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Answers (numbered to correspond with those on the list of questions):

Nuclear Risk

1. Nuclear weapons ARE currently being used. Nuclear weapons, and their development, are used by nuclear weapon states, nuclear possessors and the so-called nuclear umbrella states as a deterrence factor, as an expression of power and affirmation of sovereignty and by some, as a tool to maintain the current world order and by others, as an attempt to alter such order.

Whether there is a risk that a nuclear weapon will be deliberately detonated against a perceived adversary is unlikely from the perspective of “what is at stake” for most of the nuclear weapon states and those who possess nuclear weapons. This risk is however different when it comes to the United States.

The current level of risk that the United States will (again) detonate a nuclear weapon to devastate its target will depend on its ability to (again) succeed -without debilitating retaliation from its adversaries and destabilizing condemnation from the international community.

The United States President’s actions in the international arena have been primarily geared at “making America great again” (i.e. securing United States power and influence in world affairs) through financial and military strength.

Allegations and threats against adversaries such as Iran and DPRK can be viewed as smoke-screen tactics to justify the implementation of economically destabilizing mechanisms on these countries and to justify the withdrawal of the United States from international commitments/obligations that limit its economic gain and technological developments in nuclear warfare.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

2. Ahead of the 2020 NPT Review Conference, the biggest challenge facing global nuclear diplomacy is the inability to further disguise double-standards. The NPT is not a treaty that was concluded “among equals” --i.e. equally sovereign states. While one can argue that differences in negotiation leverage are standard and that “free
will” and “freedom of contract” are the principles to be upheld, national security is an inalienable right of the citizens of every sovereign nation --inalienable even by means of the free will of its government at any given time. The actions of a government that are not in compliance with the basic obligation to secure its country would ultimately be *ultra vires* -beyond the government’s powers and -regardless of will, cannot be sustained over time. The current state of world affairs and the challenges to the implementation of the NPT are clear examples of the inability to sustain double-standards in matters of security.

a. The NPT is nevertheless still viewed as relevant because it is the only existing treaty to which “the P-5” are parties and which contain some sort of commitment *towards* nuclear disarmament.

If national security is the inalienable right of the citizens of every sovereign nation, so long as there are nuclear weapons (and in fact any weapons), nuclear proliferation is inevitable. In the preamble of the CTBT, this is expressly acknowledged by the international community in stressing the need for continued systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, and of *general and complete disarmament*.

Consequently, the NPT, the CTBT and any future instruments of the non-proliferation/disarmament regime *need to be* regarded, understood and implemented as *continued systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally*, with the *ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons*. Emphasis is placed on “need to be” because it is not a matter of will or instruction, nuclear non-proliferation is simply not viable without nuclear disarmament.

Nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament are not separate notions, let alone separate regimes. Nuclear non-proliferation is merely part of the phase-out process to attain the goal of eliminating nuclear weapons. Insistence on the contrary has proven ineffective in the fifty year history of the NPT and the lack of entry into force of the CTBT more than twenty years after its opening for signature.

Consequently, as of this point, I will cease to refer to “nuclear non-proliferation” and only refer to the comprehensive term “nuclear disarmament”.

b. The prospects for other components of the nuclear disarmament regime such as the CTBT are inevitably affected by the double standards underlying the implementation of the NPT and nuclear diplomacy in general. The CTBT has however one major advantage which can improve the prospects for itself and the disarmament regime as a whole: the CTBT is the only treaty of the regime that effectively leads to disarmament. The CTBT, as
part of the continued systematic and progressive efforts to reduce nuclear weapons globally, with the ultimate goal of eliminating those weapons, takes the international community one step further than the NPT. There are a myriad of “other steps”, many -such as a future FMCT-being more direct and effective, but the CTBT is a step and it is a necessary one and unlike the FMCT, it is there. The CTBT has been signed by the five nuclear weapon states and although, the treaty is not yet in force and China and the United States have yet to ratify the treaty, its very signature already obliges ALL signatories to not carry out any actions that would defeat the CTBT’s object and purpose. Hence, the 184 Signatories of the CTBT are currently committed under international law to not conduct any nuclear explosions. Computer simulation and subcritical testing remain points of contention with non-nuclear weapon states, but despite these apparent loopholes, simulation and subcritical testing are no substitute for explosive testing in terms of reliance and safety.

