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On China's No First Use of Nuclear Weapons

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On October 16, 1964, the Chinese government announced a statement that China had exploded an atomic bomb at 15:00 that day.¹ The event indicated its first successful nuclear test, and that China had become a nuclear weapon state. China's nuclear explosion immediately drew the world attention.

Background of China's no-first-use policy and its implications to the world peace and stability

If one recalls the history of the Cold War in 1950s and early 1960s, it is not difficult to note that China went nuclear under great compulsion. Under the extremely heavy military pressure of Washington, China at that time was the only country from the third world to be engaged in serious military conflicts with the United States, and was almost the sole practical target out of non-nuclear weapons states of a possible US nuclear strike. As a matter of fact, Washington had more than once seriously considered launching such a nuclear attack against China in the Korean War from 1952-1953, and in the Taiwan Strait Crises both in 1954 and 1958.² It is under such circumstance that China declared that it 'is developing nuclear weapons for defense and for protecting the Chinese people from U.S. threats to launch a nuclear war'.³ Self-defense is the primary driving force of China's nuclear option.

But behind the self-defense motivation, there seems another important factor that helped shape Beijing's nuclear decision then, that is, the belief that 'you must have nuclear weapons in order to eliminate the nuclear weapons'. This belief was at least partly reinforced by the view of some well-known personages in the Western peace movement such as the Nobel Laureates Frederic and Irene Joliot-Curie in Paris. In 1951, Frederic Joliot-Curie was said to pass a message to Mao Zedong that 'you should not oppose the atomic bomb, you should own the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb is not so terrifying'. The advice 'helped raise the level of consciousness in Beijing about the bomb and its potential significance for China. Mao characterized that significance for his senior colleagues in 1958, when he told them that without atomic and hydrogen bombs, others don't think what we say carries weight'.⁴

In the above-mentioned China's statement in October 1964, there are quite a number of important paragraphs to highlight China's concept to this effect:

"The atomic bomb is a paper tiger. This famous statement by Chairman Mao Zedong is known to all. This was our view in the past and this is still our view at present. China is developing nuclear weapons not because it believes in their omnipotence nor because it plans to use them. On the contrary, in developing nuclear weapons, China's aim is to break the nuclear monopoly of the nuclear powers and to eliminate nuclear weapons.

"The Chinese government fully understands the good intentions of peace-loving countries and peoples in demanding an end to all nuclear tests. But more and more countries are coming to realize that the more exclusive the monopoly of nuclear weapons held by the US imperialists and their partners, the greater the danger of a nuclear war. They are very arrogant when they have those weapons while you haven't. But when those who oppose them also have such weapons, they will not be so haughty, their policy of nuclear blackmail and nuclear threats will not be so effective, and the possibility of complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons will increase. We sincerely hope that a nuclear war will never break out. We are deeply convinced that, so long as all peace-loving countries and peoples make joint efforts and persist in the struggle, nuclear war can be prevented".⁵

This ambivalence towards nuclear weapons led China to adopt a nuclear policy on two legs as soon as it acquired the nuclear capability. On the one hand, Beijing insisted on maintaining a nuclear retaliatory force to meet the nuclear threat from the United States. On the other hand, it exercised greatest restraint on the role of these weapons, and was active to call for nuclear arms control and disarmament.

In the 1964 statement, China "solemnly declares that China will never at any time or under any circumstances be the first to use nuclear weapons".⁶ In the subsequent years, China also explicitly undertook unconditionally a commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against any non-nuclear weapons states. Since then, China has consistently abided by this no-first-use obligation, which has virtually become Beijing's nuclear doctrine to protect its national security interests, and to promote world peace and nuclear disarmament. In China's perspective, pending the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, nuclear weapons states should at least undertake the minimum obligation to reduce the role of nuclear weapons to the only one of retaliation of a nuclear attack.

