Our New Atomic Age

Inside.

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Global Response Required

New challenges call for new approaches

When North Korea tested what is presumed to be a nuclear device on October 9, it was another blow to an already wobbly nuclear nonproliferation regime. That regime—a collection of treaties, institutions, norms, and commonly accepted practices—is the work of a nearly 40-year effort to stop the spread of nuclear weapons.

In many ways, the world’s effort to keep the proliferation of nuclear weapons in check is a model of international cooperation. It addresses one of the most serious threats to humankind—the prospect of an unrestrained arms race involving uniquely powerful weapons, those with the capability of ending human life on the planet. At the same time, it holds out the promise of nuclear energy to those nations who are responsible members of the regime. By and large, the regime has served the world very well.

A Different Era

But the nonproliferation regime is also a relic of the Cold War. Its centerpiece, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), went into force in 1970. Shaken by China’s nuclear weapons development and President Kennedy’s dire prediction that we could be facing a world of dozens of nuclear weapon states, the United States led the world in creating a system to control the spread of nuclear weapons. As part of the bargain, the nuclear states agreed to share nuclear energy technology so that all could benefit, and the superpowers also promised to eventually get rid of all of their nuclear weapons, while conveniently finessing the question of when they might get around to doing so.

The Cold War rivalry itself also played a role in checking the spread of nuclear weapons to other countries. Nations that allied with one of the superpowers or were de facto client states understood that their relationship with a superpower offered significant security assurances, making it easier to forgo their own nuclear weapons development. And by allowing international inspections that made sure that no nuclear materials were diverted to weapons programs, even nonnuclear weapon states could develop advanced civilian nuclear energy, medical, and research programs.

In many respects, today’s world is much less orderly. The absence of a superpower rivalry limits the options for countries looking for a guarantor of their security. As well, at a time when international accountability seems to be in decline, the repercussions for a state moving to develop nuclear weapons has become much less clear. In 1962 the United States and the Soviet Union nearly started World War III when the USSR attempted to place nuclear missiles inside Cuba. Yet by 1998, two longtime adversaries, India and Pakistan, openly and repeatedly tested their own nuclear weapons, with only minor, short-term negative consequences.

Isolated and dangerous, North Korea is well on its way to becoming a full-blown nuclear weapons power. Iran, which swears it does not want nuclear weapons, nevertheless asserts its right to develop technology that would allow it to produce weapons. Without a reliable, overarching framework to hold regional and global forces in check, the “domino theory” that never came true during the Cold War may actually become a reality today.

The acquisition of nuclear weapons by states in already unstable regions might prompt their neighbors to likewise arms. The cases of North Korea and Iran have already prompted statements and speculation about South Korea, Japan, Syria, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, and whether these states and others may react to nuclear developments in their region by adapting their own nuclear policies.
Nuclear Terrorism

Add to this the mounting concern about what radically disaffected groups who have used terrorist tactics would do if they were to get their hands on nuclear weapons.

In recent years, there have been alarming indications of how this might come about. Following the breakup of the Soviet Union, thousands of nuclear weapons and thousands more tons of nuclear material were left in limbo, under shaky security. The September 11 attacks awoke the US government and public to the potential of international terrorism on US soil. And the uncovering of the A. Q. Khan proliferation network was a surprising, concrete example of how the spread of nuclear weapons and technology could be accomplished.

Energy Demands

Meanwhile, the demand for nuclear energy is growing after more than two decades of being in a stall. The rapid growth of economies and population in China, India, Brazil, and elsewhere—combined with a growing appreciation for the dangers of global warming—has created a tremendous demand for new, noncarbon-based energy sources. Nuclear energy is seen as an essential part of the mix. But an increase in the number of nations that have nuclear technology and nuclear materials raises the risk that the technology or fuel can fall into the wrong hands.

Responding to the Challenge

Independently and collectively, the global community, led by the United States, has in part responded to these challenges.

A set of programs called Cooperative Threat Reduction has secured or removed much of the “loose nukes” problem in Russia, although it will not complete its task for another decade at the current rate. The UN Security Council has passed a binding resolution making states more accountable for terrorist groups and the transit of nuclear items within their borders. And several proposals have been put forth for expanding nuclear energy without contributing to weapons proliferation.

But to date, most of our efforts have been ad hoc, bilateral, and specific. Global problems require global solutions. Will we find the vision and the political will to pursue them?

—Jeffrey G. Martin and Matt Martin
McHugh: What is the state of the nuclear world today, 60 years after the US used the first atomic bomb?

