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mit der
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Bonn
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Mit Unterstützung
der Evangelischen
Kirche in Hessen
und Nassau

und der
Berghof Stiftung
für
Konfliktforschung
GmbH

Jürgen Scheffran (IANUS):

Time for a Missile Freeze¹

Options for International Control of Ballistic Missiles

Dangers of a missile arms race

Since ballistic missiles were first used by Germany in World War II, missile proliferation has been of great concern to many nations. Ballistic missiles allow aggressors to strike distant targets quickly, with little warning, and with a high probability of penetration. They played a destabilizing role and wasted enormous resources during the Cold War. Grave concerns have been raised about the spread of ballistic missile systems and technologies, in particular, to the Middle East, South Asia and the Korean Peninsula. The use of ballistic missiles in the two Gulf Wars demonstrated their political significance in regional conflicts, though their military utility is rather questionable. Altogether there are good arguments why a world with less or no ballistic missiles would be a better place.

While the enormous Cold-War missile arsenals have declined, the government of the United States perceives new threats from emerging missile capabilities in the so-called "rogue states" (Iraq, Iran, North Korea) which now transformed into "states of concern". While the substance of this threat is still doubted by many experts, influential political circles in the USA promote the early deployment of NMD. Opponents argue that such a system could be easily countered by countermeasures, would undermine international stability and may even increase the missile threat.

The current missile control regime is insufficient

There is still time to prevent a destabilizing and costly arms race between offensive and defensive missiles, assuming that the development of intercontinental-range ballistic missiles (ICBMs) is a complex and time-consuming task and NMD deployment would be delayed by technical difficulties (especially after the failure of the July 7 test). In the past, ballistic missiles have been largely ignored in international arms control and disarmament negotiations, although the preamble of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) demands "the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery". In his speech to the House of Commons in London on July 3 Jayantha Dhanapala, the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs of the United Nations, raised the question,

¹ This article appeared in the ECAAR Newsletter, July 2000.

"why is public debate mired today in a duel between deterrence and defence, with scant attention to missile disarmament?"

Previous efforts have focused on export control by the major suppliers of missile technology and bilateral arms control and disarmament of the former superpowers (INF Treaty, START Treaties). The current restrictions on the transfer of missile-related technology are embodied in the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), created by the G-7 States in 1987. Although membership has grown from 7 to 28 countries and some missile programs could be delayed, the effectiveness of the regime is limited by fundamental problems and shortcomings. The MTCR is a voluntary, non-binding agreement with restricted membership. It does not address the already existing ballistic missile arsenals, and ignores the asymmetry between "haves" and "have nots". Various shorter-range missiles are already deployed in developing countries, and the MTCR has no specific verification and enforcement mechanisms. Furthermore, rigid export control of dual-use goods impedes civil technology cooperation.

To improve the present control regime, a few countries had made preliminary proposals within the limits of the MTCR. At an MTCR meeting in Paris April 23-24, 2000 the United States, Britain, and France offered steps to reinforce MTCR export controls by an increased dialogue with non-MTCR parties, pre-launch notification for missile and space launches, and international standards in the missile field. The proposals will be discussed at a meeting in September to prepare for the MTCR October 2000 plenary session.

New political initiatives

Some governmental levels are now considering options for a stronger missile non-proliferation regime as an alternative to missile defense. The former Russian President Boris Yeltsin at the June 1999 G-8 summit in Germany proposed a Global Control System for the Non-Proliferation of Missiles and Missile Technology (GCS). In his statement at the NPT 2000 Conference on April 25, the Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov urged consideration of a Russian proposal for a global missile confidence-building and non-proliferation regime.² The GCS proposal was discussed March 16 at an expert-level meeting in Moscow, attended by representatives from 46 countries and the United Nations, including Iran and large delegations from China, India, and Egypt. The United States sent an observer but did not participate.

