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Strengthening WMD Security: A “Whole of Society” Approach

Since the end of the Cold War, chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) technologies have expanded beyond the control of a small number of states and into the hands of a wider pool of governments and even nonstate actors, such as private companies and individuals. As a result, while state-based proliferation continues to be a global concern, today, the newer and more complex potential of proliferation to nefarious nonstate actors presents an even more pressing challenge. Accordingly, while the United States has a long and distinguished history of implementing a broad array of nonproliferation engagement activities—particularly in the states of the former Soviet Union—international nonproliferation efforts should adapt to new realities in order to be successful in the modern era. Certainly, the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) programs implemented in former Soviet states remain instructive; however, ultimately, they are an imperfect template for the threat environment found today in numerous geographic contexts. As such, contemporary approaches to nonproliferation should incorporate the lessons of the past without being bound by them, adapting and even changing strategy when necessary.

In the interest of building an updated template, at the Stanley Foundation’s 52nd Strategy for Peace Conference, participants examined how governments, particularly the US government, can utilize nonproliferation assistance and other multilateral assistance mechanisms to meet evolving international security objectives while bolstering capacity-building efforts in the developing world. Discussion of this “whole of government” and indeed “whole of society” approach included talk of the role of the nonproliferation community (relevant US government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, civil society, law enforcement agencies, and the private sector) in facilitating this endeavor. Doing so would meaningfully expand nonproliferation efforts beyond the Global North and engage governments across the Global South, which is increasingly becoming host to potential links on the proliferation supply chain. This policy dialogue brief provides a detailed overview of the discussion, including key policy recommendations made by participants.

The Changing Proliferation Environment

By virtually any measure over the past quarter century, the forces of globalization have revolutionized the international system. Foreign direct investment rates have skyrocketed. The volume and speed of global trade have reached unprecedented levels. Private companies seeking to maximize profit and efficiency through outsourcing, off-shoring, supply-chaining, and other activities have helped to drive intellectual and technical capacity around the planet, leading to a blossoming of

This brief summarizes the primary findings of the conference as interpreted by the rapporteur, Esha Mufti, roundtable organizer, Veronica Tessler, and chair Brian Finlay. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this brief. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all of its recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

innovative and manufacturing capacities in regions of the world once thought incapable of competing in the modern marketplace.

Globalization has thereby facilitated the transfer of more technologies into more hands in more countries and regions of the world than at any other point in human history. Economists and development specialists alike rightly celebrate this trend. But for security specialists—and particularly those focused on nonproliferation and related transnational criminal activities—technology transfer tells a very different story. Not only have sensitive technologies systematically moved into weak and fragile states that continue to represent regulatory vacuums, but globalization has also enhanced the authority of an exponentially growing consortium of private sector actors with the capacity to facilitate the proliferation of CBRN weapons of mass destruction. The mission to diminish the threat of proliferation has therefore evolved and become even more complex. Nonetheless, as nonproliferation engagement is expanded geographically and functionally via UNSCR 1540, the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction, as well as bilaterally, it is important to learn the lessons of history as we seek to develop new preventive strategies.

Lessons of the Past: CTR Programs

The collapse of the Soviet Union was a catalytic event that forced creative new thinking in terms of nonproliferation. The breakup of one nuclear weapons state had led to the creation of four states—Russia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus—that possess not only nuclear weapons but also chemical, biological, and radiological ones. The dangers posed by these circumstances were clear, including diversion and unauthorized use of weapons and possible proliferation to other countries. As a result, on the other side of the Atlantic, the US Congress took the unusual initiative to develop innovative new mechanisms to counter this urgent threat. Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar directed the congressional approach and facilitated bipartisan cooperation by cosponsoring the bill that created the CTR Program.

Moreover, because the early days of US nonproliferation engagement were situated as an urgent response to a clear and present threat, these programs were given great leeway in their implementation. As such, the initial focus of the CTR programs was distinctly state-based. And while these states

were not always perfect partners, they had decided within a short period of time to de-weaponize. Thus, their shared stake in the efforts greatly facilitated the effective implementation of the CTR programs.

