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Nuclear Disarmament: Challenges, Opportunities and Next Steps

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Contents

- I. Introduction
- II. Synthesis of the main information on NW gained during the work on the project
 1. History of creation and spread of NW
 2. Attempts to stop spread of NW
- III. Keeping nuclear weapons as an essential part of national security
 1. Challenges related to nuclear weapons
 2. Inevitability of invention of nuclear weapons
 3. Vast territory and extended boundary
 4. Means to keep world power position
- IV. Conclusion
- V. Reference materials

I. Introduction

My tasks in this work are:

- 1.** to synthesize the main information gained during the work on the project, mainly
 - the history of the creation and spread of NW and
 - the attempts to stop the spread of NW (international organizations and treaties)
- 2.** to show the reasons for keeping NW as an essential part of national security highlighting
 - challenges related to nuclear weapons,
 - the inevitability of invention of nuclear weapons,
 - the importance of the vast territory and extended boundary, and
 - the necessity for Russia to keep world power position

II. Synthesis of the main information on NW

1. History of creation and spread of NW

You know, nuclear weapons are weapons of mass destruction; their use in a war is disastrous for all mankind and the planet itself. Nuclear weapons are weapons of great power in comparison with conventional weapons.

The history of the creation of NW can't be separated from the history of nuclear physics. At the edge between the 19th and 20th centuries, the discovery of radioactivity by French physicists Pierre Curie and his Polish wife Maria Sklodowska-Curie in 1898 and the discovery by Ernest Rutherford in 1911 that the nucleus of an atom is made up of protons surrounded by whirring electrons cleared the way for other physicists to make even more prominent discoveries. After the discovery of the process of nuclear fission and later nuclear fusion, it became evident that mankind gained energy of such power that could not only devastate cities and towns but also destroy the Earth as a planet. Among the countries paying special attention to the research in this sphere were England, France, Germany and Russia.

During World War II, when the democratic world including the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain and France fought against the fascist Germany, the enemy states toiled to create nuclear weapons which were many times more powerful than ordinary weapons. The US was the first to succeed and after they had bombarded Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atom bombs, the whole world could witness how dangerous and destructive these weapons were. A lot of people started to enforce a ban against the creation of nuclear weapons or at least to stop their proliferation as the danger of nuclear war and the possession of NW became apparent to everybody.

After the end of World War II, the winner countries wanted to keep dominating positions in the world policy and economics and NW was the best "argument" in this competition. So, the nuclear arms race began. The United States tested its first hydrogen bomb in 1952. The Soviet Union conducted its first tests in 1949 (A-bomb) and in 1953 (H-bomb).

The US wasn't inclined to share the results of its NW research program with its former European allies. That's why the UK and France developed their own programs to acquire NW. Their main motivation was "to have an independent deterrent against the USSR" as well as "to retain great power status". (31) The UK tested its bomb which was drawn to a great extent on the information gained by the British physicists while working on the Manhattan Project during the war. As for France, its nuclear bomb based on its own research was tested in 1969.

Another great developing state, China, wanted to have a deterrent against both the United States and the USSR and in 1964 (due to the previous scientific and technological assistance from the Soviet Union), it also tested a nuclear bomb.

The spread of NW was becoming more and more threatening.

Some developing countries also wanted to acquire NW not as a deterrent against their enemies maintaining their national security as well as to become great regional powers.

Thus, India and Pakistan tested their nuclear bombs in 1974 and 1998. And North Korea tested its bomb in 2006. (Though most specialists agree that the test was only partially successful with the yield less than a kiloton).

Still more countries haven't announced their tests but are suspected of either possessing NW or developing NW programs. These are Israel, Iran and Syria.

2. Attempts to stop spread of NW

Soon after the creation of the first nuclear bomb, both scientists and politicians realized how dangerous it could be and started working out measures to put an end to NW proliferation. During the second half of the 20th century, a series of international treaties were agreed and even entered into force as well as some international organizations to control nuclear materials and activities were established (among them the United Nations with its Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency).

As for the international treaties, there are a lot of them dealing with disarmament, test ban, nuclear free zones and others.

The most important of them is the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It was opened for signature on July 1, 1968. There are currently 189 countries party to the treaty. Five states are recognized by the NPT as nuclear weapon states (NWS). These are the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Russia, and the People's Republic of China. All of them are the permanent members of the UN Security Council. The aims of the treaty are to limit the spread of nuclear weapons; to lesson the quantity of NW, to monitor their stockpiles and to create someday the conditions for a halt to the production of nuclear weapons; plus to make it possible for NNWS to apply nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

However, the spread of NW can't be stopped so far.

III. Keeping nuclear weapons as an essential part of national security

Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum...

1. Challenges related to nuclear weapons

The nuclear powers and those alleged to be possess such a lot of nuclear arsenals that they could be enough to destroy our planet several times. Though the period of the Cold War is over and the former enemies don't threaten to apply the nuclear weapons to gain political goals, it's still extremely dangerous to go on preserving them. So, the mankind arouses the question of what to do with all these arsenals. Political and public leaders are nowadays discussing the challenges related to nuclear weapons: the elimination of NW, the reliance on Arms Control and keeping nuclear weapons for national security. In our opinion, the third option is the most reasonable.

2. Inevitability of invention of nuclear weapons

First, total reduction of nuclear weapons for ever doesn't seem achievable. The process of thinking can't be stopped. Even if we eliminated all the present day nuclear weapons and all the documents showing how to produce them, someone would invent again how to use the gigantic power of atomic energy. It might be done in another, even simpler way, but we know for sure that some day it would happen. Who knows what kind of people will do it in the future. This enormous power can appear in the hands of radical politicians or terrorists who would like to achieve their ambitions with its help. If they start threatening our national independence and security, we'll be helpless unless we have equal deterrence.

3. Vast territory and extended boundary

Then, as far as our country is concerned, it's spread over vast territories and has an extremely long boundary which can hardly be protected with the help of conventional weapons at its whole length at a time. No country possesses such huge finances and such a big army. The threat of aggression is quite real as our nearest neighbours are countries with rapidly growing population, such as China and India. They need spare lands for their people to settle and if some day they'd decide attack this country in order to conquer the territories of Russia, especially its eastern part, for these purposes, we need to have something really "convincing" to deter them.

4. Means to keep world power position

Another reason, nuclear weapons enable Russia to have a position of a respected world power and secure its independence against all risks, which is really important in the periods of economic crises and political instability in the world.

IV. Conclusion

To sum up, after nuclear weapons were created and spread over the world, the mankind has to take their existence and destructive power into account while building international relationships and making global decisions. There are numerous arguments for complete elimination of NW stockpiles. At the same time, a great many sensible politicians believe that mere possession of nuclear arsenals is enough to ensure deterrence. So, nuclear weapons could be considered as a perfect means of increasing international stability. What's more, nuclear weapons promote caution in political leaders and decision-makers. And as we have tried to prove above, NW should be kept as an essential part of national security.

However, we clearly realize that ownership of nuclear arsenals makes Russia and other nuclear powers responsible for reasonable foreign and home policy, peaceful goals and all-round assistance to other peoples and nations. We are also convinced that keeping nuclear weapons must be inseparably connected with all-round international arms control, regulated monitoring and verification.

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