



Asia Pacific Leadership Network
for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and
Disarmament

Colombo, Sri Lanka

Co-hosted by Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of
International Relations and Strategic Studies

18-20 February 2018

Report of the APLN South Asia and China Regional Meeting at Colombo

Summary

The APLN convened a second South Asia and China Regional meeting in Colombo 18-20 March 2018 in partnership with the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI) of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka's premier foreign policy think-tank.

Our discussion focussed on 3 core issues:

- *'The China, India, Pakistan Nuclear Dilemma'*, which explored developments in the evolution of the chain of nuclear strategic relations between Pakistan, India China, and beyond; examined the risks of unintended consequences cascading through the chain; and options for breaking away from the habits of the past and creating mechanisms for reducing nuclear threats and risks.
- *'The Global Outlook: Strategies for kick starting disarmament and curbing proliferation'* which considered measures to support the JCPOA addressing Iran's nuclear program; examined options for dealing with nuclear issues on the Korean Peninsula; and considered what South Asia could do separately and collectively to restart nuclear disarmament processes.
- *'Strengthening the global Non-Proliferation consensus'* which examined the NPT Review process; the relationship between the NPT and the Nuclear Ban Treaty; and bridging the gap between the supporters and opponents of the Nuclear Ban Treaty.

As set out in the report, several practical recommendations arose and will be taken forward by APLN. The meeting was also an opportunity for APLN Members in the region to discuss our outreach strategies and review work plans. **A full report of the meeting is [here](#).**

In conjunction with the meeting, LKI arranged a public lecture by Co-Convenor Ramesh Thakur on "Nuclear Policy and Prospects for Disarmament in the New World Order," and a follow-on panel discussion amongst APLN Members, moderated by Jayantha Dhanapala, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. The event was well attended and stimulated a lively audience discussion. The event also stimulated media coverage which will help raise the profile of nuclear issues on Sri Lanka.

A full report of that event, including a video of the speech and panel discussion, can be found at <http://www.lki.lk/events/lkis-dinusha-panditaratne-on-nuclear-disarmament-at-aplns-south-asia-and-china-regional-meeting-2018/>.

Content



Report and summary prepared by John Tilemann, APLN Research Director

The 2018 South Asia and China Regional Meeting was convened in Colombo 18-20 February, in partnership with the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI) of International Relations and Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka's premier foreign policy think-tank.

The meeting was held over one and half days, engaging APLN members from Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, with guest participation of several academic and advocacy group experts from Sri Lanka. The program and a list of participants is attached at the Annex 1 to this report. Unless otherwise indicated in the report, the meeting was conducted under the Chatham House rule.

In association with the meeting the APLN jointly hosted with our partner the LKI an event for the media and public: a lecture by Co-Convenor Thakur on "Nuclear Policy and Prospects for Disarmament in the New World Order," followed by a panel discussion amongst APLN Members, moderated by Jayantha Dhanapala, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs. A full report of that event, including a video of the speech, as well as LKI's "takeaways" of the event can be found at <http://www.lki.lk/events/lkis-dinusha-panditaratne-on-nuclear-disarmament-at-aplns-south-asia-and-china-regional-meeting-2018/>.

The very useful media comment generated by the Meeting and outreach event is attached at Annex 2.

Opening Session

Co-Convenor Thakur welcomed APLN Members several of whom were attending an APLN event for the first time; and expressed highest appreciation for the support that had been extended by LKI in arranging and servicing the meeting and related outreach. He noted huge challenges facing the Asia Pacific, the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula and the chain of nuclear tensions stretching from China to India and Pakistan which caused alarm for all regional states. Against this backdrop the APLN had a critical role in helping understanding across the region of the nature of the nuclear threats and the scope for mitigating them. The Asia Pacific region lacks formal and informal regional security dialogue structures: this made the role of the APLN all the more important. The Network needed to consider actions it can take individually and collectively. The APLN contains a unique asset in the eminence and expertise of its Members; these must be harnessed for outreach and advocacy. The intention is to continue to grow the Network from its current numbers of 90 plus to about 150. The ambition is that the APLN can help make the links that are missing in official regional structures, and provide a track-2 bridge between the multiple centres of power and competition. For the foreseeable future the APLN will be strongly focused on three issues: the nuclear spiral on the Korean Peninsula, the management of the international disarmament agenda, specifically the need for convergence between the NPT and the new Nuclear Ban Treaty, and the continuing effort to find mechanisms for

reducing nuclear threats and risks between nuclear armed states in the Asia Pacific.

The Executive Director of LKI Dinusha Panditaratne warmly welcomed APLN Members and introduced the Sri Lankan guest experts invited to participate in the exchanges. She outlined the complex regional challenges faced by Sri Lanka, and the country's effort to redefine its own geo-political identity. While Sri Lanka was 'South Asian' it was looking to project itself in a broader Indian Ocean context. It has a keen interest in the balance of powers in the neighbourhood, and very conscious of what is happening in the South China Sea, which underlined the need for a rules-based regional order. To this end, thought was being given to how Sri Lanka could build on the leadership it showed in initiating the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace at the 26th UNGA in 1971 to help address present day issues.

