Mr A. Vinod Kumar, Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses – Written evidence (NPT0015)

Summary

I. Many of the recent crisis involving nuclear-armed states in various flashpoints – from South Asia to the Korean Peninsula – had generated apprehensions of an impending nuclear conflagration, though each of those crises had eventually dissipated owing to the same fear among the key protagonist that escalation of conflict to nuclear levels will lead to absolute destruction on all sides.

II. The biggest challenges for global nuclear diplomacy, in the run-up to the 2020 NPT RevCon, include: finalizing a disarmament roadmap in the Korean Peninsula; salvaging the Iran nuclear deal; strengthening the NPT; getting the nuclear powers to accede to the Ban Treaty and reversing the armament wave among the great powers.

III. While the relevance of NPT has never been in dispute, most non-weapon states are disillusioned with the treaty’s functioning though none have initiated a momentum to introduce structural reforms in treaty. Meanwhile, the conception that a post-proliferation world – that proliferation threats have ebbed and conditions for disarmament are ripe – have led to initiatives like the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty.

IV. The prospects of the CTBT and FMCT continue to be bleak as the factors that stymied them continue to remain unchanged. While the CTBT’s fate will be determined by the action to two nuclear powers, US and China, the FMCT has been blocked by the single-handed efforts of Pakistan, which seeks an exceptional treatment as given to India through the US-India nuclear cooperation agreement.

V. While the efforts to de-nuclearise the DPRK are a certain positive step, the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal has serious consequences for the regime.

VI. The prospects of a WMD-free or nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East remains uncertain as long as the question of Israel’s nuclear weapons is not addressed and accounted for.

VII. While most of the recognized and non-NPT nuclear powers are modernizing or expanding their nuclear arsenals within the space given by the non-proliferation edifice, these armament drives will have a detrimental impact on arms control.

VIII. With new weapon systems unveiled by President Putin including nuclear-armed hypersonic platforms and long-range cruise missiles and torpedoes, the US and China are likely to develop and deploy similar
technologies which will drastically alter the nature of nuclear deterrence equations.

IX. The Ban Treaty is a historic step in framing a stand-alone instrument to bring about disarmament and total elimination, as mandated in Article VI of the NPT notwithstanding its ambiguous language and absence of a timeline towards that end. Banning nuclear weapons could be the only pragmatic route as other phased measures have failed to take-off.

X. The role and policies of the P5 vis-à-vis the NPT and nuclear weapons has to be historically judged from two different perspectives: have they made the world any safer, or, have they perpetually endangered it with their menacing arsenals?

Submission of Evidence

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and Nuclear Disarmament

Nuclear risk

1. What is your evaluation of the current level of risk that nuclear weapons, of any type, could be used?

   I. The heightened risk of a nuclear weapon being used was last prominently visible in 2017 when the leadership of the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of North Korea (DPRK) and the United States of America were locked in a dangerous display of nuclear brinkmanship with both sides threatening to use nuclear weapons at the beginning of military hostilities. (Similar scenarios were earlier witnessed during the India-Pakistan stand-off during the 1999 Kargil crisis and the 2001-02 period following the terror attack on the Indian parliament and the mobilization of forces along their volatile border.)

   II. Following the de-escalation in the Korean Peninsula through the diplomatic efforts initiated by South Korea throughout the previous year, the risk of a nuclear confrontation has considerably abated. Most importantly, these scenarios - be it Koreas or South Asia - makes it evident that the nuclear-armed or nuclear-capable states are themselves wary of their actions leading to an irreversible slide towards nuclear conflict. If any, the onus of reducing this risk thus lies abundantly on these states.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

2. Ahead of the 2020 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), what are the biggest challenges facing global nuclear diplomacy?
The biggest challenges for global nuclear diplomacy, in the run-up to the 2020 NPT RevCon, could be identified as follows:

(i) Advancing the agreed de-escalation/engagement framework towards a realistic disarmament road-map which could bring stability in the Korean Peninsula and reduce the potency of DPRK’s nuclear and missile inventory;

(ii) Salvaging the Iran nuclear deal by prodding the US President to restore the sanctity of the original agreement and also encourage Iran to ensure steady compliance and building global confidence in its nuclear activities;

(iii) Building a consensus to devise various measures, including exploring the possibility of amendments - in order to strengthen the three pillars of the NPT, especially the disarmament process;

(iv) Finding the means to pressure the nuclear-armed states to accede to the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons; and

(v) Dealing with or reversing the new armament wave that is being triggered by the expansion of strategic capabilities by Russia and USA, as also China and other nuclear-armed states.

