](#) [1970]) to "general disarmament" of all weapons save those needed for internal policing is actually in sight. Just as the acronym START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) denotes the nuclear-arms talks leading to the treaties of [1991](#) and [1993](#), today's equivalent could be SCRAP - A Strategic Concept for Regulation of Arms Possession and Proliferation.

5. In 1989, NATO and the [Warsaw Pact](#) began talks on arms reductions: by 1991 they had signed a treaty that saw 52,000 of their tanks, warplanes, artillery guns and helicopters destroyed. Ronald Reagan reached agreements with [Mikhail Gorbachev](#) that led to many thousands of nuclear missiles going the same way. More than 20,000 nuclear warheads have been dismantled, leaving some 30,000 intact. In this same period, near-universal agreements banned chemical weapons and the test-firing of nuclear weapons; as a result, global test-firings since 1996 have been reduced almost to zero (previously the US and the Soviet Union had been firing off hundreds a year).

6. The continuation of the Nunn-Lugar programme and recent initiatives to revive the FMCT talks are positive signs. Useful innovations in practical – including non-violent – methods of controlling dangerous commodities including nuclear materials, for example in transport and logistics, have come gradually as the disarmament and arms control mainstream has both dwindled and split. The novel legislative approach embodied in UNSCR 1540 is certainly a step in the right direction in the battle on illicit WMD transfers but it has suffered through problems of implementation at the state level. Efforts to create new initiatives for example on the “illicit trade” in small arms and light weapons are floundering on narrow conceptions of security sector reform (SSR) and the international rule of law.

7. With respect to conventional arms, the overwhelming vote in the General Assembly for a coordinated UN process to consider the feasibility, scope and parameters of a global Arms Trade Treaty reflects an increased international concern in arms control debates with humanitarian, human rights and development standards and impacts. However, to achieve these ends, this concern needs to also be directed at initiatives to reduce holdings of major weapons systems, ordnance stocks and production, and not only to the control of the conventional weapons trade. Moreover, the parallel surge of interest by the international donor community, reflected in the OECD Development Assistance Committee, in using such standards to measure the success of security sector reform requires the development of an integrated, risk-based approach to equipment and weaponry, and hence to disarmament, in the re-shaping of military, security and policing institutions – one without the other will not deliver sustained security.

8. What is needed is not to set aside the useful aspects of the new, piecemeal approach towards proliferation but to reunite them with a renewed 'classical' process based on strategies towards disarmament and the use of treaty and rule of law methods - with the associated principles of equity, objectivity, universality and transparency. This new combination could achieve a more rational division of labour and subsidiarity. Such an approach should fill dangerous gaps in the pattern of coverage and effort, and minimise the double-think and double standards that are rife in current policies and practices.

A realistic prospect

9. Much can be done to [advance](#) a Strategic Concept for the Regulations of Arms Possession and Proliferation- including setting deadlines to conclude negotiations and implement agreements. It took just eighteen months to overcome the ideological and technological issues governing the [cold-war armies](#). Today, with this precedent as a guide and no ideological barrier comparable to the confrontation with communism, a "general disarmament agreement" could be scheduled within two years of the talks starting. The basis for a global-disarmament compact is provided by current agreements. There have been arguments for and against timetables. One notable success was the 1996 CTBT, agreed by a date set at the 1995 NPT meeting. For public opinion used to target dates for climate change and the Millennium Development Goals – disarmament targets are an obvious next step.

10. A way ahead is to adapt procedures that have worked in the past rather than engage in developing a new set. The 'best practice' here lies in the UNMOVIC work in Iraq and in the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). UN inspectors should have access to the permanent members of the Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) as well as to the 'smaller' nuclear powers (India, Pakistan and Israel). These procedures will also be effective in restricting terrorist access to nuclear technology; and they can be adapted to work with biological and chemical weapons.

11. In practice, the Start and intermediate nuclear force ([INF](#)) agreements of the [Reagan-Gorbachev era](#) should be extended to all states, and include missile defence and Star Wars systems. The European agreements reducing and regulating tanks, artillery, helicopters and war planes should also be globalised and include naval vessels. Most of the technical work has already been done for all these agreements; implementation could be as swift as in the most effective existing agreements. 75% of all stocks would be verifiably "Scrap'd" in two years; the remaining quarter would be cut again by 75% in the next two years; until, after a decade, they are all gone.