Semmel: We can be grateful that the atomic bomb and nuclear weapons have not been used since then. That doesn’t mean that they won’t take place in the future. So, therefore, we have to be very vigilant to ensure that the nuclear knowhow, the nuclear materials, to say nothing of the nuclear weapons, do not get into the wrong hands, whether they be the wrong hands of states or nonstate actors, which we generally refer to as terrorists.

Since the mid-1940s we’ve built a number of international infrastructures, things like the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency), the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and a whole series of other cooperative arrangements to control exports and manage exports and so forth.

Whether this is sufficient remains a good question. We continue to look at the international system relative to nuclear proliferation questions, try to see where there are gaps, and then try to plug those gaps as best we can. Not unilaterally, but in collaboration with other countries.

McHugh: The US is a signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and some would argue that it’s on the verge of collapse. And others would argue that it’s actually done its job because there are less than a dozen countries that have nuclear weapons capability. And there was this fear after World War II that there would be dozens upon dozens. Has the NPT lived up to its original intentions?

Semmel: Depends on who you ask. Generally, I think there were expectations that in the absence of enforcement mechanisms to ensure that countries comply with their treaty obligations that you would see a very rapid growth in the number of countries with either nuclear weapons capability walking right up to the line or nuclear weapons.

And you could count perhaps more than three dozen countries in that category. I think for a variety of reasons that’s never happened. I think on balance there have been a number of countries that have really gone up to the line and actually stepped across the line, now step back, and those are the countries like South Africa, to some extent Brazil and Argentina.

There are three countries in the former Soviet Union that gave up all its nuclear weapons. Colonel Kadaffy made a decision in late 2003 to give up his aspirations for nuclear weapons and actually all weapons of mass destruction. So there’s some hope out there that countries will see their interests lie in areas other than the development of these
weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons.

McHugh: Outside of the NPT, there are a number of new counterproliferation enforcement efforts including the Proliferation Security Initiative and the global partnership against the spread of weapons of mass destruction. Are these efforts really all that effective?

Semmel: Well, it remains to be seen. I think they are. In the case of trying to secure facilities, let’s say in the former Soviet Union or elsewhere, basically, you have to have some kind of a structure. And the best way to secure facilities and to assure that they don’t get into the wrong hands or the wrong people who might use them for malevolent purposes is to secure them at their source.

And one of the elements of that is the Proliferation Security Initiative, PSI. It’s not an organization. It’s basically a set of countries, around 80 right now, who subscribe to the set of principles, come together, do exercises periodically, exchange information, improve intelligence exchanges, and so forth.

McHugh: What do you believe the global nuclear community will look like in 20 to 30 years?

Semmel: Very good question. I wish I had the answer to that. It sounds like a cliché, but we’re at a critical juncture right now. And if Iran were to develop these nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons capabilities might ask, if the Iranians can do this, why shouldn’t we?

And you then begin to get this out-of-control spiral of nuclear weapon states, and so forth. I think we’re likely to see in that one juncture, in that one direction in which the world might go, a far more dangerous world in which only by arithmetic the prospects of the use of nuclear weapons and materials—whether intended or accidental—is going to increase.

The other juncture is one for the world community through the United Nations and other means that are available to us to take the tough stance on compliance and enforcement, to toughen and strengthen international institutions that are relevant here. Maybe to develop new institutions to be able to provide for countries that want to have nuclear energy that are otherwise deprived of access to fossil fuels.

If we go down that road, I think the world would be not the dangerous world I just described on the other route. But we’re clearly at a fork in the road and it’s up to all the institutions that I just mentioned as well as the individual countries to be able to choose which route they want to take. We’re hopeful that it’s going be the second route. If it is, I think our children and our children’s children are going be much safer.


For Sale. Workers in heavy snowfall stand in front of a reactor body made for Iran during a 2001 ceremony in St. Petersburg, Russia. The 317-ton piece was the first reactor body sent by Russia to Iran, part of a project that raised strong US protests. (AP/Wide World Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)

If that doesn’t work, then you secure them at the border. If that doesn’t work, then you secure them en route to some other place, whether it’s to the United States or other friendly coun-tries, so that you want to be able to develop some kind of holistic approach to nonproliferation.

...a number of countries have developed advanced nuclear technologies and capabilities, but have not decided...to actually develop weapons.
North Korea

Can This Crisis Be Globally Managed?

*Tough policy choices must be made by the international community*

The UN Security Council condemnation of North Korea’s October 8 nuclear test was a good first step in a concerted effort by the international community to address this crisis. But a critical question remains: As diplomats in New York and national leaders around the globe try to forge a unified plan of action, can the international community make its efforts to contain North Korea’s nuclear program work?

