

FOREWORD

Nuclear weapons were considered as a danger and also a deterrent to war at the time of cold war competition between the United States and Soviet Union. The strategy of the super powers was to preserve the monopoly and discourage non-nuclear weapon States to own these weapons. In short, they did not want to have any new member in the exclusive nuclear club. Some countries like India have advocated cutting back of nuclear arsenals. This objective was supported by the United States to achieve complete, comprehensive and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. Although India supported this goal, it did not sign Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The Strategic Nuclear Arms Reduction Treaty (START) signed by the United States and Russia was a major step in the right direction. For some time, the matter of nuclear proliferation was dormant until the possession of the atomic weapons by India, Pakistan and North Korea and more recently (possibly) Iran. For North Korea having nuclear weapons will greatly affect the security in East Asia, particularly Korean Peninsula and ultimately Japan and the United States.

Nuclear material is not only used to make weapons but also to produce nuclear energy. Countries which are dependent on nuclear energy have potential problems with terrorist activities and natural and man-made disasters. The case in point is the recent Tsunami disaster in Japan. India has recently signed nuclear technology agreement with the United States. This has serious security implication for possible terrorist activities.

Potential areas of conflict are in South Asia and the Middle East. There is fierce competition between India and Pakistan in perfecting and stockpiling nuclear weapons and producing advanced means of delivery at shorter and longer range. This competition can lead to nuclear catastrophe. The only way out is to have co-operation and to reach an agreement for risk reduction. The situation becomes more complicated with Indo–Chinese competition. India is still a democratic country under civilian rule. But it should not spend a lot of money on nuclear weapons when its population lives in utter poverty. On the other hand, Pakistan is highly unstable and it is quite possible that nuclear weapons will be at the hand of terrorist elements.

A similar situation exists in the Middle East. It will be more serious if Iran possesses nuclear weapons. As the political situation in this area is already volatile, it will greatly deteriorate if Iran gets nuclear bomb.

This volume addresses all such issues on a regional scale and suggests some steps which we can take to avoid another Hiroshima-Nagasaki.

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