Session 1: The China, India, Pakistan Nuclear Dilemma

Chair: Co-Convenor Ramesh Thakur

Directions in the evolution of the triad and the dyads; Unintended consequences; and Breaking the cycle

The Chair pointed to the various parameters that needed consideration:

- the evolution of nuclear strategic doctrines, declaratory postures and force numbers and deployments
- the political and cultural characteristics of political leadership and the quality of decision making
- lessons from the Cold War including the cases of 'near misses'
- the potential for confidence building measures to mitigate nuclear risks
- the challenges arising from the absence of regional and sub-regional security structures - and the scope for strategic policy dialogues.

Considering the broad sweep of the nuclear age one discussant pointed out that following the decades of essentially a bipolar nuclear landscape we now face a much more complex era, focused on the Indo Pacific, involving multiple balances and vastly varying degrees of competence – all of which entailed potential for strategic surprises. DPRK for example with minimal industrial and technical base had surprised with the speed of its acquisition of nuclear and missile capabilities. In addition, new technologies such as cyberwarfare were introducing new instabilities in power relationships; as were the roles of 'grey-zone' operations and those of non-state actors.

A dominant theme in the ensuing discussion was the **interconnectedness** of regional nuclear relations: it was not simply a matter of dyads or triads, rather there is a **strategic chain** linking Pakistan, India, China and the United States. These interactions were the subject of a recent Brookings Institute study led by Bob Einhorn and WPS Sidhu, and involving several APLN members. The text of the report can be found at <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-strategic-chain-linking-pakistan->

[india-china-and-the-united-states/](#). The strategic environment includes major asymmetries, and the role of nuclear weapons in the overall security calculus has been changing. This is a challenge for arms control negotiators: simple number counting warhead reductions no longer work because it is necessary to look at the wider calculus of security imbalances. The Brookings study had worked within tight time constraints, requiring it to record only those recommendations which did not raise objections: accordingly, there was only a thin list of recommendations deserving close study.

A second characteristic and complication of the Asia Pacific was *'nuclear learning'* - the extent to which regional nuclear powers had learned from the experience of others. For example, the deployment of missile defence shields in Asia was drawing on earlier experience in Europe. Likewise, Pakistan's deployment of flexible response and tactical nuclear trip wires mimics NATO strategic practice of the 1960s, not the doctrines of India or China. Even counter force strategies and ideas of winnable nuclear war advanced by US Defense Secretary James Schlesinger in the 1970s were live issues for some in Asia Pacific.

Participants reflected on the **US 2018 Nuclear Posture Review**, noting that while hitherto US doctrine had been generally aligned with that of China and India, the 2018 Review not just foreshadowed 'modernisation', but had demonstrated a problematic/dangerous shift towards revisiting old options previously closed off – the use of nuclear weapons in response to non-nuclear threats to vital national interests of the US and its allies.

The theme of interconnectedness continued in the discussion of India's application to join the ***Nuclear Suppliers' Group*** (NSG); India's application engaged all four regional nuclear powers, with much hinging on the position of China. In principle China had no difficulty accepting India's membership: this was apparent from China's willingness to supply nuclear fuel to India. However India should not be in a position to block eventual Pakistan membership. There could be scope for 1.5 track dialogue with a view to engaging both India and Pakistan in the disciplines of the NSG.

Looking to the concerns and **views of the NNWS in Asia Pacific**, it was noted that the US was using the Cold War strategy of containment in its dealings with China. This was doomed to fail, but in the process was adding to the pressures on smaller states in the region. The NWS needed to initiate dialogue about the non-use of nuclear weapons. The NWS had demonstrated they could be inventive in dealing with the Iranian nuclear threat. A similarly inventive approach was needed to end the use of nuclear containment as the organising principle for managing strategic relations and advancing nuclear disarmament.

It appeared that the region was learning some of the bad lessons of the past: but efforts should be made to learn the good lessons – the positive measures that had emerged from the history of the nuclear age, such as the dismantling of South Africa's nuclear weapon capability in 1989, and the various confidence building measures

developed during the Cold War.

Looking at **nuclear relations in Asia Pacific** it was not clear that military symmetry was the key to stability. Whether relations were marked by tension or détente depended largely on political leadership. Minimum deterrence had once been enough for Beijing, New Delhi and Islamabad, but it now appeared that weapon production was simply expanding as capacity expands – leading to a situation at least on the Sub-Continent of unrestrained competition and spiralling costs. Scientific advances were producing new military technologies which the military naturally sought to acquire: the politicians were failing to contain these pressures. What stability there is in current strategic relations is now being threatened by growing BMD capabilities (though BMDs would never be able to defend civilian populations). The dispersal of command and control required by tactical nuclear weapons and the use of submarine launched weapons was adding risk.

All these developments could have unintended consequences. Steps need to be taken to prevent the strategic chain experiencing chain reactions. We need to encourage a nuclear dialogue between China and India – were that to eventuate, it might then be possible to engage Pakistan.

The Cold War has been depicted as a period of relative peace due to nuclear deterrence: however, conflicts large and small had continued through the Cold War. The **DPRK** had not been 'deterred'.