**a. To what extent do states still view the NPT as relevant?**

I. The NPT is supposedly seen as relevant by almost all state-parties, and probably even by most of the non-signatories, owing to the fact that it is a near-universal treaty, remains as the cornerstone of the non-proliferation regime and has successfully anchored the non-proliferation norm. Notwithstanding the fact that some state-parties like Iran might be skeptical about the NPT’s current status, it is noteworthy that but for Israel, which refuses to endorse or reject the treaty, and North Korea, which was a former NPT state-party, the remaining two non-members (India and Pakistan) has claimed adherence to the treaty though refusing to join as non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS).

II. While the relevance of the treaty has never been in dispute, a vast number of NNWS are disillusioned with the post-Cold War functioning of the treaty. There is a dominant feeling that the nuclear weapon states (NWS) have promoted the ‘non-proliferation’ pillar at the expense of the other two pillars – disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This has been a key reason for the failure of RevCons, since the 1995 indefinite extension of the treaty, to produce meaningful outcomes or to redress the shortcomings in the treaty. The NWS’ obstinacy over pathways to disarmament and selective issues like the Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) have been the reason for them to orchestrate inconclusive RevCons in the last few versions.

III. Unfortunately, the sentiment of majority of the state-parties that the NPT has to be strengthened with structural reforms has not amplified through any specific initiatives to introduce amendments in the treaty which has allowed initiatives – like the counter-proliferation ventures or the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons – to flourish outside the NPT system, but often catering to particular interests or sections. The NPT, thus,
remains relevant for the absence of another overarching regime but may potentially lose its primacy when the momentum for disarmament, through the prohibition treaty or any other stand-alone instruments, gains greater traction.

IV. Relevant to this context is also the conception of the post-proliferation world, which, many felt in recent years, is in the making. A post-proliferation scenario is based on the belief that proliferation threats have drastically reduced, possibilities of nuclear confrontations have considerably reduced and the conditions for disarmament are ripe. Notwithstanding the fact that this conception could be contested, especially in the light of recent events in the Korean Peninsula and renewed great power competition.

V. The idea of a post-proliferation world could be seen as outcome of a flawed NPT framing process with the treaty’s vague pursuit of the disarmament end-goal opening interpretations of whether the means towards disarmament should be pursued on a parallel track along with the NPT, or whether the treaty will facilitate a point where there will be no more proliferation (post-proliferation world) from where disarmament can be pursued through a stand-alone instrument (as enshrined in Article VI) and which the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty also seeks to address.

b. What are the prospects for other components of the nuclear non-proliferation regime, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban-Treaty (CTBT)?

I. The prospects of the other key components of the regime, particularly the CTBT, continue to be bleak as the factors that stymied the test ban treaty’s entry-into-force –namely, the US government’s refusal to ratify its signature, China’s hesitance prodded by the US action, India’s aversion to the treaty replicated by Pakistan– remain unchanged. Notwithstanding the fact that his Democrat predecessor, President William J. Clinton, played a key role in framing the CTBT, President Barack Obama had failed to make any significant attempt to ratify the treaty during his two tenures despite promising such breakthroughs in his Prague speech of April 2009.

II. President Obama’s inability to progress on nuclear test ban can also be symptomatic of the conditioning in the regime which has not customarily favoured structural integration of instruments that had a direct disarmament linkage and was consciously omitted in the original drafting of the NPT text. While the omission during the NPT drafting could be attributed to the orchestration of the NWS (especially the US and the Soviet Union) to formulate a weak treaty that avoided any provision impinging on their existing arsenals, neither the NPT community nor the members of the regime at large has shown the resolve to pursue the means for test ban and ending fissile material production within an amended treaty or pursue the implementation of the stand-alone instruments formulated for these objectives. It is clear that the current dispensations representing the powerful players in the regime have no determination to get the CTBT operational in the near future.
c. **How important are these agreements to the wider rules-based international order?**

I. More than the sustenance of a rules-based international order, the significance of these agreements is for the objectives of disarmament and total elimination. These objectives, in fact, contrast the dominant perceptions of nuclear weapons, in the hands of a privileged and powerful few, playing the key part of safeguarding an existent ‘rules-based’ international order. The great powers heralding the international order believe in the primacy of nuclear deterrence, and its key role in maintaining international peace and enabling the sustenance of a rules-based system. Hence, while portraying support for nuclear disarmament and stand-alone instruments for a calibrated progress towards disarmament, they, in reality, seek a status quo in the normative system.