Today, the circumstances are decidedly different. In addition to the changing nature of the threat environment itself, ranging from the emergence of non-state actors to partner governments that display varied levels of receptivity to engagement, Congress has failed to update US nonproliferation strategy. Moreover, over time, as the danger seems to have become less imminent, nonproliferation programs do not have the leeway that they once enjoyed, making them less able to adapt quickly to the changing circumstances.

However, four key lessons of the CTR programs should be a part of any effective US nonproliferation strategy today:

- There is a need for a wider perspective beyond nonproliferation.
- Strategy needs to be adapted to local norms and culture.
- Human capital is important.
- The public must be convinced to support nonproliferation strategy.

In the early 1990s, Senators Nunn and Lugar accompanied several congressional delegations to former Soviet states. These delegations returned with the awareness that these countries were close to if not already falling apart and their problems were far more serious than the possession of CBRN weapons. Their bureaucracies were incompetent and fraying at the edges, there was no investment to support economic growth, and a significant portion of their talent was leaving for shores with brighter prospects. As such, these delegations understood that a focus on nonproliferation alone would limit the effectiveness of any threat reduction programs. The United States could set the singular aim of securing all the weapons in these countries; however, if a country became a failed state in the meantime, those weapons would decidedly no longer be secure. Moreover, significant numbers of once-privileged scientists, engineers, and technicians were now un- or underemployed. As a result, US strategy in the former Soviet Union facilitated CTR programs from which multiple benefits beyond nonproliferation could be derived.

For example, the US Department of State BioIndustry Initiative (BII), a relatively new program in the post-Cold War era of nonproliferation, was designed to provide patenting, commercialization, training, and business and market development for both biological research institutes and production facilities in the former Soviet Union. In short, BII aimed to redirect research and production facilities in former Soviet states toward peaceful and self-sustainable means, encouraging the growth of the biotech sector and facilitating job creation.

Likewise, today, countries like Pakistan and Libya that are potential links in the proliferation supply chain face problems, such as the lack of economic development, that threaten their immediate stability, and economic concerns take precedence over nonproliferation. Thus, US nonproliferation strategy, if it is to succeed, should do more than simply lock down security programs and missiles and coalesce international needs with real local needs on the ground. However, while the underlying need for a wider perspective continues to hold true, that wider perspective encompasses a different array of problems in today's geographic context than it did in the former Soviet states. For example, at-risk chemical and biological weapons caches that might exist in Libya are not accompanied by a considerable number of un- or underemployed scientists, technicians, and engineers, especially in comparison to the former Soviet Union. Likewise, Pakistan has not agreed to de-weaponize and would not be receptive to redirection efforts geared at its nuclear program. As such, a US strategy that facilitates benefits that extend beyond nonproliferation would still prove most effective. The benefits should, however, be based on local needs.

US nonproliferation strategy should not only adapt to local needs but also to local norms and culture. For example, a shortcoming of the CTR program implemented in Russia was that it had not been customized to the country's norms. The program stipulated that Russian research institutes sign nonproliferation pledges; these meant nothing to the Russians who did not consider the pledges binding. Thus in facilitating a modern US strategy, policy contributors and makers should consider the sociology of partner states.

Indeed, far more effective than asking Russian institutes to sign nonproliferation pledges were the informal scientist-to-scientist relationships built through the CTR programs. Scientists from the for-

mer Soviet Union were incredibly receptive to their American counterparts and readily established personal relationships with them. These relationships provided the impetus for cooperative research that was critical to the success of the programs. Moreover, they not only sustained effective programming but also provided a platform upon which to expand that programming as security circumstances on the ground changed. US nonproliferation strategy should recognize the value of interpersonal relationships at the technical level but also at the political level as the key to long-term success and continue to promote them.

