

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

1777 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006
tel 202.509.8400 fax 202.509.8490 www.cfr.org

Summary of CFR Workshop on Evaluating and Strengthening the Nonproliferation Regime
May 18 and 19, 2009
Washington, DC

This workshop was made possible through the generous support of CFR's Program on International Institutions and Global Governance and the Robina Foundation.

In his April 2009 speech in Prague, President Barack Obama reaffirmed U.S. commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons and outlined a series of steps toward this goal, including the reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security strategy and various means by which to strengthen the international nonproliferation regime. But the challenges posed by proliferation and the dangers of nuclear use remain high, leading to questions about the ability of existing institutions and treaties to address them. Do current events indicate that the international nonproliferation regime is on the verge of collapse or is it on the mend? More specifically, how will the United States and its international partners prepare for the Nonproliferation Treaty Review Conference in 2010? Will the world eventually need a new treaty, such as a nuclear weapons convention, to replace or supplement the Nonproliferation Treaty?

On May 18 and 19, just days after the third and final preparatory committee meeting for the 2010 NPT Review Conference, policymakers, analysts, and expert observers gathered in Washington, DC for the Council on Foreign Relations' Workshop on Evaluating and Strengthening the Nonproliferation Regime. Over the course of three sessions, workshop participants addressed these and other questions about the overall health of the nonproliferation regime, and how to improve it over the near and long terms.

In his opening remarks, **Charles D. Ferguson**, CFR's Philip D. Reed senior fellow for science and technology, underscored the pressing character of the subject at hand, adding that the workshop would be a broad and comprehensive look at the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

Workshop panelists and participants widely agreed that the current health of the nonproliferation regime is grave, but differed in their outlooks and expectations for reform. **Joseph Cirincione**, president of the Ploughshares Fund, represented an optimistic point of view. He said that President Obama "fundamentally started the transformation of U.S. nuclear policy." He also predicted a successful 2010 NPT Review Conference that will enhance barriers to proliferation by increasing the international cooperation necessary to limit access to sensitive nuclear technologies. Conversely, **Henry Sokolski**, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, argued that the spread of nuclear energy programs would mean the growth of access to such dual-use, proliferation-prone technologies. "Unless you have clarity about what you're strengthening, you could make things

worse,” he said in reference to Article IV of the NPT, which many states use to defend the pursuit of domestic fuel enrichment and reprocessing.

The development of enrichment and reprocessing programs under Article IV were frequently cited as a major near-term proliferation challenge. **Paul Lettow**, an adjunct senior fellow at CFR, raised the point that if Iran developed a nuclear weapons capability, it would be the second NPT signatory to do so under the auspices of a domestic nuclear fuel program. He added, “That could well broadcast that the NPT regime is weak and possibly even unenforceable,” potentially causing the deterioration of the treaty as an effective barrier to proliferation. However, enrichment and reprocessing were also as discussed as areas ripe for innovative international cooperation, which would serve to strengthen the regime. **Lawrence Scheinman**, distinguished professor at the Monterey Institute’s James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, outlined various incentive-based approaches to limit the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technologies. “Nuclear energy is a challenge, technologically and politically,” he said, continuing that the political challenge can only be met when alternative norms and approaches, beyond safeguards, are widely accepted.

Article VI of the NPT, which commits states to the pursuit of “negotiations in good faith” relating to nuclear as well as general and complete disarmament, also emerged as a central topic throughout the workshop’s three panels. **Scott Sagan**, professor and co-director of Stanford University’s Center for International Security and Cooperation, drew links between Articles IV and VI, and the concept of shared responsibility in the NPT. He specifically put forth the need to change conventional wisdom on the “grand bargain” in the treaty as a near-term step to improve the nonproliferation regime. Nuclear weapons states should acknowledge that international safeguards apply to them, while non-nuclear weapon states should expand their definition of good faith obligations under Article VI to include negotiations to make the nuclear fuel cycle international. “They cannot accept that national fuel cycles will spread as a right and as a good thing, and at the same time say that they are working in good faith toward the eventual elimination [of nuclear weapons],” he asserted.

The overarching question of what, if any, purposes should exist for nuclear weapons, further informed debates over proposed near-term changes to U.S. nuclear policy and doctrine, which would be undertaken in part to advance nonproliferation ends. Because it inherently leaves open many potential uses for nuclear weapons, the concept of calculated ambiguity was identified as posing a particular barrier to effective U.S. leadership in reducing the role of nuclear weapons in national security strategy. In this regard, it is also necessary to consider the function of non-nuclear military capabilities, in particular the fact that U.S. conventional superiority permits the consideration of a world in which nuclear weapons could be eliminated without sacrificing national security requirements. **Dennis Gormley**, a senior fellow at the Monterey Institute’s James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, discussed how cruise missile, long-range missile, missile defense, and space weapons capabilities affect Russian and Chinese perceptions of the United States, and their willingness to pursue deep nuclear reductions. “I would encourage elevating transparency to the level of what we used it for during the Cold War...to moderate behavior and to seek consensus,” he said, adding that a world free of nuclear weapons would eventually require decisions on what to do with the associated delivery systems.

The third and final panel at the workshop devoted itself to examining the “zero option” as the ultimate, long-term means by which to address the challenge of proliferation and to ensure the survival of the regime. While the three panelists differed in their rationales for abolition, they all agreed that the current nonproliferation regime needs dramatic revision with zero nuclear weapons as

the organizing concept. **Jan Lodal**, a former adviser on national security issues to the Nixon and Ford administrations and the chairman of Lodal & Company, explained that as long as any one state has nuclear weapons, at least one other state will feel that they need nuclear weapons for deterrence purposes, and methods that work to incrementally reform the existing regime are extremely problematic. “We need a different approach...Zero is the only stable outcome. Everything else eventually leads to more proliferation.” He further elaborated his belief in the goal of zero “entirely because it is in our strategic interest.” **Jonathan Schell**, the Harold Willens peace fellow at the Nation Institute, continued the exploration of nuclear abolition as the only way to effectively stop proliferation, which he explained as being driven by deterrence doctrine and action-reaction relationships. He proposed a reversal of conventional approaches to zero, placing primacy on the objective rather than the first steps toward it. **Jonathan Granoff**, the president of the Global Security Institute, framed the elimination of nuclear weapons as a legal and moral imperative. Describing the current nonproliferation regime as incoherent, he proposed the eventual negotiation of a nuclear weapons convention that would codify abolition.