II. On the other hand, when we talk about rules-based order, it cannot be ignored that the rules in the nuclear order were largely the creation of the hegemon(s) and the western liberal security community. This was most evident in the imbalanced and discriminatory formulation of the NPT: it created a world of nuclear ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, allowed the privileged possession of nuclear weapons in the hands of a few, denied the same right to others without invoking suitable security guarantees, and had no credible pathways or timelines for disarmament and total elimination. All of this heralded not just a lop-sided non-proliferation regime but also an international order that was built on power-centric structure, military supremacy and was shaped by the rich and the mighty nations.

d. **To what extent does the existence of three nuclear-armed states outside the NPT (India, Israel, and Pakistan) destabilise the overall regime?**

I. The existence of India, Israel, and Pakistan outside the NPT does not pose as much of a ‘destabilising’ effect as the Democratic Peoples’ Republic of Korea (DPRK) would do as a state that invoked Article X to exit the treaty after misusing access to civilian nuclear energy resources as an NPT state-party. India, Pakistan, and Israel were not state-parties to the treaty since the outset, and despite their absence, the treaty managed to universalise the non-proliferation norm and lay the foundations of the regime in such a manner that the existence of a few outliers could not destabilise its edifice.

II. Further, it should be noted that India and Pakistan had declared their adherence to NPT principles. Going by its history of playing norm entrepreneurship roles for many initiatives in the nuclear realm, it is worthwhile to underline India’s prominent role at the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee (ENDC), where the NPT was born, and its attempt to formulate a balanced and non-discriminatory instrument. India decided against signing the NPT many of the issues it raised – balance of rights and obligations of between NWS and NNWS, uninterrupted access of peaceful uses including peaceful nuclear explosion, security
guarantees, timeline to reduce and eliminate stockpiles and existing arsenals, etc – were not included in the treaty text (which was result of a US-Soviet Union draft). It is worthwhile to note a similar Indian approach to the CTBT; having co-sponsored the resolution for comprehensive test ban treaty, India eventually stayed out owing to lack of reasonable disarmament linkages and the treaty allowing existing arsenals as well as their expansion.

III. Pakistan had voted in favour to the UN Resolution on the NPT but decided against signing the treaty as India preferred to stay out – a logic and approach that Pakistan used for many subsequent instruments in the non-proliferation spectrum. Israel’s nuclear behaviour continues to remain as enigmatic as ever. Owing to the fact that it is yet to publicly declare its nuclear weapon status, the consequent impact of Israel staying out of the NPT cannot be fairly judged.

IV. Having said this, it should also be emphasised that the presence of three nuclear-armed/capable states outside the NPT has a certain impact on the treaty and the regime. The three parties continue to be the key inspiration for the deviant behaviour intermittently seen among many NPT state-parties. Further, the case of India gaining a back-door access to the regime through stand-alone exemption from the 1992 Warsaw Guidelines of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) in 2008 (as part of the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, popularly known as the Indo-US nuclear deal) had created resentment among many NNWS state-parties to the NPT, especially those who were nuclear-capable or at some levels of nuclear latency.

V. A notable example is the case of Iran, which has cited the Indian case throughout the negotiations that were undertaken to address its nuclear deviance. Further, one cannot rule out the possibility of DPRK demanding a similar treatment at some point of time, though both Teheran and Pyongyang should remember their NPT membership records before demanding a similar treatment like India. Pakistan is also demanding a similar deal despite its past proliferation and existent terror histories continuing to instill a trust-deficit in terms of enabling its greater integration into the non-proliferation system.

e. What prospects are there for a Middle East WMD free zone?

I. The prospects of a WMD-free or nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East remains uncertain as long as the question of Israel’s nuclear weapons is not addressed and accounted for. Israel’s nuclear weapon capability has historically caused ‘security dilemma’ in the region and is the fundamental motivation for the nuclear latency or even WMD capabilities gained by other prominent players in the region, be it Iran, South Arabia, Iraq or Syria.