The lack of **public interest in and awareness** of nuclear risks in the region was a cause for concern. Awareness of the issues had been higher in the 1980's but the profile of nuclear issues had been displaced by the rise of terrorist challenges. APLN needs to maintain its efforts to educate policy makers and the public. It should also draw attention to the dangerous trends revealed in the US Nuclear Policy Review, as well as in regional developments. Building on the work of the Latin America Leadership Network in its study *Terror Unleashed* (see <http://www.nti.org/analysis/atomic-pulse/new-report-laln-terror-unleashed/>), it would be helpful to have studies done on the consequences of nuclear use in South Asia. Perhaps regional awareness could be stimulated by a Bollywood blockbuster highlighting nuclear threats.

Possible follow-on and action:

- *There could be scope for 1.5 track dialogue with a view to engaging both India and Pakistan in the disciplines of the NSG.*
- *The major powers should employ the inventiveness demonstrated in relation to Iran to advancing nuclear disarmament.*
- *Euro-Atlantic confidence building measures should be further considered as potential models for such measures in Asia Pacific.*
- *Encourage a nuclear dialogue between China and India – were that to take off, it might then be possible to engage Pakistan.*

- *More needs to be done to raise awareness of dangerous trends such as those exhibited in the US NPR.*
- *Consider commissioning a study on the consequences of nuclear use in South Asia.*

Session 2: The Global Outlook: Strategies for kick starting disarmament and curbing proliferation

Chair: Co-Convenor Ramesh Thakur

The outlook for the Iran deal; containing DPRK; options for restarting nuclear disarmament; what can South Asia do collectively; priorities for APLN contributions.

Introduction

The Chair observed that the global outlook had been worsening as reflected in the advance of the Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists to just two minutes before midnight. No new disarmament arrangements are being negotiated and existing instruments are being scrapped. The US Nuclear Policy Review seemed aimed at re-legitimising the roles of nuclear weapons. Israel seemed determined to unravel the Iran nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and the US position remains ambivalent. APLN has pointed out, the US approach to the Iran deal impacts the prospects of a negotiated settlement for the DPRK nuclear issue – see http://apl.org/statements/statements_view/APLN_Statement_to_Protect_the_Iran_Nuclear_Deal. Overall the picture is bleak, especially in the Asia Pacific. How can the APLN contribute to reversing these trends?

Iran

It was encouraging that Iran remained committed to the JCPOA and, according to the IAEA, remains compliant. However, the Saudi anti-Iranian coalition was dangerous. Iran, it was suggested, was on the verge of breaking out: if Israeli and Saudi pressures continued to mount, Iran would have no choice but to restart its nuclear program as a counter. The JCPOA had put back Iran's nuclear program – perhaps by years: that was a high price. On the other hand, there were still questions about the extent of Iran's past militarisation of its nuclear capabilities: the IAEA file on these issues was paused but not closed.

Pakistan was caught between competing interests. It needed good relations with its neighbour Iran, but the Pakistan military was close to Saudi Arabia – as evidenced by the appointment of retired army chief Raheel Sharif to head a Saudi-led anti-terrorism alliance of Sunni states.

The US was conflicted on Iran: President Trump was stridently critical of the JCPOA

but Congress not willing to scuttle it. The EU remained very supportive of the JCPOA and there were suggestions that should the US reimpose sanctions, the EU would again consider sanctions blocking measures – but opinion was divided on whether such blocking measure would be successful, and if they were, the measures would only help the EU, not other major stake holders like Japan and Korea.

It was noted that the JCPOA was backed by the Security Council and the Security Council was bound to hold the US to its obligations. While the JCPOA had not ideal it was a valuable achievement and APLN should continue to encourage its full implementation.

Korean Peninsula issues

It was argued that DPRK's nuclear armed status must now be acknowledged. Washington was certainly ramping up the pressure including through the Nuclear Posture Review and the President's rhetoric: the NPR's expressly reserves the right to 'field a range of conventional and nuclear capabilities' to hold 'at risk' key DPRK military and command and control capabilities. A major early objective would be a halt to DPRK nuclear weapon testing. The DPRK for its part had declared its nuclear and missile programs had achieved their objectives.

Concerning DPRK's nuclear arsenal and missile capability, the US had at one point played up those capabilities and China had played them down: now the reverse is the case. The US assesses that DPRK has enough material for up to 60 warheads: but only 10 of more missile deployable Plutonium variety. DPRK missile technology has continued to progress: the re-entry vehicle of the latest test survived intact.

The improved climate of intra-Korean relations generated by DPRK participation at the Winter Olympics in the ROK provided an opening that should be exploited. All involved parties were urged to embrace the opportunity. China would have a major role, but the key issues remained between US and DPRK. It was doubtful that increased sanctions would have the promised effects.

It was noted that APLN efforts through the conference in Seoul in December (see <http://a-pln.org/%22http://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/gridlockworkshopsummary/%22>) and subsequent outreach will be followed up at the APLN Northeast Asia Meeting being convened in Seoul in March.

Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)

Limits to the production of further fissile material could be helpful in containing nuclear weapon stocks in China, India and Pakistan (as well as Israel and DPRK); but of no value in relation to Russia and the US where there are abundant surplus stocks. Pakistan however remained a firm opponent of FMCT negotiations unless consideration was given to pre-existing stocks. Reference was made to the work of the International Panel on Fissile Materials (see

<http://fissilematerials.org/ipfm/about.html>) and the difficulties it has encountered in seeking precision on the quantities of fissile material produced. The uncertainties are very significant and without a firm political commitment to transparency, greater precision will be impossible.