Lastly, considering the aforementioned implementation mechanisms was only one half of what constituted a successful US nonproliferation strategy in the former Soviet Union. The second half was convincing domestic constituents of the importance of nonproliferation. It was difficult for congressional supporters of nonproliferation to advocate a resource-intensive strategy that would not reap any immediately perceived benefits for Americans. Thus, transitioning CTR programs from foreign aid to defense by other means was a key part of that process. It is especially challenging to campaign for such programs in the present climate of economic uncertainty, when critics argue that US funds are better spent domestically. For that reason, the nonproliferation community should develop and promote a coherent and well-defined strategy in order for nonproliferation efforts to be renewed and updated.

Adapting and Changing Strategy: Nonproliferation Today

Today, the nonproliferation community has to advocate a threat reduction strategy not only to the American public but also to Capitol Hill. US nonproliferation programs have constituted perhaps the most successful US foreign policy agenda in a generation. However, in the face of evolving threats, US nonproliferation agencies have rarely reinforced their successes by marketing them to Congress and the American public. Moreover, no one in Congress is championing nonproliferation as Senators Nunn and Lugar did in the 1990s and, indeed, because there has been no catalytic event such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent creation of four nuclear weapons states, Congress has not been receptive to such efforts. The definition of success has been narrowed to look at nonproliferation metrics singularly as opposed to capacity building as a whole and how these programs benefit a wider US foreign policy.

Consequently, the nonproliferation community should be proactive in participating in Congressional outreach, sharing success stories, and highlighting the remarkable value that nonproliferation initiatives afford US national security. Moving forward, building a wider spectrum of metrics to evaluate success—based on the effect on US foreign policy and security as a whole—will be central to maintaining domestic political support for these efforts. Accordingly, they should craft and convey their message well. The key to doing so entails:

- Democratizing and modernizing a nonproliferation outreach.
- Defining threats, vulnerabilities, and new partners.
- Outlining durable coordinating mechanisms.
- Outlining broad soft power tools that the United States can utilize to support global nonproliferation.

As a part of formulating an updated strategy, the nonproliferation community should engage all relevant entities of the US government and beyond, beginning in the planning and development stages. As such, coordination efforts with the US government should include not only traditional partners in the Departments of State, Defense, and Energy but also unorthodox yet connected partners in the Departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services (including the Center for Disease Control), US Agency for International Development, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the Millennium Challenge Corporation, the National Academies of Science, the National Defense University, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation among others. In addition, considering Congress's key role in realizing nonproliferation initiatives by agreeing to fund them, the nonproliferation community should engage congressional staffers in building a relationship of interchange with Capitol Hill.

In reaching out to incorporate traditionally unconventional government partners, nonproliferation strategy should work to complement the agencies' domestic agenda in order to incentivize cooperation. Partner countries trust agencies such as the Department of Agriculture with whom they have already worked, had technical cooperation, and fostered relationships for decades. Consequently, these entities can play a critical role in implementing larger security objectives including nonproliferation.

Moreover, because proliferation today is a transnational challenge that no single government can manage alone, innovative partnerships beyond the US government will be critical to the success of any nonproliferation strategy. This outreach should include international, multinational, regional, and local entities such as United Nations agencies (including the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs), the World Customs Organization, the World Trade Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, INTERPOL and its regional partners, regional organizations (including the Association of Southeast Asian States, the Caribbean Community, and the Organization of American States), and local governments.

Importantly, regional organizations and local governments across the Global South that find themselves increasingly to be potential lightning rods for proliferation on the global supply chain have traditionally been missing as equal partners in nonproliferation engagement. Democratizing and modernizing nonproliferation outreach necessitates their inclusion not only in nonproliferation activities but also in the nonproliferation discourse and viewing them as partners rather than as recipients of international counsel and aid. To be sure, these states may lack even imperfect shared threat assessment as did the states of the former Soviet Union—particularly in the early days of the post-Cold War era. Nonproliferation is less likely to be a high priority for these countries especially in comparison to more immediate challenges with implications for human security and economic development.