II. Further, the United States continue to be the key spoiler in this effort to make the region WMD/nuclear-free as Washington had repeatedly blocked efforts to push for a Middle East NWFZ in various forums, most notably at
the NPT RevCons, which also happened to be the major reason for the failure of the quinquennial in 2015.

3. To what extent will the United States’ withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, as well as US efforts to achieve the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, affect the wider nuclear non-proliferation regime?

I. Both developments have their definite impact on the non-proliferation regime and with different results. While the efforts to de-nuclearise the DPRK are a certain positive step, the US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal has serious consequences for the regime. The Iran deal was being the result of tough negotiations that ran for many years under the leadership of key players in the regime, it was the responsibility of all the stakeholders to ensure the conditions are created for the deal to be safeguarded and maintained. The deal had accounted for the Iranian nuclear programme in its entirety and was since being completely monitored by the IAEA.

II. The Trump Administration’s decision to withdraw from the deal was not based on assessments of non-compliance by Iran by owing to the President’s own unreasonable judgments about what the deal had achieved or what he conceived as the ideal deal. The nuclear deal is not a wartime activity that it needed to be done at the cost of compromising a nation’s sovereignty and national esteem. The European parties to the deal have been correct in standing by the deal while the US will lose its credibility on its global diplomatic roles. This could, in fact, have a domino effect on the Korean Peninsula as well where Kim Jong-Un might doubt the trustworthiness at the negotiation table.

III. On the other hand, the actual meaning and dimensions of the events in the Korean Peninsula of the past year is yet to be fully comprehensible and may carry shades of surrealism. This is because the actual intentions are still difficult to be deciphered and may evolve into unpredictable forms. The ability of all parties to agree on pragmatic reductions and disarmament plan is central to attaining peace and stability in the Peninsula.

Nuclear arms control

4. To what extent and why are existing nuclear arms control agreements being challenged, particularly the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF) and the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START), and what prospect is there for further such agreements? What prospects are there of progress in negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT)
I. Like in the case of the CTBT, the prospects for any significant progress in the negotiations for a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) look unpromising at this point in time. The peculiar nature of negotiations at the Conference on Disarmament (CD) provides the space for any single country or group to sabotage the negotiations, which Pakistan seems to have optimally exploited. Though the issue of coverage over existing fissile stockpiles has been an issue for many other countries, Pakistan has used it as an opportunity to block the progress in FMCT negotiations whereas the actual issue has been Pakistan’s disillusionment over the privileged treatment that India has gained through the NSG waiver. Pakistan is concerned that the nuclear deal provides India with a Strategic Fuel Reserve that, it feels, could potentially free up fissile resources for India’s strategic weapons programme.

II. In fact, India too had earlier taken issue to the absence of coverage over existing stockpiles in the FMCT draft though eventually its opposition waned after its own weaponisation process and also because it had committed in the nuclear deal (or the 18 July 2005 Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh) to successful complement of FMCT negotiations. While Pakistan will continue to leverage all means, including blocking the FMCT negotiations, to extract a similar nuclear deal for itself, the fact that none of the nuclear weapon states have shown the resolve to constrain their fissile materials production or arsenals is indirect indication that the FMCT would continue to remain in limbo for the indeterminable future.

III. The likely demise of the INF Treaty and procrastination in renewing the START framework should be blamed on the belligerence and imprudence of the leadership in both capitals. Having declared his determination to massively expand the American arsenal, President Trump is unlikely to be bogged down by the burden of treaty diplomacy. Similarly, President Putin has always suffered a trust deficit, including the actions that raised suspicions over his adherence to the INF Treaty. On the other hand, the vigorous strategic modernisation exercise that China has embarked upon for more than a decade is a major factor that is unsettling for both Washington and Moscow. The Cold War rivals could, hence, use the China factor as an excuse to expand their arsenals, with both leaders willingly seeing the benefit in each other’s plan.

Nuclear modernization programmes

5. What effect will nuclear renewal programmes have on the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime? To what extent could technological developments—including in missile capabilities, warhead strength, and verification—undermine existing non-proliferation and arms control agreements?