c. The NPT and the CTBT are essential to the wider rules-based international order because of the legitimacy they give to the international community’s ability to negotiate and conclude binding agreements on matters of security. If when it comes to international security, “pacta” are not “servanda” and principles of sovereign equality are not observed, there is no rule of law and international order and security are not achievable.

d. The main implication of the existence of the three nuclear armed states outside the NPT is at the regional level. What actually destabilises the overall disarmament regime is the global acceptance of those three nuclear armed states and the continued reliance on nuclear weapons by the P-5 and the nuclear umbrella states.

e. If biological and chemical weapons have already been banned and there is only one nuclear armed state in the Middle East, then the issue at stake is not about a WMD free zone, but ultimately about disarming Israel. From this perspective, it can be reasonably concluded that there are no prospects in the foreseeable future for Israel to give up the nuclear weapons it does not even admit to have. Credible efforts to achieve a “WMD free zone in the Middle East” will therefore need to address the threats that have led Israel to develop nuclear weapons in the first place.

*The United States*

3. What truly affects the wider nuclear disarmament regime is the United States nuclear posture and increased reliance on nuclear weapons. As mentioned in paragraph 1, I see the United States withdrawal from the Iran deal as a smoke screen to maintain Iran at an economic disadvantage and secure financial support for the
United States (e.g. Saudi Arabia). Perhaps the main effect such withdrawal would have on the wider disarmament regime is that it exacerbates the double-standard underlying nuclear diplomacy and makes solutions through diplomatic efforts unreliable and ineffective. As for the Korean Peninsula, there are no efforts to achieve denuclearization. Efforts have been to ease tensions and “buy time” --needed for strategic purposes vis-à-vis China...and Russia.

**Nuclear Modernisation Programmes**

5. Renewal programmes and technological developments in nuclear warfare both underscore and perpetuate reliance on nuclear weapons and thereby undermine the disarmament regime and render ineffective (costly and useless) efforts for diplomatic solutions. Renewal programmes and technological developments in nuclear warfare actually encourage nuclear proliferation and, given the obligations to protect country and citizens, have been interpreted by some governments to require nuclear their development of nuclear weapons.

**The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

7. The Ban Treaty is primarily a mechanism to engage and empower civil society in nuclear disarmament matters and its entry into force would give civil society a legal basis with which to continue their outreach efforts. Effective stigmatization of nuclear weapons helps to discourage nuclear proliferation and would erode the public support (and ability to turn a blind eye) for government decisions on nuclear weapons renewal programmes and technological developments. Lack of public support for the existence of nuclear weapons has, indeed, the potential to bring about disarmament.

**The role of the UK**

9. Truth, facts and common sense are often obscured by political and economic interests. International, regional and national security can only be achieved though peace. Efforts to obtain security through financial and military strength are unsustainable and inevitably lead to arms-races and wars. The UK, as the close ally of the United States, has a key role to play.

Similar to the United States tactics used with the DPRK, the first step would be to ease tensions and buy time. Tensions could be eased if during the 2020 NPT Review Conference some progress could be made on the disarmament front -even if as shallow and intangible as the discussions for the “denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula”. Equally important, is to bring Egypt, Iran and Israel to the table (any table) to begin discussions on their respective security concerns (i.e. not about a Middle East WMD Free Zone).
However, immediate action that can be taken by the UK with the highest probability of effective impact is peace education. Hence, the prior reference to “buying time”.

While the deep divide in the positions of current leaders and policymakers will continue in the foreseeable future to be too wide to bridge in order to achieve meaningful progress on disarmament matters, educating the next generation of leaders and policymakers on the principle of equality, the need for mutual respect and tolerance and the imperative of cooperation and development is essential. There is no other road to peace.

The best form of peace education is horizontal education through empowerment, access to information and providing students and young professionals with platforms for discussion and knowledge transfer among peers around the world.

The CTBTO has taken a step in this direction with the establishment of the CTBTO Youth Group in 2016 and the group has over 500 members from all geographic regions. Supporting activities of the CTBTO Youth Group is an easy and excellent way to maximize existing efforts.

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