A goal of the GCS is to increase transparency and reduce the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding. Nations would be required to provide notification of missile or space-launch vehicle (SLV) test-launches. To discourage proliferation, the GCS would offer incentives to members of the regime that forswore the use of missiles to deliver weapons of mass destruction, including security assurances against the use of missile systems, assistance from the UN Security Council if such weapons were used, and assistance in the peaceful uses of space for members that gave up missiles as weapons. Despite strong criticism, US officials expressed interest in discussion of the GCS. The Russian government has stated its intention to open the proposal for debate at the "millennium session" of the UN General Assembly.

The GCS proposal is valuable in opening the international debate on missile control, but still is confined to a rather narrow non-proliferation regime, comparable in some respects with the NPT but without the disarmament obligation of Article VI. In this form it would be improbable that major developing countries would accept another "discriminatory" regime with the five declared nuclear weapon states as the only missile powers. If, however, all of the current missile owners would be allowed to keep their missile arsenals, then the effectiveness of the regime would be severely limited.

The only way to deal with asymmetries between countries would be the creation of an international norm against ballistic missiles that would leave the same rights to any country. As the Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy explained in his speech at the 2000 NPT Review Conference on

² M. Rice, Russia Proposes Global Regime On Missile Proliferation, Arms Control Today, May 2000.

April 25, "there exists no treaty, no code of conduct, no set of guidelines defining responsible behavior in these areas. This is a matter that must be addressed."

On March 30-31, 2000, ballistic missiles experts from Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Russia, and the United States met with Axworthy for a roundtable in Ottawa to examine options of a multilateral approach to more effective ballistic missile control, international monitoring, and early warning.³ First priority would be the public defense of the value and need for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, which should be expanded and strengthened. To prevent instabilities and accidents, risk-reduction and confidence-building measures could be taken, such as de-alerting, improved ballistic missile early warning and launch notification. The concept of no-first use could be extended to ballistic missiles. The monitoring and surveillance of missile and space-related activities and the exchange of technical data would be a the key to building a verification system of missile control.

The link between space and missile control was seen as crucial. The experts suggested to negotiate and clarify multilateral space regulations and reserve the use of space for commercial rather than military uses. Steps into this direction would be the establishment of a Canberra-style commission on "Cooperative Security in Space", expert meetings on space surveillance and regulations, and the involvement of the commercial space business.

It was suggested that Canada should play a lead role in elaborating a multilateral action plan on ballistic missiles, e.g. by including key NATO countries. Russia and China should be involved in multilateral cooperation, addressing their broader security concerns. For the long-term success of a missile control regime it would important to "de-rogue" relations with countries such as North-Korea and Iran and better understand their reasons for pursuing their missile programs. Recent political developments in these two countries have been rather positive in this respect (to mention the North-South-Korean summit). This clearly shows that the chances for a new missile control regime would be best served by creating regional security environments that reduce the demand for ballistic missiles.

International organizations would play an important role in facilitating such a process. Potential fora to discuss and negotiate multilateral missile control would be a conference of the MTCR member states and the UN Committee on Disarmament. Alternatively, an international conference of the crucial countries with ballistic missile capabilities could be considered.

Missile ban and missile freeze - two sides of one coin

According to the Ottawa expert group, the long-term goals include "demilitarization, the elimination of non-civilian ballistic missiles, and the elimination of nuclear weapons". While the report did not go into details about how these goals might be achieved, some experts referred to the Reykjavik talks of Gorbachev and Reagan in 1986 and proposals made by independent researchers. A model for the elimination of ballistic missiles is the ZBM (Zero Ballistic Missile) regime which has been developed and discussed by the Federation of American Scientists (FAS) in 1992, with Paul Nitze and Alton Frye as strong supporters.⁴

Such a regime would aim at the complete elimination of offensive ballistic missiles and combine unilateral declarations with regional and global multilateral agreements. The ZBM proposal suggested a step-by-step approach, including bilateral cuts between the USA and Russia, ballistic missile-free zones, an international Missile Conference, the creation of an International Agency for Ballistic Missile Disarmament, and finally agreement on the varying schedules to zero ballistic missile capability. To implement ballistic missile elimination, the FAS proposal presented a complete draft treaty. Such a Ballistic Missile Convention would aim for the global non-proliferation and elimination of offensive ballistic missiles, in conjunction with conventions on the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction.