These differences in threat priorities present both challenges and opportunities. New initiatives should be made relevant to partner state priorities to ensure sustainable buy-in from these countries. They should respond to real needs and tap into overlapping interests on the ground, ranging from lack of public health facilities, to narco-trafficking, to small arms trafficking. Like the CTR programs, these programs should include collaborations at both the political and technical levels in order to ensure the development of durable relationships that are vital to the success of any viable nonproliferation strategy. As such, in order to facilitate a strategy of embedded and sustained engagement, the nonproliferation community, including governments and specifically the US government, should go beyond engaging the capital and also engage local civil society, infrastructure, law enforcement, and think tanks. These entities are more likely to be “in tune”

with realities on the ground and, thus, helpful partners in presenting global security issues such as nonproliferation in a local context, highlighting, for example, that such safeguards and nuclear security are trade enablers.

Regional organizations can act as brokers for engagement with local agencies. Regional implementation of nonproliferation is consistent and even necessary because of the transnational nature of the global supply chain. A regional approach can circumvent the duplication of efforts so that resources do not go to waste, establish cost-sharing plans, exchange model legislation, and collaborate on enforcement mechanisms. Moreover, a regional power that champions nonproliferation efforts can be very effective in promoting threat reduction as a priority in neighboring countries. As such, the nonproliferation community should seek out regional organizations and powers that share innovativeness. Not only can regional powers advance nonproliferation strategy by endorsing it, but they can also invest in capacity building in target countries in the region. For example, Japan can offer assistance to countries like Indonesia, and India to Burma.

Lastly, a modern nonproliferation strategy requires the incorporation of private industry (that can directly or indirectly facilitate proliferation such as private technology innovators, manufacturers, shipping companies, finance, and insurance interests) in the planning and development as well as implementation phases. The expansion in the private sector has underwritten the modern success stories of globalization—economic growth and development. It therefore follows that the most effective way to address transnational challenges that stem from the undercurrents of globalization is for the public sector to work with the private sector in a mutually beneficial way, especially considering that the global supply chain is common to both licit and illicit trade. Multinational security and defense, insurance, pharmaceutical, and shipping corporations involved in international trade have the real world experience and technology that are integral to meeting these challenges. Identifying innovative ways prevents illicit actors from taking advantage of industry, and the global supply chain that does not inhibit growth or business will go far in restricting the flow of the WMD materials and related technologies. Most importantly, it is in the economic interest of private industry to strengthen the global supply chain against misuse and potential proliferation, as credibility and uninhibited trade flow from security.

Reaching out in the earliest planning and development stages to these relevant actors would ensure that programming meets mutually identified and beneficial objectives that may extend beyond immediate nonproliferation objectives. The US government should therefore consider convening a special task force—Task Force 2020—which would develop a long-term nonproliferation strategy and build a “CTR collective.” In addition to mutually validating the interests of collaborating partners in the United States and abroad, this approach would foster a strategy of embedded and sustained engagement. Not only would such collaboration from the beginning expand nonproliferation engagement, but it would also promote coordination by integrating and leveraging synergies and ensuring reciprocal value to stakeholders; thus, it would foster cohesive messaging for nonproliferation strategy, which relevant US agencies could, for example, market to Congress. It would, among other things, facilitate the understanding and articulation of threats, vulnerabilities, the links between nonproliferation and nontraditional spaces and agencies, the links between proliferation and local security and development challenges, and the links between nonproliferation strategy and US foreign policy and security as a whole, that should enable the development of a consistent strategy. Doing so is crucial because a decade after September 11, nonproliferation mandates lack a singular event that focuses congressional and international support. For this reason, collective ability to describe, justify, and market the utility of a coherent nonproliferation strategy and ensuing programs to US national security will be critical to the future of nonproliferation.

Finally, a closely related goal of the task force should be to develop durable coordinating mechanisms that would facilitate the freer flow of information, which, in turn, would make leveraging resources and synergies among agencies, government, and other bodies easier. The task force should consider undertaking a global mapping of all international assistance programming, not only in the immediate field of nonproliferation but also in parallel and interconnected spheres such as the countertrafficking of small arms, drugs, humans, and counterfeit intellectual property. In addition, a regularized electronic system should be developed to share and track pertinent programmatic information. This process should be designed to provide value to all contributors in order to ensure sustainability over the long term.