In the same statement, China also "proposes to the government of the world that a

summit conference of all the countries of the world be convened to discuss the question of the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of the nuclear weapons, and that as the first step, the summit conference conclude an agreement to the effect that the nuclear powers and those countries which may soon become nuclear powers undertake not to use nuclear weapons either against non-nuclear countries and nuclear-free zones or against each other?⁷

This was indeed the first ever proposal coming from a nuclear weapon state, which pointed to a new but most practical and effective approach to the nuclear disarmament. As China argued:

?The proposal of the Chinese Government, which takes the pledge not to use nuclear weapons as the first step towards the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, is both reasonable and feasible.

?It is easy and simple for those countries who possess nuclear weapons to implement it as long as they do not harbor the intention of aggression. After they undertake the obligation of not using nuclear weapons, there will be no need to conduct nuclear tests, nor to manufacture nuclear weapons?.⁸

It should be pointed out that despite the zigzag evolution of the world situation in the subsequent years, China has never changed these two basic positions with regard to its commitment of no-first-use and the desire to conclude an international treaty on the prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

For China, the no-first-use is not only a politically declaratory policy, but also the fundamental doctrine to guide its nuclear strategy, which is only relevant to the nuclear weapon states as China does not consider using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states under any circumstances. So, China will consider the use of nuclear weapons only when it was attacked by nuclear weapons. Unlike other nuclear weapon states, it does not plan to use its nuclear force to make for the inefficiency of conventional capabilities.

Thus the no-first-use doctrine provided a conceptual guidelines for the development of China's nuclear force. In accordance with the no-first-use doctrine, China didn't find it essential to develop a large nuclear arsenal in number. The idea was as long as you are able to give a devastating counter-attack against one or two U.S. big cities, the scenario was enough to make the attacker who had the intention of preemptive nuclear strike pause, and hopefully drop the plan. Furthermore, China didn't find it essential either to seek the qualitative improvement of its nuclear force such as acquiring the capability of striking at the military targets, with much greater precision guidance, or

fitting more nuclear warheads on a single missile (MIRVed). Nor did China feel a need to develop battlefield nuclear weapons, as these weapons would often be prone to be used in a military conflict, thereby triggering the escalation of nuclear exchanges. This self-restraint is vividly reflected in the fact that China has never put nuclear modernization program as its top priority on its national agenda. It conducted the least nuclear tests among the five de jure nuclear weapon states, and the pace of its nuclear modernization program has been deliberately slow. Against the backdrop, China has been able to be away from the nuclear arms race between the major nuclear powers. More importantly, this non-provocative stance contributed to the emergence of a strategic framework in the Cold War, in which global strategic stability was sustained. One cannot imagine how the world structure would have been had China followed a different course of action and also built up a large nuclear arsenal.

Meanwhile, China has been consistently pushing for the progress on the international obligation of no-first-use.

The effort was of course first of all directed to urging the United States to accept the obligation. Immediately after the first successful nuclear explosion in 1964, China challenged the United States by suggesting to conclude a bilateral agreement on the non-use of nuclear weapon against each other.⁹ In the following years, in order to make it less difficult to be acceptable, China slightly modified the proposal by suggesting to the United States to first conclude an agreement that each side undertakes not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other.¹⁰ Unfortunately all these proposals were rejected by the United States.

When China resumed its rightful status in the United Nations in 1971, it immediately carried the issue to the UN General Assembly, stressing the importance of the no-first-use as the first step to the nuclear disarmament:

?In order to initiate the first step to the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, it is essential to grasp the key to the issue instead of beating bushes around on the details. What is of the first and foremost importance is that the nuclear weapon states should undertake the obligation not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other; particularly the obligation not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states, nor against nuclear-free zones. If there is indeed the will to avoid a nuclear war and to work towards complete prohibition of nuclear weapons, it should not be difficult to undertake such obligations?¹¹

At the Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament on June 21, 1982, China took the opportunity to put forward a set of systematic proposals on essential measures for an immediate halt to the arms race and for disarmament.