A variation on the FMCT could be an agreement whereby current fissile material production is halted, while the US and Russia agree to pause tritium production.

It was suggested that APLN could usefully review the various approaches to an FMCT that have been considered over time: might it be feasible now to update the proposals of the Shannon mandate?

Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)

The CTBT demonstrated the flexibility of the international system: while the treaty had not entered into force it was in large part being implemented as if it was. Nevertheless entry into force remained a very important goal. Would it be possible to amend or otherwise work around Article XIV to speed up entry into force, or at least broaden the provisional application of the CTBT?

Pending entry into force it was useful for the monitoring system to achieve its full technical capability. With that in mind it would be desirable for India to host an International Monitoring System (IMS) facility, which it could in principle do without ratifying. However, India remains deeply unhappy about the CTBT, considering it had been betrayed by the manner the Treaty was taken to the UN General Assembly for adoption (arguably in violation of international treaty law). The Indian 'narrative' on the CTBT would therefore need to change radically before it could become politically acceptable to host an IMS facility. And while the Indian de facto moratorium on testing remains in place, there is a strong pro-testing lobby that Governments cannot ignore. Further, India's experience with UNMOGIP caused it to be very wary of international monitoring mechanisms. Despite these difficulties it was noted that countries change their positions over time: and India might be encouraged to overcome its historical aversion to the CTBT and embrace it in practice if not in principle.

China on the other hand is actively supporting the CTBT, including hosting IMS facilities. Its only hesitation was on aspects of the ongoing inspection work undertaken by the CTBT Provisional Technical Secretariat.

'No First Use' Commitments

It was observed that China and India had never jointly launched a disarmament measure: they seem to share a position in common on 'no first use' (NFU): accordingly this issue could be an opportunity for them to take a joint international lead. In so doing they could help demonstrate the practical benefits of the policy were it to be universalised. Such joint action between India and China would be consistent with the history of the bilateral relationship: neither side has threatened the other with nuclear

use. That said, there is no ambiguity in the Indian position that nuclear weapons are to deter China; so a joint initiative would suffer presentational problems. A first step would be the opening of a nuclear dialogue between India and China.

Concluding Remarks

Overall the outlook is pessimistic, but this is not the time for despair. We need to deploy our passion and energies to achieving tangible measures. On the positive side China and India had never made nuclear threats to each other. Also, there has been a modicum of nuclear stability over the last 20 years between India and Pakistan. Yet nuclear arms stockpiles are growing, the nuclear powers are looking to prove land, air and sea-based delivery systems, and strategic competition is heating up, including in the scramble for naval facilities in the Indo-Pacific. Further, the Indo-Pak equilibrium is not stable – being challenged by border exchanges and terrorist actions and the deployment of tactical nuclear weapons.

Despite this, nuclear threats in the region are not seen as proximate or a priority, and there are no frameworks for bilateral yet alone wider official dialogues on nuclear issues. In fact the political environment is perhaps less conducive than ever to dialogue and restraint. APLN Members need to help raise public awareness – especially amongst the young. Reviving exchanges between strategic studies students from India and Pakistan (and China) would help. Confidence building measures are urgently required: for example a dialogue on ‘no first use’ undertakings.

Possible follow-on and action:

- *APLN consider the need for and timing of a further statement in support of the JCPOA; and continue to focus on Korean Peninsula nuclear issues.*
- *A Policy Paper be commissioned to take stock of options for a cut-off treaty (FMCT) in light of developments in the last 25 years.*
- *On the CTBT: consider whether it is possible to amend or otherwise work around Article XIV to speed up entry into force, or at least broaden its provisional application.*
- *India and Pakistan encouraged to consider hosting an IMS facility – such a step would be useful reinforcement of the test ban moratorium and would be a useful bilateral confidence building measure.*
- *Urge India and China to develop a joint initiative on disarmament to break the current log-jam: ‘no first use’ could be the issue.*

Session 3: Strengthening the global Non-Proliferation consensus

Co-Chairs: APLN Research Director John Tilemann and LKI Executive Director Dinusha Panditaratne

The NPT Review process and challenges; the Nuclear Ban Treaty: challenges and implications; bridging the gaps

Introduction

The Chair recalled that aside from the specific proliferation challenges posed by Iran and DPRK, there were systemic issues facing the non-proliferation regime. Arguments were being advanced that the NPT has run out of steam and has exhausted its normative force; and that the future lies in building on the Nuclear Ban Treaty as representing a much broader consensus on how disarmament might be advanced.

However the NPT had recorded huge security dividends over 50 years of near universal adherence, great success in arresting proliferation and its huge normative force had worked in favour of global nuclear restraint. On the other hand, the Ban Treaty suffered possibly fatal shortcomings: most prominently its lack of support from nuclear armed states; the rushed negotiation with attendant substantive flaws; and its slow uptake amongst its supposed supporters.

