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**CULTURE  
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**Comment**

## NPT Conference Appears to Favor Compromise

The first days of the conference to extend the Non-Proliferation Treaty are encouraging. However, the final verdict is still not clear.

Vladimir ORLOV,

Moscow News

First, out of 178 member states, 142 sent representatives to UN headquarters, which is more than expected. Second, nobody officially opposed extending the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). On the contrary, even countries such as Iran, Yemen and Venezuela admitted that the treaty is necessary. Third, delegates maintained discussions at a fast pace that was not slowed by the resolution of procedural questions. This leads one to the hope that the conference will conclude by May 12 on schedule.

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Participants were presented with three options for extending the NPT: to prolong the treaty until a fixed date, to prolong it for several terms, or to prolong it for an unlimited period of time. A majority of countries side with the United States, the European Union and Russia in supporting the third alternative. At least 90 votes are required for a legal vote. At the beginning of the conference, there were doubts as to whether enough countries would support unlimited extension. But at the end of the first week the number of countries favoring extension has exceeded 100.

On the other hand, major non-Union countries such as Indonesia, Nigeria, Egypt, Venezuela, Mexico and Malaysia strongly oppose this decision. They maintain that unlimited extension would forever separate the five nuclear powers, which are "allowed everything," from everyone else. Non-Union countries have established the following requirements for the big five: first, a nuclear test-ban treaty should be signed by all nuclear states no later than 1996. Second, nuclear states must stop producing fissionable materials for military purposes. Third, they must continue the process of nuclear disarmament, including the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), and progress toward START. Fourth, they must make the NPT a universal treaty, which means convincing India, Pakistan and Israel to join it. Particular emphasis is placed on Israel, with its active military nuclear program and 220 nuclear weapons.

Admittedly, most of the arguments put forth by the Third World countries are logical. The Big Five's reluctance to proceed with nuclear disarmament is an important issue but not the only one. The nonproliferation treaty works only if it receives support from the United States. Without this support, any NPT conference and MAGATE inspection is powerless. The international community could not prevent Iraq and North Korea from developing their own nuclear programs or Ukraine from keeping its nuclear arsenal. Only the United States managed to do this. The international community has repeatedly tried to exclude Israel from the nuclear club. However, the efforts have been in vain because the United States is not about to exert pressure on its strategic partner. On the other hand, Iran, whose nuclear plans are not so clear, has come under spectacular pressure.

Even if unlimited extension of the NPT receives majority support, the main problem will remain unsolved: the NPT will not become a universal treaty. Under these circumstances, the position of regional powers such as Mexico, Indonesia, Egypt, Nigeria, and South Africa will remain neglected, therefore upsetting the delicate balance in the nonproliferation movement. A majority of countries is now inclined toward a compromise. The exact wording of this compromise decision has been voiced by China and Switzerland: unlimited extension is highly desirable, but a widely approved decision is more important. This compromise could entail extending NPT for several terms of 25 years. In other words, if the treaty were not revised after each term, it would continue to be valid. If considerable doubts emerge, they would be settled through negotiation. This solution seems to suit all the rebellious parties. There are some indications that Russia does not object to this solution, though tactical considerations prevent the Russian delegation from publicly voicing its opinion, as China did.

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