Among the many specific measures proposed, the first was related to the no-first-use. China suggested:

?All nuclear states should reach an agreement on the non-use of nuclear weapons. Pending this, the nuclear states should each undertake unconditionally not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or nuclear-weapon-free zones and not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other at any time or under any circumstances?¹²

Again, China's proposal was turned down by the Western nuclear powers. But to the surprise of many people, the Soviet Union accepted it. For the first time, Moscow pledged not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. However, the fact that Soviet Union continued to strengthen its already excessive nuclear striking force by further enhancing the counter-force capabilities led the world to seriously doubt the validity of the Soviet pledge. When the Cold was ended, the Russians reversed its position of no-first-use. China remains now the only nuclear weapon state that has self-made and abided by such a commitment.

Obviously, China's consistent pledge of no-first-use, its self-restraint on the development of the nuclear program and its active participation in seeking an international agreement on the no-first-use as the first step towards the nuclear disarmament has made it a unique nuclear weapon state, who appears to have more common language with the non-nuclear weapon states than nuclear weapon states. In association with China's no-first-use pledge, for example, China has often been on the side of the non-nuclear weapon states to urge the nuclear weapon states (including itself, of course) to respect further the security requirements of the former, and to undertake greater obligations for peace, stability and disarmament.

China has consistently rejected the policy of nuclear deterrence of the major nuclear powers, as it inherently carries recognition of using nuclear weapons as legitimate. It has repeatedly pointed out that the theory of deterrence had become the major obstacle to the no-first-use obligation, and the primary source of nuclear arms race among nuclear weapon states.

China is the most explicit among nuclear weapon states to give negative assurance to the non-nuclear weapon states, which it considers fully accords with China's pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states under any circumstance.

China also strongly supports the establishment of nuclear zones, and calls for the respect of their status as such and undertake corresponding obligations. Among these

obligations on the nuclear weapon states, China urges that states with nuclear weapons deployed outside their borders should withdraw all these weapons home.

Challenges to China's no-first-use policy in the current situation

The Cold War ended rather abruptly beyond the world anticipation at the beginning of the 1990s. The bipolar global structure collapsed with the disappearance of the Soviet Union, which led to the general relaxation of the world situation, dominated by the military competition of the two former superpowers. The fundamental change of the world situation apparently had benign bearing on people's perceptions of the role of nuclear weapons. No longer did the nuclear issue stand as the central piece of the international security, as people no longer regard nuclear war as feasible or acceptable. There seem to be widespread sentiments that nuclear weapons are increasingly usable in terms of technological development, but politically it is increasingly unusable.

It is against this background, a propitious atmosphere developed for the progress of the multilateral effort for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation at the initial period of the post-Cold War era. Among other things, the international community almost unanimously agreed to the indefinite extension of NPT in May 1995. Under the auspices of the United Nations, a comprehensive test ban treaty was open for signature of the world countries in September 1996. By the end of 2000, 160 nations had already joined the treaty. During this period of time, the effort for creating nuclear free zones were also fruitful, witnessing the establishment of those regions in South Pacific, Southeast Asia and Africa. Although the above progress in nuclear disarmament and arms control was not directly relevant to the no-first-use policy, it had an indirect positive impact on the universal perception of a reduced role of nuclear weapons, as well as the changing policies of nuclear weapon states towards less reliance on them. In all the above effort, China was an active participant, and played an important role in materializing their success.

But the seemingly benign situation changed also quite abruptly when the world was prepared to enter into the new millennium. A series of events happened, having important bearing on the strategic stability of the world.