³ Ballistic Missiles Foreign Experts Roundtable Report, March 30-31, 2000, Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, April 7, 2000.

⁴ Revisiting Zero Ballistic Missiles - Reagan's Forgotten Dream, F.A.S. Public Interest Report, May/June 1992; L. Lumpe, Zero Ballistic Missiles and the Third World, Arms Control, Vol. 14 (1), April 1993, pp. 218-223; A. Frye, Zero Ballistic Missiles, Foreign Policy, No. 88, Fall 1992, pp. 12-17.

While global missile disarmament would be a longer-term perspective, the need for action is now. The best way to prevent an arms race and buy more time for political initiatives would be a moratorium on the further development, testing and deployment of ballistic missiles. Such a "missile freeze" would be like a break in the arms race, during which countries could consider and negotiate the next steps without time pressure. A key element would be a ballistic missile flight test ban which would preclude the testing of new missiles and reduce the chance of accidental or intentional war. To address concerns about asymmetries and discrimination, a test ban moratorium would have a contemporary character and would need to be accompanied by negotiations on missile reductions. To minimize incentives for missile development, the missile freeze should be extended to missile defense systems. Regional security initiatives, including the whole range of delivery systems, could help to overcome asymmetries.

Verification of missile disarmament

A crucial aspect of missile control would be verification.⁵ Most important would be measures to prevent the transformation of space launch technology into ballistic missiles. Despite their inherent similarity, differences in the basing mode, the testing procedures, the payload, flight trajectory, guidance systems and reentry could be used as indicators to distinguish between space launchers and ballistic missiles. During testing, production and deployment, national technical means of verification (sensors, intelligence) would focus on observable rocket characteristics (number, size, range, payload, deployment mode, launch preparations, flight trajectory). Most visible is the infrastructure, which includes production facilities, development programs and test ranges, tracking and communication facilities, missile containers and missile-carrying vehicles. A ballistic missile flight test ban would be not very difficult to verify since missile launches are visible from early warning satellites and ground- or air-based radars.

To limit the risk of using space launchers for ballistic missile development, technical means of verification need to be combined with measures of cooperative verification and confidence building. Most important would be inspections, using non-intrusive devices and techniques, to detect reliably evidence of non-compliance and help provide assurance that no military ballistic missiles are being developed under a civilian space program. A safeguards system for space launchers could place some of the "most critical" items under supervision by an international organization. International cooperation in civilian space programs would be also important in containing the use of space technology for missile development.

The role of citizens and the public

Similar to nuclear disarmament, citizens and non-governmental organizations would play an important role in promoting and implementing international missile control. To increase public awareness a greater public discourse on the missile problem and its resolution is needed. By building a network of information exchange and debate, experts, civil society and officials would be jointly engaged in this process. Activities could include meetings and conferences, together with scientists and technicians, as well a protesting and citizen inspections of critical facilities. Only by such a joint endeavor there is a chance that ballistic missiles do not stimulate a new arms race and undermine the prospects for nuclear disarmament.

⁵ See further: J. Scheffran, Verification of Ballistic Missile Bans and Monitoring of Space Launches, in: W. Liebert, J. Scheffran (eds.), *Against Proliferation - Towards General Disarmament*, Münster: Agenda 1995, pp. 156-164; J. Scheffran, *Elimination of Ballistic Missiles: An Important Step Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World*, in: J. Rotblat, M. Konuma (eds.), *Towards a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World*, World Scientific, 1997, pp. 310-326.