12. An international coalition must build upon the important precedents set by the Canberra Commission, the Blix Commission, governmental initiatives by the likes of Norway, Germany and the UK, and non-governmental reports from BASIC to Amnesty across the spectrum of human security. The bonus for citizens in every country, taxpayers, the poor and the global economy as a whole would be immense.

Globalising the End of the Cold War Treaties

13. The following paragraphs are an adaptation of the informal proposal to globalise the INF Treaty made by a number of States to the UN Conference on Disarmament in November 2007. It extends it to include other major agreements made at the end of the Cold War and include sea-launched systems. It is designed to complement both the recent proposals on security suggested by Russia and by Barack Obama.

14. "Basic elements of an international legally-binding arrangement on the elimination of strategic, intermediate-range, shorter-range and short range missiles; verification of nuclear weapon manufacturing and stockpiles; verification of biological disarmament and verification of conventional armed forces holdings and manufacture, open for broad international accession"

15. Preamble

The States Parties to this Arrangement,

Guided by the objective of strengthening strategic stability both globally and regionally,

Convinced that the measures set forth in this Arrangement will help to reduce the risk of outbreak of war and strengthen international peace and security,

Determined to act with a view to achieving effective progress towards general and complete disarmament under strict international control,

Desiring to contribute to the realization of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Have agreed as follows:

16. Article I

General Obligations

1. Each State Party to this Arrangement upon entry into force of this Arrangement and thereafter shall not produce or flight-test any strategic, intermediate-range and shorter-range missiles or produce any stages of such missiles or any launchers of such missiles.

2. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall eliminate all its strategic-range, intermediate-range and shorter-range and short-range missiles and launchers of such missiles, as well as all support structures and equipment associated with such missiles and launchers, being in its possession or ownership, or being located in any site or on any vessel under its jurisdiction or control, under categories subject to an agreement, so that no later than the agreed date after entry into force of this Arrangement and thereafter no such missiles, launchers or support structures and equipment shall be possessed by each State Party.

3. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall permit inspections on its territory consistent with the provisions developed by UNMOVIC with respect to nuclear and biological weapons and carry out the verified elimination of such weapons and supporting technologies and infrastructure according to a timetable agreed.

4. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall not produce or test any weapon system of category types described in the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) Treaty regardless of whether they are fitted to land, air or sea systems.

5. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall provide data to other States Parties to this Arrangement concerning weapon systems of all category types within the CFE Treaty whether operated from land or at sea.

6. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall adhere to the Open Skies Treaty

7. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall adhere to the Vienna Confidence and Security Building Measures developed by the OSCE

17. Article II

Rules of Accounting and Definitions of Types of Weapons systems

Provisions for Rules of Accounting and Definitions of Types weapons and supporting technologies are subject to an agreement pursuant to the adapted provisions of START, INF, UNMOVIC, CFE, CSBMs

18. Article III

Limitations on numbers of weapons and supporting technologies are subject to an agreement,

19. Article IV

Exchange of an Information Related to the Obligations

Provisions for exchange of an information under categories of data, related to the obligations provided for by this Arrangement, are subject to an agreement pursuant to the provisions of START, INF, UNMOVIC, CFE, CSBMs and drawing on the timetables therein.

20. Article V

Elimination Procedures

Each State Party to this Arrangement shall eliminate all its strategic, intermediate range, shorter-range, and short range missiles and launchers of such missiles, and all support structures and support equipment associated with such missiles and launchers in accordance with the procedures which are subject to an agreement. Each State Party to this Arrangement shall reduce the other categories of weapon systems and supporting equipment and manufacturing capability subject to agreement.

21. Article VI

Rules of Compliance Verification

Rules of compliance verification are subject to an agreement.

22. Article VII

Definitions shall draw on the relevant paragraphs of the treaties listed herein.

23. Article VIII

The Organization for Implementation of the Arrangement

The States Parties to this Arrangement shall come to an agreement about mechanism of implementation of the subject and the objective of this Arrangement.

24. Article IX

Duration of the Arrangement

This Arrangement shall be of unlimited duration.

25. Article X

Amendments, Signature, Accession, Ratification, Entry into Force, Reservations, Depositary, Authentic Texts

Amendments, signature, accession, ratification, entry into force, reservations, depositary, authentic texts are subject to an agreement.