In May 1998, India conducted a number of nuclear explosions, which forced Pakistan also to make its response in kind. Two more new nuclear de facto nuclear weapon states emerged in the sub-continent. Although it was no secret that these two countries had long time ago acquired nuclear capabilities surreptitiously, it still had very negative shocking implications to the region as well as to the world for them to go nuclear openly. The conflict between India and Pakistan is added a new dangerous nuclear element. That India used 'China's threat' as its motivation to develop nuclear

weapons obviously undermined the already tenuous relations between the two largest Asian countries. In a more broad sense, the explosions has dealt a heavy, if not fatal, blow to the international nonproliferation regime. The danger of further nuclear proliferation is particularly ill-boded in Southwest and Northeast Asia as more possible next nuclear candidates are all concentrated in these regions.

Meanwhile, In the United States, the conservative force especially from the Republicans were on the rise with its increasing desire to influence the American security policy. This found expression especially in its criticism on the nuclear policy of the Clinton administration, and the demand for the development and deployment of ballistic missile defense (BMD) systems. The CTBT was shelved by the Republican dominated congress. Yielding to the great pressure from the Republicans, Clinton found himself obliged to make a reversal of its original opposition to the BMD, and opted for controversial programs for both national (NMD) and theater (TMD) missile defense systems. The decision was bound to have serious impact on the global nuclear structure, posing challenges to the lesser nuclear weapon states in particular. As the development and deployment of NMD systems invariably impel the U.S. withdraw from the ABM treaty, the world would stand with danger of no rules of game, thereby eroding much of the strategic stability built through the joint international effort.

If all these were initial signs of the changing U.S. policy into the new century, George W. Bush coming into power signaled a dramatic turn for a much more conservative and hard-line position that immediately generated world instabilities and regional tensions. Indeed, the Bush administration comprised mostly those Cold War warriors that had previously closely associated with Pentagon, the armed forces, or the military industrial complex. Rigid in ideological prejudice, they seemed solely preoccupied with consolidating the U.S. predominance in the world by military superiority, and claimed that they acted only for the American interests, which, unfortunately were narrowly defined. Military superiority was stressed as the top priority on the national agenda of the administration. And they are more willing to take a confrontational approach towards countries thought to be hostile, whether practical or potential. In the field of arms control and disarmament, the Bush administration was particularly characterized by what people labeled as unilateralism, aimed at seeking the maximum freedom of action and greatest flexibility in developing new military capabilities.

The 9.11 event took the U.S. by surprise. It was hoped that the tragedy may help somehow the administration to reexamine its unilateral approach and come back for greater international cooperation for the common security of the world. This expectation fell apart. As a matter of fact, the 9.11 event seemed only to augment the determination of the administration to enhance absolute security by absolute military superiority. Military expenditure is increased substantially. The advanced military

programs like the BMD and those into the outer space have been added greater dynamism. Preparation for a war against Iraq is now set in full process.

In early 2002, the Bush administration was reported to reveal part of its nuclear posture, which demonstrated a new trend that the U.S. will be prepared to use nuclear weapons in a much wider range of circumstances than before, with a particular emphasis on tactical uses. Such an emphasis in a declaratory policy has not been seen since the days of 'flexible response' forty or so years ago, when tactical nuclear weapons were deployed in Europe and elsewhere. In addition, according to the media reports, the nuclear posture also stresses:

- That nuclear weapons are legitimate weapons, which the U.S. plans to retain in large numbers for the indefinite future.
- That the U.S. may be prepared to use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear weapon state, which should attack the U.S. or its allies with chemical or biological weapons. This is evidently a step back off from the previous administration.
- That the U.S. will invest heavily in its nuclear weapons infrastructure; that new warheads may be developed and nuclear explosion testing may resume.
- That the U.S. is unlikely to allow itself to be constrained by existing arms control commitments, and unlikely to engage in additional meaningful measures of nuclear arms control and disarmament.¹³

What is worth pointing out is that in the readjustment of the U.S. policy, the Bush administration has manifested a clear vigilance against China. In fact, Washington has barely cared to veil its belief in its threat perception that China has become the U.S. greatest potential adversary in the future. Quite a few strategic measures taken by the administration have first spearheaded against China. In the 2002 nuclear posture, it was reported that China was among the seven countries that were the U.S. nuclear striking targets; it was also revealed that the U.S. was prepared to use nuclear weapons against China during a military conflict across the Taiwan Strait.¹⁴