Thus there are differing views, some strongly diverging, on how the NPT regime will evolve; and more immediately what impacts these new tensions will have on the already challenging five yearly NPT review process now underway leading up to the 50th anniversary Review Conference in 2020. The APLN is committed to strengthening global non-proliferation standards while working for the elimination of nuclear weapons. Bridging the gap between the supporters and opponents of the Ban Treaty, seeking to narrow the differences between parties and non-parties to the NPT, and working for a 'successful' 2020 Review Conference will be central to the APLN's work over the coming two years.

The NPT Report Card

From the perspective of some, the achievements of the NPT have run their course. It had done a good job on non-proliferation but is not able to deliver on disarmament. Further, while the NPT has attracted very broad-based support, it was important to understand the treaty's flaws. Despite its name, the NPT purported through Article VI to also address nuclear disarmament – the second pillar. Non-proliferation was a necessary but not sufficient condition for disarmament. The arms control measures between the US and the Soviet Union/Russia did not constitute disarmament. Rather the delegitimising nuclear weapons, it established a group of legal and legitimate 'NWS' and a group of illicit NWS – those outside the NPT. In time it was recognised that other mechanisms were needed to address issues not comprehended by the NPT such as the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, the export controls regime triggering controls on traded nuclear items. Technology advances have created additional challenges: nuclear technology is no longer the preserve of a few. As a result we are faced with issues of latency and the lead times of threshold states. This does not mean that the NPT should be abandoned: rather that it is time to be looking for new norms and approaches for advancing disarmament. Some even anticipated the NPT being abandoned by its members.

On the other hand from the **perspectives of NPT advocates**, the NPT had performed an invaluable service in containing proliferation over the last fifty years. It had

embraced more than a dozen countries which in the 1960s had been looking to the nuclear option. For many of these, the nuclear umbrella provided the necessary assurance to make such a major decision. The 1990s saw major breakthroughs with South Africa and former Soviet Union states foregoing nuclear weapons and Argentina and Brazil joining, confirming the denuclearisation of South America. Over time the NPT has become a very strong norm. IAEA safeguards had evolved over time to meet new verification challenges. The CTBT had evolved as a further layer of assurance. And while the NWS had deeply disappointed they had over time made some progress in reducing the number of operational weapons and available fissile material. Weapon reductions did not take place under the formal auspices of the NPT – but arguably that was never the intention.

Still the NPT faced serious challenges which would arise in the 2020 Review process:

- Very little progress has been made on the various decisions taken in 1995 and subsequently.
- There was declining interest in nuclear power outside the existing user countries (though Bangladesh was a notable regional exception); and many hurdles have been placed in the way of the nuclear power option.
- Nuclear weapon free zones (NPT Article VII) had been rather more successful and it would be good to see further progress on NWS signature of outstanding Protocols.
- There was every prospect that the unresolved Middle East issues will again threaten any agreement on a final document
 - o and differing views on the importance or otherwise of having a final document in any event.
- The absence of any apparent movement on Article VI remained a cause for very deep concern.

Legal and normative strength of the NPT and Ban Treaty

There was discussion of the normative and legal force of the NPT and the Ban Treaty. The NPT was not universally subscribed to, and therefore did not stand the test of customary international law for non-parties. However with only 5 standout states its normative power was very strong, and had been strengthened by Security Council enforced measures.

The Ban Treaty on the other hand gained a large majority of votes in the General Assembly, was slowly gaining ratifications, but has yet to be brought into force. It seems unlikely to gain support from the nuclear possessor or umbrella states reducing the overall numbers it is likely to gain. Its normative power will be enhanced by the greatest possible number of adherents. From this perspective it is too early to judge whether the Ban Treaty will become a real force for change; but the reaction of the nuclear armed states do suggest that they have been discomfited by the new spotlight and pressure.

It was pointed out that from a legal point of view the NPT and Ban Treaty only have the force of law for their members, the parties.

Concerning the ICJ advisory opinion of 1996, it was noted that the evolution of the international debate, combined with changes in the composition of the ICJ, might make

it profitable to think of a further reference to the ICJ.

The NPT and the Nuclear Ban Treaty

It was recognised the negotiation of the Ban Treaty brought a new element to international consideration of nuclear issues and the prospect of tensions between the two regimes. In part this arises from differences in the provisions of the two instruments, but probably more importantly because of the differences in tone in relation to the moral and humanitarian aspects, as well as the urgency of, and path to disarmament. This led to consideration of the potential for 'gaps' to arise between the advocates of the Nuclear Ban Treaty and those who have rejected it.

In discussion it was noted that all Ban Treaty advocates are simultaneously parties to and thus in principle supporters of the NPT. Successive statements of Ban Treaty advocates have argued that rather than detracting from or damaging the NPT, the Ban Treaty is intended to support the NPT.

It was noted that the NPT provided for the goal of disarmament but did not prescribe in any detail how that was to be achieved. With that in mind it was possible to imagine many pathways to disarmament, consistent with the NPT. The Ban Treaty could be seen in those terms as one possible pathway to elimination. Consistent with this approach it was suggested that the two instruments should be seen and projected as reinforcing each other: doctrinally they were compatible, and in practical terms it made no sense to allow proliferation while working for disarmament. Thus some questioned why there should be any focus at all on the supposed 'gaps': it was a false premise and unhelpful.

In yet another perspective, it was suggested that care should be taken not to give the Ban Treaty 'too much oxygen'. As an instrument unlikely to achieve real disarmament, it was argued, it would be unwise to allow the rhetoric to get in the way of substantive moves in the direction of reduced nuclear threats.

Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy

It was noted that while nuclear power generating capacity was growing significantly in China, India and Pakistan, interest elsewhere had declined in the wake of the Fukushima disaster – with one major exception: **Bangladesh**. In this context the meeting was briefed on the progress that Bangladesh has made in its joint works with Russia on the construction of two units with a capacity of 1200MW each at Ruppur, in Pabna district about 160 km northwest of Dhaka. The project became viable with the recent understanding reached on the removal back to Russia of spent fuel from the station. Construction has commenced, and the units could be online as early as 2024-25. A feature of the project is the closest engagement with the IAEA, and collaboration with India in training and other technical aspects.

In this context there was discussion of the management of cross border incidents such as might conceivably arise from the operations of the nuclear power plants in South India (Tamil Nadu). It was noted that there were IAEA sponsored conventions and codes dealing with such issues; and that usually such scenarios and concerns would

be subject to bilateral consultations on any management issues. In this case there could be scope for more formal recognition of Sri Lanka's health and safety interests in some structured bilateral or regional exchange.

Concluding observations

The Chair observed that a wide range of views had been registered reflecting the complex challenges facing the advocated of non-proliferation and disarmament, but that some tentative points of convergence might be identified.

- South Asia is part of a chain of nuclear relationships which are experiencing new uncertainties and instabilities, adding to regional and global nuclear threats.
- It would be helpful for India and Pakistan to be as integrated as far as possible into existing nuclear control regimes: the NSG would be a good step and APLN could consider how it might help facilitate such an outcome.
- While the Ban Treaty process had attracted considerable attention from civil society in the 'West', it had not made significant impact in Asia Pacific: in fact there are low levels of interest in nuclear security matters, underlining the need for more awareness raising, education and outreach.
- While the NPT continues to enjoy strong support, there are questions about its longer-term role at the centre of the international nuclear order
 - o There is an urgent need to ensure that international disarmament measures are reinforcing: this would be a major focus of APLN efforts in the coming years
 - o The 2020 NPT Review Conference will be difficult: it would require key countries to step up their efforts: in Asia Pacific we would look to China to step up into a leadership role.
- Strong consensus that the P-5 and other nuclear armed states needed to take nuclear disarmament more seriously: practical disarmament measures are urgently needed to break the current log-jam
 - o This issue too would be high on the APLN agenda.
- It was recognised that the Korean peninsula nuclear issues had broad regional implications
 - o This would be another key focus of APLN efforts in the coming years: Members were invited to encourage support this critical work.

Possible follow-on and action:

- *APLN Members should consider encouraging adherence to the Ban Treaty at a minimum as an expression of ongoing unhappiness with the rate of progress under Article VI of the NPT.*
- *Regional countries that have yet to do so should consider signing/ratifying all relevant nuclear instruments.*
- *NPT and Ban Treaty parties commit to collaborating to make the two treaties compatible and mutually reinforcing, urgently in the lead up to the 2020 NPT Review.*
- *Non-NPT parties might consider how they could strengthen overall non-proliferation and disarmament commitments by committing to act where relevant as if they were a party to the NPT.*
- *APLN will continue to extend support to the Chairs of the Preparatory*

Committees and will extend the same offer to the Chair of the Review Conference itself once determined,

In closing the meeting, the APLN recorded its deepest appreciation for the support and collaboration of the LKI in organising and contributing to the meeting and looked forward to ongoing engagement.

Appendix I: Program, Agenda and Participants' List

1. Opening: Welcome Remarks

- Ramesh Thakur (Co-Convenor, APLN)
- Hyung T. Hong on behalf of Co-Convenor Chung-in Moon (Head of APLN Secretariat)
- Dinusha Panditaratne (Executive Director, LKI)

2. Session 1 “The China, India, Pakistan Nuclear Dilemma”

Chair: Ramesh Thakur

- Directions in the evolution of the triad and the dyads
- Unintended consequences
- Breaking the cycle

Concluding reflections:

- Manpreet Sethi
- HMGS Palihakkara

3. Session 2 “The Global Outlook: Strategies for Kick Starting Disarmament and Curbing Proliferation”

Chair: Ramesh Thakur

- Options for restarting nuclear disarmament
- The outlook for the Iran deal
- Containing DPRK
 - o What can South Asia do collectively?
- Priorities for APLN contributions

Concluding reflections:

- Lalit Mansingh
- Pervez Hoodbhoy
- Shashi Tyagi

4. LKI-APLN Co-hosted event for the public and media: “Nuclear Policy and Prospects for Disarmament in the New World Order”

Chair: Ramesh Thakur

- Welcome by LKI
- Introduction
Prof. Nayani Melegoda, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies and Senior Professor of International Relations, University of Colombo and Member of LKI Board of Management
- Keynote: “Nuclear Disarmament, the NPT and the Ban Treaty: Proven Ineffectiveness vs Unproven Normative Potential”

Prof. Ramesh Thakur, Director, Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University

- Panel discussion and Q & A
Chair: *Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala*
Panellists: *Prof. Ramesh Thakur*
Mr. Rakesh Sood
Ms. Sadia Tasleem
Dr. Li Bin
Mr. H.M.G.S. Palihakkara