I. While most of the recognized nuclear weapon states are modernizing or expanding their nuclear arsenals in one form or other, the NWS outside NPT are also advancing their nuclear capabilities towards deterrence targets conceived as part of their original weaponisation plan. Though
President Obama had supplanted the ambitious renewal projects of the Bush Administration (including the Reliable Replacement Warhead and Stockpile Stewardship programmes) with his own modernization plan, President Trump has moved a step ahead by announcing plans for rapid expansion of what he felt was an ‘aging’ arsenal. This has now attained a sense of urgency for the American security establishment after the Russian president’s unveiling of a new generation of strategic weaponry. While the existing non-proliferation edifice gives abundant space for such nuclear armament drives to be pursued without hindrance, the expansion of arsenals will make a certain impact for arms control mechanisms that will be sidelined to accommodate this drive.

II. On the other hand, the vigorous weaponisation pursuits of the non-NPT nuclear weapon states like India and Pakistan have also added to the global trend of nuclear re-armament. While India has recently declared its accomplishment of a nuclear triad through the operationalisation of its nuclear-armed and –powered nuclear submarine force, Pakistan has also advanced from an initial capability of existential deterrence to full-spectrum deterrence. Besides its formidable inventory of short and medium-range strategic delivery capabilities, Pakistan has in recent years lowered the threshold of nuclear use by introducing a tactical nuclear delivery capability which has the potential to trigger a rapid escalation of military hostilities to nuclear conflict.

III. Similarly, the uninterrupted expansion of nuclear and missile capabilities by North Korea in the past few years has not just turned the Korean Peninsula into a dangerous region but also spells a grave crisis for non-proliferation. If the ongoing efforts to prod Kim Jong-Un to a disarmament timeline does not fructify, and the North Korean ruler reverts back to him nuclear adventurism, it could encourage other aspirants towards the path of deviance especially when the motivations exist in the behaviour of the prominent nuclear-armed states.

New technologies
6. To what extent will technological developments, both directly relating to nuclear weapons and in the wider defence and security sphere, affect nuclear diplomacy?

I. Technological developments have been a continuous process that has influenced all areas of defence and security, and, in recent years, driven by the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). As for the nuclear realm, besides the modernization projects mentioned above, a new technological generation and practices have shown their influence and presence in many areas, particularly in delivery systems. The new weapon systems unveiled by President Putin includes hypersonic platforms and long-range cruise missiles and torpedoes which will be nuclear-armed and supposedly having unlimited range. Even the US and China are known to be developing similar technologies which could vastly alter the nature of nuclear warfare.
II. These developments, undoubtedly, will have their impact on nuclear diplomacy, and particularly challenging for arms control structures. Further, the advent of cyber technologies is also increasingly shaping the nature of military technologies and warfare, with a domino effect on all areas of defence and security. Similarly, the advent of missile defence technologies, especially the development of laser-based kill-vehicles, and the concomitant impact of the large-scale deployment of BMD systems on nuclear deterrence are yet to be properly analyzed. While a defensive shield against nuclear weapons has the potential to promote strategic stability and mitigate conflict escalation, the possibility BMD system encouraging nuclear-armed states to indulge in adventurism and pre-emption cannot be discounted. The ongoing race among NWS to acquire BMD technology for defensive depth and deterrence advantage is yet to be properly assessed.

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

7. If it were to enter into force, how would the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (commonly referred to as the Ban Treaty) affect efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons and bring about disarmament?

I. The Ban Treaty is the historic next step in the global efforts to bring about disarmament and move toward total elimination. The treaty fulfills the mandate enshrined in Article VI of the NPT for a stand-alone instrument to facilitate nuclear disarmament. Though the Ban Treaty will not amount to a treaty on general and complete disarmament, the prospects of such an instrument looked uncertain on account of the ambiguous language of Article VI, the absence of a timeline towards that end in the NPT text and the customary reluctance to initiate such an instrument that could facilitate disarmament and total elimination.

II. Further, as I pointed out earlier in this submission, there remains a conceptual confusion on whether the efforts towards such a disarmament treaty should be pursued on a parallel track with non-proliferation or whether a post-proliferation tipping point will emerge from where a stand-alone treaty could be pursued. Notwithstanding the status of either routes, the key proponents of Ban Treaty, having realized that the time was ripe to pursue this goal, used the momentum generated by the movement on ‘Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapon’ in the last few years to draft and get the treaty passed at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and set the stage for its certain entry-into-force in the coming months.