The new developments as indicated above have important implications to China's nuclear security. In short, the security environment has been much complicated, compared to the time when China had first exploded its nuclear bomb. In those years in the Cold War, China had to address the threat but only from one superpower. There were times the threat came from both the two major nuclear powers. But even in that case, the nature of the threat to China was the same whether it came from one or two powers. Moreover, nuclear technology at those times was relatively primitive. Under the circumstances, the response to the nuclear threat was fairly easy and simple: as long as you also have the bomb yourself, you are fairly safe in ensuring the effective

deterrent to the others. Now, evidently the nuclear threat from the major nuclear power, namely the United States, remains. What makes things more difficult to manage is that the situation involving an attack from it could be far more fluid and complicated than ever before. To China, for example, the following scenarios are easily conceivable suppose a military conflict occurs with the United States:

- If Washington uses a tactical nuclear bomb against China's military assets in a conflict at Taiwan Strait as it has alleged;
- If Washington uses conventional weapons to attack China's ICBM silos or its nuclear infrastructures as it clearly indicated in the nuclear posture that in the U.S. new triad, conventional weapons will replace strategic weapons to perform part of its missions; or
- If Washington launches a limited nuclear attack against China after it has successfully deployed a limited NMD system which is specifically aimed at coping with the possible China's incoming warheads.

Under any one of the situations, China will feel in a dilemma to make the decision to use its nuclear retaliatory force to counter-attack. For one thing, from an operational point of view, China's no-first-use pledge seems to have greatly bound its hands to maintain flexibility in seeking the optimum options. For another, China will find lack of multiple means to differentiate its responses to different scenarios.

On the other hand, nuclear proliferation in South Asia, and possibly to Northeast Asia (Japan, for example) has also complicated China's security calculation. For the first time, regional tensions are greatly affected by a nuclear element not directly from the major nuclear powers. Beijing will confront a new challenge as how to put these nuclear capabilities into the regional equation of various forces. Furthermore, nuclear proliferation may also raise a prospect, however remote it seems now, that Taiwan, a renegade province from China, acquires nuclear weapons to resist peaceful unification with the mainland. China will not tolerate such kind of thing happening.

There is apparently an inside debate about the future nuclear policy in China, facing the new situation. The result of this debate is unknown as quite a number of decisions will have to depend on the evolution of the future situation. But already a small but discernable voice can be heard in China calling for the drastic change of China's nuclear strategy. It argues since China faces a more complex and practical nuclear threat, no-first-use policy perhaps only serves in the future to bind its hands to seek greater flexibility of actions. It also argues that since the US has changed its nuclear strategy emphasizing pre-emptive strikes, particularly given the deployment of missile defense systems, china should perhaps realize that the present minimum nuclear arsenal is inadequate to meeting the new challenges, and therefore should greatly

expand its nuclear force to the extent that it can be actually used in different scenarios.

But the above view from this small group in China's defense community, however, is plausible. It seems extremely unlikely that China will fundamentally change its nuclear policy; particularly its no-first-use position. The reasons are many-fold: First, from China's grand national strategy of putting the sustained economic development as its top priority, and of continuing to seek a long-term peaceful and stable international environment, and greater international cooperation to ensure its security, it is clear that China's defense modernization will continue to be at the backseat. This will definitely also apply to its nuclear posture and doctrine. China certainly is concerned the drastic implications if it changes its nuclear policy. Second, China still does not believe that nuclear weapons are usable, or a nuclear war could really work in any country's interests. Third, change of its nuclear policy will inevitably lead to a nuclear arms race with the United States, which China certainly has no interest in. Finally, China may also be concerned that change of the nuclear policy will tarnish its image in the non-nuclear weapon states, which China has so consistently proud of. Thus, all these considerations combined, China will make effort to enhance the survivability and effectiveness of its small nuclear force, but it will do so only in proportion with its defense needs. There is no reason to suggest that China will change its course of action in the nuclear field although one must acknowledge that the government will under greater pressure to review its nuclear doctrine and posture.