- Closing remarks by LKI

5. Keynote Speech at Dinner

Guest Speaker: Mr. A. L. A. Azeez (Senior Director-General of European Union, Multilateral Treaties and the Commonwealth, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sri Lanka)

6. Session 3 “Strengthening the Global Non-Proliferation Consensus”

Co-Chairs: Dinusha Panditaratne and John Tilemann

- The NPT Review process and challenges
- The Nuclear Ban Treaty: challenges and implications
- Bridging the gap

- Discussion starter: Rakesh Sood

Concluding reflections

- Jayantha Dhanapala
- Abdul Hameed Nayyar
- R Rajaraman
- Li Bin

APLN members

Australia

Ramesh **Thakur** (Co-Convenor of APLN / Director, Centre for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, Australian National University)

John **Tilemann** (Director of Research, APLN)

Bangladesh

Iftexhar Ahmed **Chowdhury** (Principal Research Fellow, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore)

China

Li Bin (Director of Arms Control Program, Tsinghua University)

India

R. **Rajaraman** (Emeritus Professor of Physics at Jawaharlal Nehru University)
Lalit **Mansingh** (former Foreign Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs)
Manpreet **Sethi** (Senior Fellow, Center for Air Power Studies)
Rakesh **Sood** (former Ambassador to Conference on Disarmament)
Shashi **Tyagi** (former Chief of the Indian Air Force)

Pakistan

Pervez **Hoodbhoy** (Professor of Physics and Mathematics at Forman Christian College University)
A. H. **Nayyar** (former Professor of Physics at Quaid-i-Azam University)
Sadia **Tasleem** (Lecturer for Defense and Strategic Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University)

Sri Lanka

Dinusha **Panditaratne** (Executive Director of the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Studies)
Jayantha **Dhanapala** (former President of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs)
HMGS **Palihakkara** (former Foreign Secretary)

Observers

Ganesh **Wignaraja** (Chair of the Global Economy Program, LKI)
Vidya **Abhayagunawardena** (Country Researcher, Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor)
Gamini **Keerawella** (Executive Director, Regional Centre for Strategic Studies)
Nayani **Melegoda** (Dean, of the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Colombo, and member of the Board of Management at LKI)
Anitha **Munasinghe** (Assistant Director, International Cooperation, Sri Lanka Atomic Energy Board)

[APLN Secretariat]

Hyungtaek Hong (Head of APLN Secretariat)
Jamie Cho (Program Officer, APLN Secretariat)

Appendix II: Media comment arising from Meeting

Navigating a nuclearised Asia for smaller states: Reviving Sri Lanka's commitments to disarmament [\(link\)](#)

Published by Daily FT on Tuesday, 20 February 2018

Written by Malinda Meegoda

Throughout its diplomatic history, Sri Lanka has maintained a strong anti-nuclear stance. Given the perceived need to avoid antagonising nuclear powers in the region, Sri Lanka has communicated this stance as a general normative and ethical position, rather than by criticising individual nuclear actors.

Recent global developments on nuclear issues, however, have tested the consistency of Sri Lanka's anti-nuclear stance. In view of these developments and a need for consistency in its policy, Sri Lanka should reaffirm its past commitments to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. It can advance these commitments by employing a 'dual track' policy, of working towards incremental denuclearisation in the Indian Ocean and by joining the growing list of nations advocating for total nuclear disarmament.

Sri Lanka took seemingly contradictory positions in 2017, on North Korea's nuclear program as well as on the proposed Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (the Nuclear Ban Treaty).

First, it issued a statement (1) on 28 July, 2017 condemning North Korea's decision to conduct an intercontinental ballistic missile test. However, there were reports that the statement was not sanctioned by the President (2). Second, while the Government initially supported the proposed Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (the Nuclear Ban Treaty) in July, 2017, it did not sign the Nuclear Ban Treaty in September 2017 (3).

These developments indicate a lack of clarity about what the most tactical diplomatic response might be by Sri Lanka to the current crisis in the Korean peninsula, and on potential nuclear issues closer to home. They signal a need for Sri Lanka to formulate a nuclear policy that would be pragmatic for smaller states surrounded by competing nuclear neighbours while fulfilling the country's prior commitments to promoting nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation (4).

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that North Korea's heady approach to nuclear weapons has been influenced by the regime change of authoritarian governments in Libya and Iraq. Therefore, any response from Sri Lanka should be undertaken with a commitment to non-intervention in sovereign states.

Sri Lanka's evolving security context

Sri Lanka remains a non-nuclear nation both in terms of military and civilian use, and has ratified the 1970 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT or

'Non-Proliferation Treaty'). Sri Lanka's current geopolitical realities, however, dictate that it maintain a degree of sensitivity to the security interests of the three nuclear states battling for greater influence in the Indian Ocean: India, China and Pakistan.

There are several concerns for Sri Lanka to consider in this context. Firstly, Sri Lanka should be cognisant of the changing relationships between nuclear powers. In particular, India's decision to forge closer relations with the US presents new realities for South Asian countries in regard to nuclear testing by North Korea. If North Korea assesses India as a US ally in the region, its rhetoric might evolve to encompass India. A threat to Indian security (even if an actual strike would be a remote possibility), would have an impact on Sri Lankan security.

