

Seminar: Reviewing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty: What Is at Stake?

On 27 March 2008 the Netherlands Atlantic Association organised a seminar looking ahead to the 2010 Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The event took place in 'Sociëteit De Witte' in The Hague, and was chaired by Mr. Piet Bukman (Chairman, Atlantic Association). Dr Ivo Daalder (Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution, Washington D.C.) presented an American point of view on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. Dr Henning Riecke (Head, European Foreign and Security Policy Programme, German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP), Berlin) elaborated on European perspectives on nuclear disarmament and transatlantic relations. The position of the Netherlands was put forward by H.E. Maxime Verhagen (Minister of Foreign Affairs).

Ivo Daalder: The U.S. position on nuclear non-proliferation

Ivo Daalder started off the meeting by stating that the Bush administration has missed opportunities to strengthen non-proliferation efforts. In the opinion of the current U.S. government there needs to be one set of rules for democratic partners and one for 'non-democratic countries'. Now the time is right for a reassessment of this policy in the light of new security threats, such as terrorism. The U.S. should recapture the leadership in international non-proliferation, according to Daalder. As four American 'elder statesmen' advocated in *The Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008 (Shultz, Perry, Kissinger, Nunn, 'Toward a Nuclear-Free World'), the world could and should be nuclear-free. The U.S. should rethink what it needs nuclear weapons for. All it needs them for is to assure that no one else will use them. For this purpose, the U.S. does not need as many nuclear weapons as it currently possesses. Daalder proposed Washington should unilaterally reduce nuclear weapons to below the number of 1,000. This move could re-energise non-proliferation. At the same time, non-nuclear states should not get fissile material at their disposal without international supervision (by the International Atomic Energy Agency, IAEA).



The upcoming U.S. presidential elections on 4 November are reason to be optimistic about the future, Daalder said, as he expected the new president to take a different path on non-proliferation from the present administration. Two of the major candidates, Barack Obama and John McCain, are most likely to make fundamental alterations in American non-proliferation policies.

Mr. Daalder responded to a question from the audience regarding the position of Israel, a nuclear power. According to Daalder, Israel should be part of the non-proliferation regime. To keep its region free of weapons of mass destruction in general, Israel should play a leading role. In addition, U.S. companies should rethink their policies of selling nuclear energy technology in the Middle-East. The region has 'sufficient' fossil energy resources at its disposal, making it possible to withhold it from obtaining nuclear energy. This could stimulate the cause of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons as well.

Henning Riecke: European and transatlantic perspectives on nuclear disarmament

Henning Riecke remarked that during the Cold War both superpowers controlled nuclear proliferation in their own sphere of influence. After the Cold War, the NPT became the only instrument of nuclear 'haves' to influence 'have-nots'. Yet elimination of nuclear arms has not been achieved; what is more, both nuclear and conventional weapon limitations talks have reached a stalemate. For example, the U.S. and Russia have not implemented some important treaties in these fields.



But what about the two European nuclear powers? The French president, Nicolas Sarkozy, recently announced that France would reduce its number of nuclear warheads to below 300. This appears to be a good sign, Riecke indicated, but at the same time Sarkozy offered a 'new way of doctrinal thinking'. By directing the nuclear deterrence also towards 'state sponsors of terrorism', Sarkozy has provided a new legitimisation of the possession of nuclear

weapons. In addition, France would rely more on smaller and more accurate ones, not causing 'complete destruction', thereby increasing the credibility of the threat of actually using them.

Great Britain has decided to renew its nuclear force, even though a majority of public opinion opposes it. Even the military has its doubts, Riecke said, as it prefers to focus its attention and resources to its troops presently deployed abroad. Former prime minister Tony Blair thought it unwise to give up nuclear arms, however. The Cold War might be over, yet new threats could emerge. According to Riecke, non-nuclear European states should convince Britain to engage in a substantial multinational disarmament regime.

Though Germany does not have nuclear arms of its own, it is host to a number of American tactical nuclear warheads. The U.S. and Germany decide together on the deployment of the U.S. weapons on German fighter planes (the 'dual-key' arrangement). Some Germans want the U.S. to withdraw these weapons, yet others are cautious and warn of a decline of German influence within NATO in case of withdrawal of the weapons. NATO's Strategic Concept of 1999 suggested that these weapons would not be needed for Germany's own security, but for the coherence of the Alliance, Riecke indicated.

Overall, European states still consider nuclear weapons relevant to their security. Obviously, this reliance is a weak spot of disarmament. Since the European nuclear arsenal is relatively small, the UK and France cannot be frontrunners of non-proliferation. However, they should assume an open attitude towards weapon reductions and non-proliferation. Their commitment is one of the conditions to achieve overall arms reductions, Riecke claimed.

Maxime Verhagen: The position of the Netherlands on non-proliferation

Maxime Verhagen concluded the seminar by remarking that there are more countries that possess nuclear weapons today than at the time the NPT was signed in 1968. The Netherlands Minister of Foreign Affairs advocated a multilateral approach to non-proliferation to tackle new security threats, such as the possibility of non-state actors (e.g. terrorists groups) getting their hands on nuclear weapons. The Netherlands also strongly calls for ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the implementation of the Hague International Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation.

Present day nuclear weapon states need to take serious steps towards disarmament and non-proliferation. In this area, the West has to play an exemplary role. The U.S. and Russia have a special responsibility here, given that they still hold massive stocks of nuclear arms. Verhagen endorsed the call of Shultz, Kissinger *et al* for a world free of nuclear weapons.

Verhagen considered the NPT Review Conference in 2010 a good opportunity to re-energise the non-proliferation regime. Furthermore, this conference will also be important for discussing the NPT's third pillar: the peaceful use of nuclear energy. To illustrate the value the Netherlands government attaches to non-proliferation, Mr. Verhagen concluded his speech by announcing that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will be giving grants to three PhD students pursuing research on this subject. The Netherlands believes that topical research with policy relevance could contribute to a fruitful discussion of non-proliferation.