Nor is China expected to reduce its interest in the participation in the international multilateral efforts for nuclear arms control and disarmament. In fact, Beijing continues to push forward the conclusion of a multilateral treaty on mutual no-first-use of nuclear weapons. In January 1994, China formally submitted a draft treaty on the no-first-use of nuclear weapons to U.S. Russia, France and Britain and suggested a consultation between the five nuclear weapon states at an early date. It has also been actively seeking support of the other nuclear weapon states to undertake no-first-use commitment on bilateral basis. On September 4, 1994, China and Russia agreed to undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons against each other or target their nuclear weapons at each other. The U.S. still refused to consider any obligation of no-first-use either on the multilateral or bilateral basis, but Washington did agree to conclude an agreement with China on the non-targeting of each other under Clinton administration.

Future prospect of turning no-first-use into an international treaty

The idea of developing thermo-nuclear weapons was first raised during the second world war by a group of natural scientists in order to deny the Nazi Germany any opportunity of acquiring this horrible capability and bring to the world the unimaginable catastrophe. They successfully manufactured the weapons thanks to the

support of the U.S. government before the Germans did; the bombs were actually used at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, demonstrating such huge destructive power that the effect immediately shocked the world. Among those who were particularly alarmed by the ensuing nuclear armed race between the two superpowers and the increasing risk of a nuclear exchange are those very scientists engaged in the development of the nuclear weapons themselves. "The men who know most are the most gloomy".

So at the very outset in the Cold War, the scientists with great consciousness to humanity were pioneers for alerting the world of the danger of nuclear weapons and the calling for their abolition. The Russell-Einstein Manifesto issued by eleven such eminent scientists in July 1955 was just one example. With a sense of great urgency, they pointed out that "a war with H-Bombs might quite possibly put an end to the human race.", and asked the question, "stark and dreadful, and inescapable: Shall we put an end to the human race; or shall mankind renounce war?". The Manifesto particularly called for an agreement to renounce nuclear weapons as part of a general reduction of armaments.¹⁵ Following the release of the Russell-Einstein Manifesto, efforts were begun to convene an international conference of scientists for a more in-depth exchange of views on ways to avert a nuclear catastrophe. The first Pugwash conference was thus held from 7-10 July 1957, ending up with a report on nuclear radiation hazards, control of nuclear weapons, and the social responsibilities of scientists. From this first meeting the Pugwash Conferences have evolved into an international organization with national groups in more than 50 countries, which by the summer of 2001 had organized 265 meetings, involving more than 3,500 individual scientists, academics and policy specialists. In recognition of its efforts to eliminate the nuclear threat, Pugwash and its then President, Joseph Rotblat, were jointly awarded the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize.¹⁶ Today, anti-nuclear non-governmental organizations like Pugwash Conference are over several thousands all over the world. They have been playing a unique role in arousing the international awareness of the nuclear risks and mobilizing the world efforts for nuclear disarmament, including the no-first-use of nuclear weapons.

But of course these international efforts were not only confined to the peace movement. In the United States and the Western world, there has been growing criticism from government officials or research institutions about the role of nuclear weapons. As early as in 1982, four Americans who had held high office in the US government proposed reconsideration of the NATO understanding and of an agreement not to use nuclear weapons first.¹⁷ The proposal contained in the article in Foreign Affairs immediately gave rise to a heated debate on the NATO nuclear strategy for many ensuing years. In 1991, right on the eve of the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, the Committee on International Security and Arms Control (CISAC), the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, which comprised a number of well-known