Secondly, while North Korea has developed Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) capable of targeting US cities, there are valid concerns about the accuracy of North Korea's missile guidance systems, ballistic trajectory, and re-entry capabilities. Thirdly, there is no historical precedent for nuclear warfare between nuclear nations, and the common understanding held by experts is that once first strike capabilities are employed by an actor, it is highly unlikely a nuclear conflict can be managed (5).

To guard against these risks, in a manner that also reflects its legacy of neutrality and non-alignment, Sri Lanka could consider an agreement with both India and China to eliminate the presence of nuclear vessels within Sri Lanka's Exclusive Economic Zone.

As of yet, however, nuclear security has not become a mainstream internal political issue and certainly not to the extent of nurturing a stronger stance by the Sri Lankan government. By way of contrast and example, New Zealand's 'Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act of 1987' was the culmination of nearly two decades of public discussion and activism (6).

Non-security concerns

There are also pragmatic economic reasons for Sri Lanka to be more proactive on nuclear issues. The Sri Lankan Government's plans to become a significant player in the global maritime transshipment sector could suffer significant setbacks if tensions between the regional nuclear weapons states escalate in the Indian Ocean.

Another factor to consider is the current and looming realities of climate change. A number of voices have advocated that nuclear energy should be adopted as a stop-gap measure until economies can transition to a fully renewable model (7). In view of its security interests, however, it would be more sensible for Sri Lanka to pursue a robust anti-nuclear policy, which includes avoiding nuclear power for civilian use.

Civilian use of nuclear energy has often been a precursor to a nuclear weapons program; this was the case for India and Pakistan with the 'Atoms for Peace' program (8). While Sri Lanka is very unlikely to attempt to gain access to nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future, it should adopt a strict non-nuclear policy if it is to play a regional leadership role in nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

Smaller states that have successfully advocated for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, such as Austria and New Zealand, have rejected nuclear power as an energy source or have made attempts to dismantle or halt the construction of nuclear reactors.

This, however, need not preclude research on nuclear technology; as has been the case in Austria, where the global headquarters of the International Atomic Agency (IAEA) is located.

There are other reasons to reject the introduction of nuclear power as an energy source in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka as a developing nation suffers from weak management as far as its energy infrastructure is concerned. Even economically advanced nations have clearly inadequate (9), safeguards against natural catastrophes like earthquakes and tsunamis, as was demonstrated by the destruction of the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan by a tsunami. Additionally, Sri Lanka's small size does not permit it the luxury of isolating large tracts of land as 'sacrifice zones,' in the case of a nuclear catastrophe (10).

The way forward

The larger question of how to manage nuclear regimes remains controversial, with no global agreement between the main nuclear weapons states and the non-nuclear weapons states. The former continues to push an agenda of non-proliferation, while a majority of non-nuclear weapons states – especially ones from the Global South – are pushing for disarmament, as indicated by their active role in the formulation of the Nuclear Ban Treaty.

The North Korean nuclear crisis presents an opportunity for Sri Lanka to regain its strong reputation as a global citizen on issues of peace and security, by revisiting the Sri Lanka-led declaration in 1971 of the Indian Ocean as a 'Zone of Peace.' Sri Lanka should also work within the Non-Alignment Movement as an advocate for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, by creating strategic partnerships with states such as Indonesia that are currently active in global nuclear disarmament fora. Despite its current limited political influence on the global stage, Sri Lanka should not shy away from engaging in the nuclear debate. The role of smaller states such as Costa Rica, which played a crucial role in the recent adoption of the Nuclear Weapons Prohibition Treaty, is an indication that small powers can help shape the global conversation on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament.

(The writer is a Research Associate at the Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute of International Relations and Strategic Studies (LKI) in Colombo. The opinions expressed in this article are the author's own. They are not the institutional views of the LKI and do not necessarily represent or reflect the position of any other institution or individual with which the author is affiliated.)

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APLN and LKI

The **Asia Pacific Leadership Network (APLN)** comprises of more than ninety former senior political, diplomatic, military and other opinion leaders from fifteen countries around the region, including nuclear-weapons possessing states China, India and Pakistan. The objective of the group, founded by former Australian Foreign Minister and President Emeritus of the International Crisis Group Gareth Evans, is to inform and energize public opinion, and especially high level policy-makers, to take seriously the very real threats posed by nuclear weapons, and do everything possible to achieve a world in which they are contained, diminished and ultimately eliminated. The Co-Convenors are Professors Chung-in Moon and Ramesh Thakur. The Secretariat is located at the East Asia Foundation in Seoul, Republic of Korea. See further www.apln.org.

The **Lakshman Kadirgamar Institute (LKI)**'s mission is to engage in independent research of Sri Lanka's international relations and strategic interests, and to provide insights and recommendations that

advance justice, peace, prosperity, and sustainability.

LKI is named after the late Lakshman Kadirgamar, P.C., M.P., and three-times Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister. The Institute is the realisation of a goal actively pursued by the late Minister, to fulfill the country's need for a think tank. The Institute also reflects Minister Kadirgamar's vision for Sri Lanka, by promoting the country's intellectual profile in the field of foreign policy research and engagement. See further <http://www.lki.lk/>.

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