On the one hand, the answer is clearly yes: effective sanctions regimes or methods to seal off and prevent North Korea from exporting its nuclear technology can be devised and implemented, at least theoretically.

But the underlying problem is this: we arrived at this point because the interests and policies of the major parties involved with this crisis are out of sync. If these fundamental misalignments persist, it is difficult to imagine how an effective international approach is sustainable.

**A Clarifying Moment**

North Korea’s test was a clarifying moment, however, and that clarity may well breed unity and harmony.

Despite its agreement to narrowly targeted sanctions against its neighbor to the south, China has never really been forced to choose between competing interests at play in its North Korea policy: Is it about stability in the North? Trade? Continuing to serve as North Korea’s patron? Playing a role of regional power broker and forging a deal? Concern about a possible Japanese nuclear program?

Likewise, the United States has held that it cannot accept a world with a nuclear North Korea in it. Yet US policy over the past several years has all but assured that this is precisely the world we have.

These contradictions—and the policies of South Korea, Japan, and others can be added into the mix—have resulted in the failed policy and failed diplomacy that got us here.
Can we, the international community as a whole, build a sustainable consensus to manage the situation? And if not, what then?

—Michael Schiffer

For more on the Stanley Foundation’s Asia Security initiative, visit www.stanleyfoundation.org.
that the lawyers ask a client...is, “What's our leverage?” In other words...this is always the first question we ask about international disputes. Well, it's interesting that the word leverage can't be translated into any other language. It's a purely American usage and what it means is, “What are all the points of pressure that we can bring to bear?”

It is an inherently coercive notion. Relationships that rest on coercive measures are inherently fragile. The results that...coercion produces are seldom very long sustained and, in fact, we all know again from ordinary life—and I think this is true in international relations also—that it's at least as important to ask what the other party wants and whether there is some way in which we can make what they want compatible with what we want, or whether we can persuade that what we want is what they ought to want, before we start asking how we can bring them to their knees with economic pressure or an air strike.

Effective conduct of international relations really requires a measure of respect for the other party, a measure of empathy in order to craft a strategy which will persuade the other party that it's in their interest to do what the United States thinks would be in our interest as well.

Porter: If we had a new US foreign policy based on respect, how might our relationship change, say, with China?
Freeman: Well, I think actually the relationship with China is a very good case in point. We have a great number of contradictions in that relationship. On one level, it’s never been healthier. The interaction between the American business community, labor, the American cultural community, the educational establishment, and the Chinese is every day more vigorous. But on the other hand, we’re quite conflicted on the military front. People in the Congress are responsive to what President Eisenhower called the military industrial complex, and they can’t by law and policy sell anything to China.

They can sell it to Taiwan and they can sell it to the Defense Department. So they have a vested interest in talking up the China threat, both to Taiwan and to the United States. And in fact, in the Congress, laws have been passed to require, for example, an annual report on Chinese military power, the purpose of which is to alarm Americans sufficiently...to generate support for funding on major high-tech complex weapons systems like the F-22 and nuclear attack submarines which have no conceivable use against terrorists or the other threats that we face in the real world. So I think that the beginning would be on the military side with the Chinese, which is the most problematic part actually, to engage in some discussion.... Because the other thing that the United States does that is very peculiar is imagine that you can influence people by shunning them.

If we have a problem with people, we immediately sever communication with them. But again, we know from ordinary life that all that does is make people mad and cause them to go on their own way without regard to your interests.

Porter: So what does the alternative look like? If Ambassador Freeman could wave a magic wand and create a new US foreign policy, what would be the broad outlines of that?

Freeman: Well, I would say the first thing is that we need to recognize that we have a big stick; therefore, we can afford to speak softly....It isn’t necessary for us to run around the world lecturing people. And we should secondly recognize that historically our greatest influence and appeal has come from the fact that people abroad believed we aspired to a higher standard. They thought the United States was attempting somewhat uniquely to behave in a morally responsible manner, not only domestically but internationally, that we believed in a rule-bound international order.

In other words...we were not attempting to build an empire or impose our will on others. Now perhaps some of that was naive on the part of others and certainly it’s an overstatement of our role in history—even the most chauvinistic of American boosters would admit that. But still one of the keys to regaining influence is not only to speak softly, but to listen, to respect the views of others, not to make pronouncements before you have fully coordinated them with others, bring others in on the process. I think we would find that we got our way much more frequently internationally if we took this less militaristic, less aggressive, more persuasive lower-key approach.

