NON-PROLIFERATION OF ‘WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION’
THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE?

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CORE QUESTIONS

• What are ‘Weapons of Mass Destruction’?

• What does ‘proliferation’ mean?

• What does ‘non-proliferation’ entail?

• Where is the ‘ultimate challenge’?
  • Case study: Why does ‘disarmament’ work in Syria?
WHAT IS A WMD?

- Used to be synonymous with NW
  - Since end Cold War, increasingly chemical, biological and radiological weapons too
  - Concept is still expanding (explosives, etc.)
- Very awkward term to use
  - No accepted international legal definition
  - Which weapon categories are included; which ones not?
- Very amorphous concept
  - Focusses on consequences of use
  - Hides specific characteristics of individual arms categories
  - Seems to blend the destructiveness of one category (NW) with the ease of acquisition of another (e.g., CW) in political discourse
NON-CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS

• **Term focusses on specific status, rather than consequences of use**
  - Only highest political authorities release weapons for use
  - Authorisation for use not pre-delegated to military commanders (in contrast to ‘conventional’ weapons)
  - First task of arms control is prevention of ‘conventionalisation’

• **Difference with ‘unconventional’ weapons**
  - Weapons outside of legal regimes
  - Unusual weapons (e.g., designed for very specific role or operation)
ARMAMENT VERSUS PROLIFERATION

• **Armament:**
  - quantitative or qualitative enhancement of military capacity
  - essentially a domestic process

• **Proliferation:** transfer of technology from a possessor to a non-possessor
  - ‘Horizontal proliferation’: lateral spread
  - ‘Vertical proliferation’: weapon acquisition and improvement (= armament?)
VALUE JUDGEMENT

• **Technology diffusion** is a natural process
  - Archaeological evidence from Palaeolithic; Antiquity, ...  
  - Possibility of multiple original sources for same technology

• **Proliferation** includes judgment about desirability
  - Origin from cell biology: ‘rapid & repeated production’ (often with negative connotation, as in cancer)
  - Security policy:
    - Negative connotation reinforced from the nuclear field
    - Use of term limited to non-conventional weaponry
    - Compare with the more neutral ‘arms trade’
DISARMAMENT / NON-PROLIFERATION PARADIGM SHIFT — 1

- Focus shift from weapon elimination to prevention of capability building
  - Impact on BTWC (Protocol) and CWC
  - Technology itself becomes central concern

- ‘Proliferation’ redefines the threat in function of the dominant power
  - Lack of consensus over threat evaluation
  - Lack of consensus over measures to address threat
  - Tendency to move to national/plurilateral rather than multilateral measures
DISARMAMENT / NON-PROLIFERATION PARADIGM SHIFT — 2

• Objective goals vs. Subjective goals
  • Disarmament: goals specified in treaty and apply equally to all parties
  • Non-proliferation: Different approaches to different countries based on subjective judgement of intent (the so-called ‘rogues’ vs. rational, law-abiding actors)

• Lack of finality in non-proliferation
  • Resolution of one proliferation threat does not affect other ones
  • Even if all resolved today, there is tomorrow’s threat
Dual-use issues arise when the attempts to control a particular technology confront the non-military commercial and scientific interests in such technology.

Disarmament

- Total ban on development, production and possession of a weapon and preparations for its use in warfare (BTWC, CWC)
- 'Dual-use' issue emerges when
  - Civilian facilities and installations need to be verified
  - Need to prevent the (inadvertent) assistance to development of banned weapon by another state or non-state entity
- Ban of weapon (= single-use technology) is central; control of dual-use technology supports that central goal

Non-proliferation

- Control of access to technologies that may contribute to undesired weapon development in another state or non-state entity
- Primary policy tool for weapon categories whose use in war or possession has not been wholly delegitimised (e.g., nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles)
SUPPLY-SIDE PERSPECTIVE

• Is the traditional focus of proliferation studies

• Focus traditionally on objects (e.g., weapons, equipment)
  • The fact that the objects exist defines an important part of the threat

• Influence of regressive analysis of armament dynamic
  • Possession or determination to possess weapon is assumed
  • ‘Rogueness’ is presumed and proliferation assumption confirms ‘rogueness’
  • All other elements are interpreted in function of the certainty of the final goal
DEMAND-SIDE PERSPECTIVE

• Focus on internal decision-making processes
  • Problem: often little known about these processes

• Appreciation of the complexity of the decision-making process (opportunity costs)
  • Failures
  • Reversals of decisions
  • Importance of the material base

• Progression analysis of the armament dynamic is required
  • *i.e.*, starting with initial decision and ending with weapon deployment
STEPS IN THE ARMAMENT DYNAMIC

1. Initial decision
2. Assimilation
3. Pre-Preparation for use
4. Release

Diagram: Exemplary timeline of resource mobilization and mobilization.
PROLIFERATION IN THE ARMAMENT DYNAMIC

Assimilation

Imp (m,p) Material Base

Initial decision

Military imperatives (doctrinal / operational guidance)

Political imperatives (Resource mobilization & allocation)
ENTRANCE OF THE *POST-PROLIFERATION ERA?*

- **Nuclear:**
  - Global warming and growing interest in nuclear energy
  - Commercial pressure to access new markets
    - e.g., US-India & US-UAE bilateral agreement; Saudi Arabia forthcoming
- **Biological:**
  - Biology and biotechnology critical to development & health
  - Many developing countries conduct leading-edge research
  - Education expanding everywhere: spread of knowledge to manipulate pathogens, including genetics
  - Biotechnology is essentially information: no physical goods to cross borders
  - Corporate acquisition and sell-offs
- **Chemical:**
  - Similar to biological
  - Many production facilities with potential for CW manufacture now located in developing world
The post-proliferation governance challenge

- No unified model for governance of weapon control anymore
- States do not drive the processes anymore; they can steer in a limited way
- New stakeholders and security actors
- Increased role of non-state national & transnational actors
- Declining role of states in shaping developments
- Shifting relative balances of powers (economy, politics, military) and multiple power centres
- Geographical decentralisation of business and industry activities
- South-south trade patterns and impact on technology diffusion
- Etc.
SYRIA: WHY IS DISARMAMENT WORKING?

- Focus on the weapon technology (CW)
- All parties to the discussions are considered equal
  - Personalities and nature of political systems are not the focus
    - No value judgements about partners
    - No talk anymore of regime change (cf. Saddam Hussein & UNSCOM; Iran & nuclear programme)
    - Consensus in Security Council
  - Russia and USA can talk business again; Syrian government is equal partner; Role for Iran
- Clear vision of point of departure and end goal
  - Cooperation is prerequisite
  - Agency of an international organisation (OPCW) as verifier and neutral arbiter of compliance
- Enter Realpolitik: what about justice?
  - Eliminates likelihood of a 2nd Ghouta
  - Possibility of ending conflict
  - Possibility of regional disarmament in the Middle East
THE TRENCH

Recalling where science, industry and military art converged
Challenging entrenched positions

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