scientists, former high-ranking officials and generals, released a report on 'the Future of the U.S.-Soviet Nuclear relationship', highlighting a conclusion in its findings that 'the principal objective of U.S. nuclear policy should be to strengthen the emerging political consensus that nuclear weapons should serve no purpose beyond the deterrence of and possible response to, nuclear attack by others'.¹⁸ After the Cold War was over, the European allies have also been uneasy about the nuclear deterrence policy which seemed so outdated for the changed situation. One illustrating example is that the German government raised the issue of a nuclear no-first-use policy at the NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels on December 8, 1999, defying outspoken U.S. opposition. The German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer explicitly stressed the support of renouncing the first use of nuclear weapons and lowering the alert status, arguing that 'the nuclear powers' failure to take steps toward disarmament or reducing the role of nuclear weapons will reduce the incentive for non-nuclear weapon states to forgo the nuclear option'.¹⁹ Although the German initiative was unable to shake the U.S. dominant nuclear concept within the alliance, it was reported that there was wide support by other non-nuclear members of NATO of the opposition against the indefinite reliance on nuclear weapons. In November the same year, Germany and 11 further NATO member states decided not to vote against resolution A/C.1/53/L48 'Toward a nuclear Weapon Free World: The Need for a New Agenda' in the UN First Committee. This was indeed a courageous step towards a right direction for a nuclear-free world.²⁰

Facing the new reality, it is increasingly essential, as the Statement of Pugwash Council stressed after its 52nd annual conference on August 10-14 August 2002, that all the nuclear weapon states should 'recognize the illegality and immorality of nuclear weapons and move expeditiously to eliminate such weapons in the near future'.²¹ In order to achieve this aim, it is perhaps of greater significance to call the establishment of a common understanding of the value of no-first-use policy of all the nuclear weapon states. No-first-use is first of all the greatest confidence building measures politically among the nuclear weapons states, which seems so absent now in their mutual relations. It also provides the way for genuine nuclear disarmament by these states. If all the nuclear weapon states are committed to no-first-use, requirements for the modernization of major nuclear systems will become far more modest than has been assumed, thus making the real, irreversible deep cuts of the nuclear weapons possible and feasible. Finally, this meaningful obligation by the nuclear weapon states will have great positive impact on the strengthening of nonproliferation regime in the world since the role of nuclear weapons is fundamentally reduced and restrained.

But sadly, the international efforts for the no-first-use seem now confronting a daunting major obstacle from the policy of the Bush administration, that still takes

nuclear weapons as integral part of its military force, and moreover, usable in its future war planning. Unless the U.S changes its nuclear doctrine, there virtually seems no hope that other nuclear weapon states will give up their first-use option. The problem on the part of the Bush administration, however, lies not only in its conceptual guidance for the utility of nuclear weapons; it also related to the huge material interests of various groups of people, who benefit from the nuclear arms development. As one American author noted many years ago: "in the United States more than just public institutions are involved in a defense-industrial complex. Besides the civilians and uniformed personnel employed by the Pentagon and other security agencies, many of the nation's largest corporations are defense contractors, and much of the labor force has learned the skills of defense-related trades. Our most prominent research institutions, universities included rely on weapons-related contracts for their prosperity, and most members of Congress come from districts where military based or defense industries are located".²² This situation has not changed under the Bush administration. It is even more consolidated that the powerful influence of defense-related interests have increasingly important implications for the U.S. arms control policy.

Under the circumstance, it is the author's belief that the hope lies in the people, the average people that will have increasingly the constraining power to influence the government's policy with the fast spread of information technology. That's why the Pugwash Council stressed the importance of the education campaign that is badly needed "to alert all peoples to the very real and continuing risk of a nuclear catastrophe".²³ Once peoples of the world are knowledgeable and mobilized, they will become a decisive force to force all the nuclear weapon states to honor their obligations, including the no-first-use, and lead the world eventually towards the one free of the nuclear threats.

Footnotes

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