—or for the full transcript of this interview, visit us online at www.stanleyfoundation.org.

George W. Bush in 2003. “The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. Our government has taken unprecedented measures to defend the homeland and we will continue to hunt down the enemy before he can strike.” (Department of Defense photo)
In 1962, Ban Ki-moon came to the White House and met President John F. Kennedy. Then, Ban was the 18-year-old winner of an English-language speech contest from rural South Korea. Today he is on the threshold of becoming the eighth secretary-general of the United Nations.

Ban says the visit to the White House inspired him to become a diplomat, and he pursued that training and career with vigor.

He graduated from South Korea’s Seoul National University Department of International Relations in 1970 and the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University in 1985. His 35 years of government and international service include time as South Korea’s foreign minister and ambassador to the United States.

He also served in a variety of posts connected to the United Nations including in South Korea’s New York and Vienna UN missions. In 1999 he was chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization. And in 2001 he was the principal aide to the president of the United Nation’s 56th General Assembly.

Ban’s rise to the post of secretary-general comes following some surprising transparency in the effort to name a successor to Kofi Annan. Annan’s second and final
Council decided that all candidates for the job must be publicly nominated by a member country. And council members took “straw polls” where they could vote to “encourage” or “discourage” as many of the official candidates as they like. These polls were intended to preview the council’s thinking, highlight consensus where it exists, and send a signal to candidates with little chance of winning.

A handful of candidates in addition to Ban, almost all from Asia, were officially nominated:

- Jayantha Dhanapala, senior adviser to the president of Sri Lanka and a former UN under-secretary-general
- Surakiart Sathirathai, deputy prime minister of Thailand
- Shashi Tharoor, UN under-secretary-general for communications and public information
- Vaira Vike-Freiberga, president of Latvia
- Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Hussein, ambassador of Jordan to the United Nations
- Ashraf Ghani, chancellor of Kabul University in Afghanistan

All of these candidates withdrew in the days after a straw poll revealed Ban to be the only candidate with the full support of all five, veto-wielding, permanent members of the council.

The UN General Assembly approved Ban in mid-October and he will begin his term on January 1, 2007.

Ban Ki-moon addressed the Council of Foreign Relations in May 2006 and revealed these thoughts about his new office:

“The secretary-general’s leadership holds together the cooperation among principal organs of the United Nations. It is also the catalyst in rallying the political will of the member states. In particular the commitment of the United States is vital. It is the host country, it is the most important country in the world at this time. Also, in our times now, global challenges call for global responses. The United States cannot do it alone. The United States needs the United Nations, and vice versa.

“Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, looking ahead, I’m an optimist, and am convinced that the best days for our global organization have yet to come. Confidence in the face of adversity comes naturally to Koreans. We Koreans have quite literally risen from the ashes of this war. We have done so through hard work, commitment, dedication and the help of friends, and particularly the United Nations. Now we stand ready to pay back what we have owed to the United Nations and international community. We wish to become the strongest advocate of the agendas of the United Nations, be it peace, development or human rights.”

—Keith Porter
The Stanley Foundation Explorer Awards provide international travel opportunities for local Muscatine, Iowa, K-12 teachers. Each year, two teachers are selected for summer study tours to a destination of their choice.

This year’s winners were Carol Kula, who joined a research team on an Earthwatch Expedition in Cuzco, Peru, and Karen Hartman, who visited Tanzania.

The awards are aimed at providing a change of environment for teachers and the chance to be creatively inspired. Here are just a few of the images the teachers brought back with them.

—Jill Goldesberry

In Peru. Left, Carol Kula and fellow Earthwatch expedition participants working to uncover Wari culture artifacts in Cuzco. (Photo by Dr. Robert Wimmer)

In Tanzania. The fig tree might be a topic for a future science unit in Karen Hartman’s fifth grade class. (Photo by Boniface Pacidi)

Kula and her team found this pot from the pre-Incan period (500-900 A.D.) at the Ccacotacutioc burial site. The animal depicted on the pot is most likely a type of puma. (Photo by Dr. Robert Wimmer)
Hartman visited children striving to learn under difficult circumstances. (Photo by Boneface Pacidi)

Students march in a parade in Cuzco to celebrate schools! (Photo by Dr. Robert Wimmer)

Hartman helped deliver food to Maasai villagers during a stop in Kenya. Money for the food was donated by students at Hartman’s school and other Muscatine residents. (Photo by Jan Tipape)
Resources