III. Despite the overwhelming support the treaty received at UNGA and the 2015 NPT RevCon, the fact that all the nuclear weapon states have rejected this instrument has severely undermined its efficacy. Nonetheless, the Ban Treaty is a step in the right direction as ‘prohibition of nuclear weapons’ could be the only pragmatic route towards facilitating a disarmament plan of action. Considering the fact that other calibrated
measures, including comprehensive test ban and ending fissile materials production, or other disarmament proposals like the Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWS) have failed to take-off, it is pertinent that the world moves towards such stand-alone instrument that provides the minimum framework to start with. I would recall the logic that helped the NPT pass muster at the UNGA in 1968 despite many countries being skeptical about its lop-sided framing – that having a treaty is better than having none!

The P5

8. What are the policies of other P5 countries (China, France, Russia and the United States), and the UK’s other partners, on the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and on nuclear weapons more generally? Have these policies changed, and if so, why? How effective has the P5 process been, and what role will it have in the future?

I. The role and policies of the P5 vis-à-vis the NPT and nuclear weapons, when judged historically, should be seen from two different perspectives: have they made the world any safer, or, have they perpetually endangered it with their menacing arsenals? While the existence of the danger of a nuclear catastrophe and continuing threat of proliferation this know-how can solely be blamed on the continuing existing of nuclear weapons in the hands of a powerful few, there would at least be some deterrence optimists who might think that these weapons had saved the world from all-out war and widespread destruction.

II. On the other hand, the P5 could be credited for the continuing relevance of the NPT, for universalizing it and ensuring that the non-proliferation norm holds sway. Yet, one cannot overlook the fact that the NPT was the result of superpower connivance in the 1960s with the US-Soviet joint draft taking shape as the treaty. Accordingly, the treaty had secured the interests of the P5 by closing the nuclear weapons club with a 1 January 1967 cut-off, and ensuring that their stockpiles remain untouched along with their right to expand arsenals at will. Besides the imbalanced treaty obligations, they also ensured that there will be no fixed timelines for a disarmament roadmap, while also shrewdly mandating it as an obligation of all nations, not solely of the NWS.

III. While China and France boycotted the NPT drafting process, they have been beneficiaries of the treaty as recognized nuclear weapon states, having tested their weapons before the 1 January 1967 cut-off. In the subsequent years, both countries have joined the treaty and also promoted various normative structures, namely the NSG guidelines and IAEA full-scope safeguards, which allowed them the privileged right to maintain their arsenals without having to commit to any disarmament process. China’s recent role in blocking India’s NSG membership by citing the NPT could be seen a historic irony when considering the fact that China had termed the treaty as an ‘imperialist instrument’ when the NPT was being drafted by the super-powers.
IV. The P5 role in dismissing the relevance and validity of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons cannot be overlooked and should be seen as a sign of their collective aversion to any credible disarmament process. Rejecting the Ban Treaty, the P5 had termed it as undermining the NPT and failing to take into account the ‘international security environment’, which implied their refusal to think beyond primacy of nuclear weapons and deterrence. The P5, according to their statement made on the eve of the 2015 NPT RevCon, will rely on ‘deep reduction in the nuclear stockpile’, which, unfortunately, is not the trend currently seen in the global security landscape.

**The role of the UK**

9. How effective a role has the UK played in global nuclear diplomacy in recent years? How could the UK more effectively engage on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament? What should the UK Government’s priorities be ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference?

I. The UK has largely played second fiddle to the US in global nuclear diplomatic efforts and hence is not seen to have taken any exclusive positions when it comes to nuclear disarmament or efforts in that direction. Besides the P5 statement on the Ban Treaty, the other instance when the UK was seen to have taken an unsympathetic approach towards disarmament was its response to the petition by the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), in which the UK termed the petition as the RMI’s “long-standing frustration against the US,” while also indicating the UK’s inability to conduct or conclude disarmament negotiations on its own.

II. The latter sentiment, in fact, could underline the absence of an independent and distinct approach for the UK when it comes disarmament, but for what the US and other NWS collectively decide. This runs contrast to the substantial efforts taken by many research institutes, as well as NGOs based out the UK, on the disarmament front, notably their role in the ‘Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons’ initiative which was the key catalyst behind the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

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