

## PREFACE

A world without nuclear weapons is a goal worth pursuing in itself. Beyond that, and most importantly, endeavoring to achieve that goal will also invigorate efforts to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. But the road will not be an easy one. Real and serious obstacles lie ahead. Nations that have privileged positions in the international system by virtue of being nuclear weapons states will be reluctant to give up that status, or even to accept parity in nuclear weapons as stockpiles are reduced to low levels. Nations that fear the conventionally-armed military might of other nations will be reluctant to give up the option of a nuclear “equalizer.” Factors such as these, rather than technical problems, are the main reasons why reaching zero will be so difficult. And these are problems that can be overcome. No law of nature stands in the way.

Thinking about a world without nuclear weapons in a more than casual way cannot help but flag a number of ramifications—related issues that have to be considered. This is one of the strengths of the idea. It focuses attention on important questions that might otherwise be neglected because they are seen as not “urgent.” Considering the many complications, there are skeptics who think that a world without nuclear weapons is beyond imagining at this point in time. Among the unconvinced, however, there is broad support for the individual steps of nuclear restraint that were advocated at the two conferences held at the Hoover Institution in 2006 and 2007, as described by Messrs. Shultz, Kissinger, Perry, and Nunn in their

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two influential *Wall Street Journal* articles (see Appendix 1 and 2). These steps were recognized as necessary to pave the way for the “end state” where nuclear weapons arsenals are finally reduced to zero, once the verification and compliance requirements have been satisfied.

Why bother thinking now about the “end state”? One answer was given in Proverbs: “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” In the nuclear age that age-old wisdom takes on new and ominous meaning. More prosaically, linking immediate actions and a long-term vision will produce synergies that will encourage progress toward a world without nuclear weapons. Generating support for individual steps that may not, in themselves, enjoy universal endorsement should be one result. Obliging governments to think through all the steps that have to be taken to safely reach the goal of a world without nuclear weapons is a second desirable result. A third is that the goal can also be a compass: it can add coherence to day-to-day national decisions. A fourth result, real even if more ephemeral, is the intensity of purpose that may be created by the pursuit of this goal: mustering the necessary political will is another way of putting this. And a fifth benefit should be that the United States and other current possessors of nuclear weapons would be able to move from the defense in nonproliferation matters, where they now are, to the offense, thus enabling them to be more effective in advancing universal nonproliferation interests.

We have engaged in this study with a sense of urgency. The world is approaching a time when nuclear weapons will be more widely available. Nuclear-armed terrorism has become a distinct possibility. And it is becoming increasingly clear that current efforts by the international community to address today’s and tomorrow’s nuclear threats do not rise to the level of the danger. Despite the somber outlook, the world need not

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give in to pessimism, or fatalism, and certainly not to the paralysis of fear. Yes, there are problems—and solutions for them. But make no mistake, there are also no grounds for complacency.

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