Stanley Foundation Publications

These reports and a wealth of other information are available at reports.stanleyfoundation.org

PUBLICATIONS

Coercive Diplomacy: Scope and Limits in the Contemporary World
This brief by Bruce W. Jentleson reviews coercive diplomacy’s track record and looks at how the United States used it to deal with Libya. It also presents policy recommendations that might be applied to current cases such as Iran and North Korea. December 2006 analysis brief

China’s Energy Security and Its Grand Strategy
China considers energy security critical to sustainable growth. Xuecheng Liu discusses China’s strategies of conservation, efficiency, and a shift toward alternative fuels, and examines the implications on international relations and security. September 2006 analysis brief

Failing States and US Strategy
The issue of failing states is one of the principal challenges facing the US. Anatol Lieven offers policy recommendations that reflect the tenets of “developmental realism” and advocates specific criteria for future international interventions. September 2006 analysis brief

Nuclear Weapons, Energy, and Nonproliferation: Pressures on the Global Community
At a time when the global nuclear regime—dependent on the United Nations, its bodies, and international law—is under great stress, this report summarizes the discussions and recommendations of UN diplomats and nuclear policy experts. June 2006 report

The US-India Nuclear Cooperation Agreement: Issues for the Nuclear Suppliers Group
A proposed nuclear agreement between the US and India stretches the nonproliferation regime. Enactment hinges on both the US Congress and the international Nuclear Suppliers Group. This August 2006 brief discusses the critical issues.

America’s Uncomfortable Relationship With Nationalism
Is there such a thing as American nationalism or is it simply “patriotism”? Why do Americans view nationalism in such a negative light? Graham Fuller analyzes Americans’ problem with nationalism, and why it is such a dangerous topic to ignore. July 2006 analysis brief

A Critique of the Bush Administration’s National Security Strategy
The Bush administration still has not produced an achievable national security strategy with a realistic chance of gaining support among Americans on a bipartisan basis. This June 2006 analysis brief examines the particular failings of the 2006 strategy document.

Open Media and Transitioning Societies in the Arab Middle East: Implications for US Security Policy
The growth of Middle East media raises questions about the impact of this new era on policy, both regionally and internationally. This report summarizes dialogues between regional and Western media and policy elites and offers recommendations. May 2006 report

RADIO DOCUMENTARY

24/7: The Rise and Influence of Arab Media
A new public radio documentary hosted by David Brancaccio. As a part of the Stanley Foundation’s Security in an Era of Open Arab Media, it examines the dramatic expansion of open media in the Arab world and the security implications this phenomenon has for the United States.

NOW SHOWING

The Stanley Foundation is seeking community and student groups that are interested in partnering to show films in their communities and on their campuses in an effort to open up a discussion about the most urgent global issues. The films and additional materials in the event toolkit are free of charge. For more information, contact us at info@stanleyfoundation.org. We have these films available:

Last Best Chance
Last Best Chance is a docudrama showing the threat posed by vulnerable nuclear weapons and materials around the world and spells out what is at stake.

The Peacekeepers
The Peacekeepers is a documentary exploring the work and experiences of the United Nations Mission to Congo from 2002 to 2004.
Control Room, a documentary examining Al Jazeera’s coverage of the current Iraq conflict, is the centerpiece of a new Stanley Foundation “Now Showing…” event toolkit.

In addition to the DVD, “Now Showing… Control Room” includes a discussion guide, the “24/7: The Rise and Influence of Arab Media” radio documentary, our quarterly publication Courier focusing on Arab media, and a policy report titled Open Media and Transitioning Societies in the Arab Middle East: Implications for US Security Policy.

To show this film in your community or on your campus, contact us at info@stanleyfoundation.org.
The objective of the conference is to advance US debate on issues and policy considerations that must be addressed if the United States is to meet the real security challenges of the post-9/11 world while also maintaining its legitimacy in the global arena.

Keynote speaker Strobe Talbott, president of the Brookings Institution, will lead an impressive list of panelists and presenters at this one-day event in Washington, DC.

Topics include:

- A World Remade: The United States and Rising Powers in the 21st Century
- Effective Counterterrorism in a Globalized World: Reclaiming the Edge of Legitimacy
- Enforcement of International Norms: Bringing and Keeping Dissenters in the Fold
- Rethinking the US Military Revolution
- Strengthening Nuclear Nonproliferation and Expanding Nuclear Energy: Incompatible or Complementary Goals?
- Why Are We Failing Failing States?

For post-conference materials, visit www.stanleyfoundation.org/securityconference.