Lastly, as proliferation threats evolve and necessitate the expansion or redefinition of nonproliferation efforts, the US government should take advantage of the broad spectrum of ways available at its disposal to promote these efforts—which do not always entail the growth of newly funded programs. Sanctions, for example, can drive adherence to nonproliferation mandates without leveraging formal nonproliferation programmatic resources. Moreover, proving the proliferation of WMD materials and related technology in criminal terms is nearly impossible. Thus, using civil litigation to follow the money would be advantageous. In an era of declining budgets, these innovative tactics and collaborations can yield unique opportunities to prevent proliferation.

Conclusion

In navigating the new proliferation threat environment—one in which nonstate acquisition of WMD in a wider geographic context is the main concern—the nonproliferation community must clearly define the threat and understand global systematic vulnerabilities. Especially because the US government as well as others worldwide are carefully assessing and reducing spending on what they consider nonessential programs, the ability to develop a coherent nonproliferation strategy—one that outlines the value of nonproliferation programs to foreign policy and security—and market this strategy, will be crucial to the future of nonproliferation efforts. The strategy, moreover, needs to be sold to a domestic audience, to the US Congress, and to partner governments across the Global South.

In developing such a strategy, the nonproliferation community should incorporate the following lessons from the CTR programs implemented in the former Soviet Union that are still applicable today:

- Partner states face an array of problems that have a more immediate impact on state security and development than the possibility of WMD proliferation. Thus, they are more likely to buy into nonproliferation programs if they are designed to be “dual-benefit”—addressing hard security as well as soft security and development threats. Moreover, in the United States, there should be a wider perspective in gauging the success of nonproliferation programs—one that considers the utility of these programs to greater US foreign policy and security goals in order to maintain domestic political support for these efforts.
- Modern nonproliferation strategy needs to be adapted according to the local norms and culture in partner countries in order to be effectively implemented. Most importantly, an understanding of local sociology is necessary so that programs do not mandate measures that are of no real value on the ground.
- Human capital is critical to the effective implementation of nonproliferation programs at the technical and political levels. Above all, interpersonal relationships can overcome systematic cleavages between agencies, states, etc. These relationships not only sustain but also enable the expansion of effective programming, especially as security circumstances change.
- The development and marketing of a renewed nonproliferation strategy must carefully be targeted to domestic audiences of citizens, Congress, and to the foreign audience of partner governments in order for it to be wholly successful. Innovative messaging and active outreach are necessary.

Additionally, however, an updated nonproliferation strategy mandates:

- The inclusion of all relevant US agencies—traditional and otherwise—from the earliest planning stages, which is necessary to leverage resources and synergies. Moreover, because not even the United States can overcome the threat of proliferation alone, allies, friends—especially partner governments—and regional, multinational, and international organizations should be engaged from the planning and development stages. Lastly, a modern nonproliferation strategy necessitates the use of a “whole of society” approach that is not limited to governments and includes the private sector. Governments should incentivize public-private partnerships, realizing that the security of the global supply chain is inherently in the best interest of industry.
- The creation of a nonproliferation coalition—Task Force 2020—that would catalogue threats and vulnerabilities in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex and interconnected world and work toward building a “CTR collective” by, in part, outlining durable coordinating mechanisms on a global scale that would promote a smooth flow of information on existing and proposed international assistance programming in

nonproliferation and related fields. Doing so would facilitate the better leveraging of resources and synergies.

- The need for outlining broad soft power tools that the United States can utilize to support global nonproliferation, including but not limited to the use of sanctions and civil litigation. Especially in a time of economic uncertainty, the use of innovative tactics that do not require new funding can prove particularly cost-effective in preventing proliferation.
- In analyzing the CTR programs in the former Soviet Union as well as the different threat environment that exists today and, from that, putting forth these policy recommendations, the participants at the Stanley Foundation's 52nd Strategy for Peace Conference have laid the foundations for an updated and consistent nonproliferation strategy. It is incumbent upon the nonproliferation community to refine the strategy and message and market it to incentivize engagement and buy-in from relevant US government agencies; Congress; allies; regional, multinational, and international organizations; partner governments; and private industry—indeed, to adopt a “whole of society” approach in combatting proliferation globally.

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