



CSIS European Trilateral Nuclear Dialogue

Consensus Statement Prior to the 2015 NPT Review Conference

11 May 2015

In an effort to increase trilateral nuclear dialogue among the United States, France, and the United Kingdom, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) established a group of high-level nuclear experts to discuss nuclear issues and to identify areas of consensus among the three countries. From 2009 to 2015, the dialogue hosted three meetings a year (one in each nation's capital) and produced consensus policy statements signed by nongovernmental participants in order to promote trilateral understanding of the nuclear challenges facing the P3. This consensus statement addresses the group consensus over issues relating to the upcoming May 2015 NPT Review Conference.

The Value of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT)

- The NPT has served the international community well and should continue to be supported by all of its signatories. We need to be sure the NPT remains the focus of our governments' and the international community's efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation. While some proliferation has occurred since the treaty entered into force, it is dramatically smaller than was feared in the 1960s. For the nonnuclear weapons states, the treaty provides significant barriers to the possibility that their neighbors will obtain or build nuclear weapons. This strengthens strategic stability on the local and regional level and, therefore, ultimately on the global level.
- The nuclear arsenals of Russia, the United States, France, and the United Kingdom have also been reduced significantly, thanks in part to the impetus provided by the NPT. While there are national and bilateral limits in place that will prevent new growth in the size of these P5 nations' nuclear inventories, China has to date refused to limit the growth of its nuclear forces and continues its policy of nontransparency with respect to its nuclear strategy and posture. We hope that China will soon join its P5 partners in greater transparency and constraining the growth of its nuclear arsenal.
- In the current unsettled international security environment, the nuclear capabilities of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France contribute to international stability, to preventing major aggression against themselves and their allies, and to helping prevent nuclear proliferation by reducing the incentives for their nonnuclear allies to pursue nuclear weapons of their own. We fully comprehend the massive devastation and loss of life a major war would create, even if fought solely with modern conventional (or at any rate nonnuclear) weapons. The U.S., UK, and French deterrents help prevent this, as well as nuclear war.
- As noted in our November 2014 consensus statement, Russia has increased its coercive use of nuclear weapons in its diplomacy, exercises, and harassment of NATO forces. We condemn these Russian actions, which are inconsistent with the restraint expected of major nuclear powers, and urge the Russian government to cease these provocations.



- In light of both Russian and Chinese behavior, we believe P3 solidarity, even at the expense of P5 consensus, must be maintained.
- We acknowledge continued frustration amongst some nonnuclear weapons states with the perceived slow pace of disarmament. We regret the strategic and political conditions necessary to pursue further reductions in our arsenals do not currently exist.
- We recognize the need to reinforce the NPT as the essential framework and forum to discuss these concerns. On the other hand, efforts to undermine the treaty viability or call into question the legality and legitimacy of the constructs and responsibilities provided by the treaty are, in our view, unacceptable.

The Case of Iran

- Rolling back the “nuclear threshold status” of Iran is the biggest near-term challenge faced by the nonproliferation regime anchored to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. If the current understanding between the P5+1 and Iran, which is more comprehensive and detailed than most of us expected, is converted to a signed agreement and executed as agreed, Iran’s breakout time could be extended to about a year for at least 10 years. This goal, while less ambitious than goals pursued in earlier negotiations with Iran, was agreed to by the P5+1 and, as such, represents their collective judgment of what was achievable in this complex, lengthy, and difficult negotiation, and what is acceptable, given the alternatives.
- Consequently, we support the effort to conclude a formal agreement along the lines of the “comprehensive framework,” which must include the critical provisions needed for verifying compliance and punishing violations. We do not underestimate the difficulties inherent in converting an “agreement in principle” into a detailed and binding document, but we urge the P5+1 to complete the task. We also call upon nonnuclear states to encourage Iran at the NPT Review Conference to follow through and conclude what would be an historic nonproliferation agreement that would make the world safer.
- A credible and effective verification regime for the P5+1/Iranian agreement is critical. In past negotiations, reaching agreement on verification has often taken much longer than reaching agreement on the provisions to be verified. In START 1, for example, the Gorbachev-Reagan statement on strategic arms reductions was made in December 1987, and it took another three and a half years before the treaty was signed. The P5+1 and Iran have set a very ambitious goal of about 100 days to conclude their negotiations. We believe it is important that the P3 begin to lay the groundwork now to allow the negotiators to work past 30 June if that is what is needed to craft solid verification provisions.

Future Proliferation Implications

- This P5+1/Iran agreement does not resolve some of the most significant medium- and long-term challenges to the nonproliferation regime, especially in the area of sensitive fuel cycle technologies. We therefore believe that this agreement needs to be a catalyst for renewed efforts to fill these cracks in the nonproliferation regime. There is a risk in particular that a small number of other states might seek over time to build their nuclear capabilities to whatever level Iran is



permitted by an eventual P5+1 agreement. We recommend that the P3 governments recognize this and similar proliferation risks and initiate consultations on how to counter them.

- The P3 (or the P5 if possible) should consistently portray the Iran agreement, if successfully concluded and implemented, as underscoring the principle that the right to peaceful uses of atomic energy enshrined in Article IV of the NPT exist *only* in situations where a state is in compliance with its obligations under Article II “not to manufacture or otherwise acquire nuclear weapons or other nuclear explosive devices.”



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