



Geneva Centre for Security Policy  
Centre de Politique de Sécurité, Genève  
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## **Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security**

### **GCSP Policy Brief Series**

The GCSP policy brief series publishes papers in order to assess policy challenges, dilemmas, and policy recommendations in *all aspects* of transnational security and globalization. The series was created and is edited by Dr. Nayef R.F. Al-Rodhan, Senior Scholar in Geostrategy and Director of the Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security.

## **Editorial of GCSP Policy Brief No. 3 Prevention of WMD Proliferation, Globalization, and International Security**

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## Review and Critique

Many academics and analysts argue that one of the most pressing issues facing global security today is the prevention of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), including limiting the proliferation of their components and delivery systems. This has certainly become an issue for the larger globalization debate and represents an area where there is a pressing need for the international community to engage, especially given recent key developments by potential nuclear states to arm themselves militarily with WMD and ongoing negotiations with other states regarding nuclear programs.

Since the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) came into force in 1970, the world has advanced further toward a nuclear-free status. However, in the past couple of decades, with the fall of the Soviet Union, the rising military force of China, the detonation of nuclear warheads in Pakistan and India, and evidence of terrorist groups seeking to acquire nuclear capabilities, there has arguably never been as much pressure on the international community to find solutions to these delicate issues. Currently, there are five nuclear states (China, France, United Kingdom, Russia, and the United States) and three others known to possess nuclear weapons (India, Israel, and Pakistan). Increasingly, the possible acquisition of nuclear weapons by other states and non-state actors makes the threat to international stability and security that much stronger.

So where does this leave the global community in its efforts to stem the tide of WMD proliferation? With the invasion of Iraq initially based on the presumption that WMD existed and then rescinded, the precedent of such presumptuous decision-making has suffered tremendously. So how do states that willingly commit to nonproliferation hold accountable those states that do not and what type of negotiations and “carrots” should be offered in order to work toward the full attainment of global security in this realm of weaponry?

The policy brief “Prevention of WMD Proliferation, Globalization, and International Security” by Dr. Vladimir Orlov<sup>1</sup> addresses and responds to exactly these types of questions. He agrees that the implications for WMD policies are some of the most pressing issues to deal with in the security realm in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through a set of case studies (India, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, and non-state actors), Dr. Orlov analyzes the challenge that the potential proliferation of WMD presents to states, regions, and the international system and what this means for the risk and prevention of proliferation in the near and mid-term future.

Through a detailed yet concise measure of the current global policy issues related to this topic of debate, Dr. Orlov outlines the current nuclear situation in each of his case studies. He then explains that, while international responses have clearly not been sufficient, many options exist for the international community to respond to traditional and non-traditional proliferation

threats. It is Dr. Orlov’s belief that the only effective responses are those that are both balanced in approach and customized to each of a variety of potential situations.

### Policy Dilemmas and Recommendations

The risk of continued proliferation of WMD worldwide, by states and potentially by non-state actors, brings into question the relevance and future of the nonproliferation architecture and thus presents the international community with a number of policy dilemmas. Most urgently, the international community faces a number of urgent collective decisions concerning potential nuclear states in the area of nuclear nonproliferation. Thus, the table below identifies eight policy dilemmas paired with relevant policy recommendations that aim to increase the confidence of states in multilateral solutions to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and are made in light of warranted concern for increased nuclear proliferation in recent years.



The above dilemmas and recommendations are all important, but only a few of them will be emphasized here, while also highlighting some of the cross-cutting issues. Using a multilateral forum to discuss nuclear proliferation is essential, as is basing action on the international legal instruments available. In this regard, the NPT is the legal cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime, and states rightly put a great deal of emphasis on its central role in encouraging nonproliferation. However, they face increasing pressure to adapt the nonproliferation regime to today's realities: for instance, of eight nuclear states, only five are recognized by the NPT. The NPT remains the bedrock, but other instruments, such as UN Security Council resolutions and ad hoc solutions, must also be instrumentalized.

Second, the determination of certain terrorist organizations to obtain nuclear material poses a grave risk to the world. States face a dilemma in responding to this threat because of the lack of information surrounding who has or is trying to acquire these weapons and the difficulty of detecting storage sites. There need to be tight controls and monitoring to ensure that these weapons do not end up in the wrong hands, including policies that put preventative incentives in place for potential sellers.

Third, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and states face policy dilemmas when trying to identify ways to encourage states to give up their nuclear ambitions. Certain potential nuclear states need to be offered important and attractive incentives in order to abandon their military nuclear programs, but these incentives are not always evident. Carrots, as much as sticks, need to be identified. States that are deemed suspicious by the international community still have the right under the nuclear nonproliferation regime to develop nuclear technology for peaceful, domestic purposes, but the international community are not very accepting of "risky states" using their rights to acquire the newest technology for this purpose.

Nuclear states need to offer incentives to maintain or create their nuclear status by ensuring protection, while, to avoid the perception of double standards, they could also reduce their nuclear stockpiles significantly without threatening their own security. Additionally, states should pursue the development of new non-nuclear technology systems. Reducing existing nuclear arsenals would have to be weighed in light regional security concerns and domestic pressures, but it would be an important confidence-building measure and testament to the importance of the multilateral arrangements under the nonproliferation regime. The trust that states have for one another is of paramount importance in dealing with these issues and quite often it is the first casualty of these discussions.

## **Conclusion**

The threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction among state and non-state actors looms large over the international community. As some potential nuclear states claim to have a right to conduct nuclear research, countries like the United States find

themselves in a difficult negotiating position, being nuclear states themselves. Multilateral solutions must be sought at every turn, and organizations such as the IAEA and the UN must be supported in their nonproliferation endeavors. Specific and collaborative measures will help to further negotiations and the move toward a more secure and stable global society.

## **References**

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<sup>1</sup> For the entire policy brief, please see the policy brief series as part of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy's Program on the Geopolitical Implications of Globalization and Transnational Security at <http://www.gcsp.ch/e/publications/Globalisation/index.htm>.