

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Thea Harvey

[Back to Previous Page](#)

“US and NATO nuclear policies are: immoral; illegal; militarily unnecessary; very, very dangerous in terms of the risk of inadvertent or accidental launch; and destructive of the non-proliferation regime that has served us so well over the 40 years.”

Thus began former Secretary of Defense, and EPS Trustee, Robert McNamara in his address to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference (NPT) on May 24th. Strong words. The treaty, originally signed in 1970, obligated non-nuclear possessing signatories to not develop nuclear capabilities. In exchange, the 5 declared nuclear countries (Britain, China, France, Russia and the US) pledged not to initiate the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states, and agreed to reduce their arsenals, eventually to nil. The non-nuclear countries also were promised access to nuclear energy technology. In the 35 years that the treaty has been in force, it has been remarkably effective.

With the success of the non-proliferation treaties, and since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, many activists have shifted their focus away from the nuclear realm to other threats. However, changes in world politics are threatening the balance the treaty has helped maintain. Several countries have developed, or are on the verge of developing weapons despite the treaty (Israel, India, Pakistan, North Korea, Iran); the collapse of the Soviet Union left a lot of nuclear material unsecured in Central Asia which possibly could be acquired by terrorist organizations. With the expansion of possible nuclear states, and even scarier, of possible nuclear non-state actors, the possibility for human error, or even worse, human intention, multiplies.

In this issue of EPS Quarterly, we offer you several takes on the current state of arms races, the new WMDs, and the role of the UN in international peace.

We reproduce for you the entirety of Secretary McNamara’s address quoted above, and hope that you will marvel with us that someone who was at one time so close to the arms race can be such a clear and passionate abolitionist now. Mike Intriligator looks at the possibility of terrorists acquiring nuclear weapons, or other WMD, and proposes that since it’s difficult to control the supply side, we should develop a new form of deterrence on the demand side. We also have Richard Kaufman’s presentation on Ballistic Missile Defense, Space Weapons, and the NPT, walking us through the relationship between missiles, satellites and arms races. Additionally, I invite you to participate in our survey on citizens’ attitudes towards nuclear weapons; the questions are similar to those recently used in an AP poll, and it will be useful to see how EPS members stack up against the general public.

The NPT Review conference closed on May 27th, without any substantial results. Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the UN summed up the conference with these words:

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, or NPT, has been a cornerstone of our global security. . . . But today, the treaty faces a dual crisis of compliance and confidence. Delegates at the month-long conference, which is held once every five years, could not furnish the world with any solutions to the grave nuclear threats we all face. . . . The vast majority of countries that are parties to the treaty recognize its enduring benefits. But there are cracks in each of the treaty’s pillars - nonproliferation, disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear technology - and each of these cracks requires urgent repair.

Our original name, Economists Against the Arms Race, expressly endorsed nonproliferation, and that purpose continues to guide the thinking and action of EPS. Our mission statement calls for us “to promote the movement for world disarmament, nuclear disarmament, and a reduction in the stockpiling of weapons by all countries,” and “to promote collective approaches to conflict and security problems,” including efforts through the UN and international treaties. I am deeply saddened, and frightened, by the current immoral and dangerous US policies, and the potential crumbling of the non-proliferation regime.

But I am heartened that people who are willing to speak against them, in the clearest and strongest language, and to offer sensible policy alternatives, are working with Economists for Peace and Security. And I take to heart the optimism inherent in Secretary-General Annan’s message: repair is still possible. I believe that EPS has a part to play in that repair - that our reasoned economic analysis of these terrifying issues shines a bright light on a dark global stage.

Economists for Peace and Security

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