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Patient in Coma?

Prospects of non-proliferation
following the Iraqi war

Vladimir Orlov

In early June 2003, the leaders of the G-8 gathered in Evian, France and signed a declaration which stated: "We recognize that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery poses a growing danger to us all. Together with the spread of international terrorism, it is the pre-eminent threat to international security."¹ Three weeks later, President Vladimir Putin, speaking in an interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation, set down the priorities in a much more direct manner: "Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction," he said, "is the main threat of the 21st century."²

Identical or very similar conclusions are predominant in Russia's policy documents: the Foreign Policy Concept, the National Security Concept, and the Military Doctrine, all of which were adopted back in 2000; so essentially, there is nothing really new to the 2003 non-proliferation priority. What is innovative about the new discussions is that they are bringing into the political foreground various issues and doubts which had remained off the agenda. Actually, they can be reduced to one big question: Is the non-proliferation regime viable in its present state, or will it be necessary to use heavy machinery to push the question forward?

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EIGHT AND A HALF

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which came into force in 1970, is intended to act as the main barrier against the proliferation threat. This treaty is quite unique, considering the number of parties who belong to it.³ Other treaties include the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (1993), the Biological Weapons Convention (1974), and the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (concluded in 1996 but not yet in force). Antarctica, the South Pacific, Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and Southeast Asia are declared nuclear weapon-free zones. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), established almost 50 years ago, plays a leading role amongst the international organizations who are now combating nuclear proliferation. Finally, the UN Security Council has the power to impose sanctions against countries violating the non-proliferation regime. This is what the 'non-proliferation architecture' looks like, at least on paper. And how do things actually stand?

The term "international treaty" is no longer very popular in some capitals. Instead, they propose using alternative methods, such as an *ozirak* policy. This means preventive attacks against countries suspected of proliferating WMD. This is what Israel did in 1981 when it bombed Iraq's Tammuz I nuclear reactor in the city of Ozirak. This is the type of action the U.S. took in 1998 when it launched a missile attack against a facility in Sudan, which was suspected of being related to Osama bin Laden's military biological program.

The reality, however, is disappointing for these "exposers of regimes" and contradicts their statements that agreements no longer work.

Today, there are "eight and a half" countries possessing nuclear weapons. These are the five nuclear states recognized as such by the NPT (the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia and China); another three states having nuclear weapons but refraining from joining the NPT (India and Pakistan, which have held successful nuclear tests, and Israel whose nuclear arsenal is comparable, according to some estimates, with that of Britain or

France⁴); the remaining "half" is North Korea. This country has come so close to developing nuclear weapons of its own that before the ink has dried on this article it may be necessary to change "eight and a half" for "nine." Yet, the information presently available suggests that it is still too early to classify North Korea as a de facto nuclear state.⁵

Is this number too few or too many? From the point of view of general and complete nuclear disarmament (this goal is set in Article VI of the NPT) this number is too high. The NPT is aimed at gradually reducing the number of countries possessing nuclear weapons, not to mention reducing and ultimately eliminating nuclear weapons altogether. But if we take a realistic view on how things stand, we would have to admit that the number of nuclear-weapon states might actually be as high as several dozen.

According to the Pentagon's 1963 estimates recently declassified, over ten countries could develop nuclear weapons — together with the means for delivering them — within less than ten years. But "for some reasons" Australia, Argentina, Brazil, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland have terminated their military nuclear programs.⁶ South Africa voluntarily gave up the nuclear weapons it had developed. Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine agreed to return all nuclear weapons from their territories to Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Over the last decade, more countries have joined the NPT, among them France, China, Ukraine, Argentina, Brazil and Cuba.

The NPT has not always been the reason why countries gave up their nuclear ambitions. Yet it was the NPT that kept states from making a political decision on the development of nuclear weapons of their own; such a decision would have undermined the existing non-proliferation regime, thus provoking a dangerous chain reaction in various regions of the world. The NPT has established the rules of the game, made clear the advantages of maintaining a non-nuclear status, while ensuring the strict interdependence of the participating states.

In another area of concern, it would require more than one hand to count the number of states now possessing other types of

WMD, most notably, chemical and biological weapons. These weapons, especially chemical ones, are easier and cheaper to make; they can be reasonably described as the A-bomb for the poor. Whereas the Chemical Weapons Convention provides for verification mechanisms for the participating states, the Biological Weapons Convention is void of such a mechanism, and the work on a protocol for this mechanism has stalled.

The number of countries possessing missile weapons has been growing at the fastest rate. This is due to the so-called secondary proliferation when, for example, North Korea, Pakistan and Iran established mutual ties. International agreements do not prohibit the development of delivery vehicles. Furthermore, the "gentleman's agreements" between major producers of missile equipment and technologies, known as the Missile Technology Control Regime, can slow down, but not prevent, the development of missile programs in countries with such ambitions.

Yet the most important goal of checking the proliferation of nuclear weapons has been successful to date.

CATCHERS OF A BLACK CAT

The war waged by the U.S. and Britain against Iraq this spring has played a nasty trick on the global non-proliferation architecture, which can produce a real drama when it wants to.

On the one hand, the acronym WMD is now widely disseminated in the mass media, and the long and cumbersome word "non-proliferation," thanks to ubiquitous television coverage of Iraq, has become something of a commonplace in every household. Now every housewife must be concerned about, or at least know of, such an acute problem as WMD proliferation.

On the other hand, the concept of "proliferation" is closely associated in the mass consciousness with Saddam Hussein. But there is a hitch: after Saddam's overthrow and the U.S.-British occupation of Iraq, WMD arsenals have never been found in that country.⁷ Playing host to British Prime Minister Tony Blair in Moscow, President Vladimir Putin asked him jokingly where he thought Saddam had hidden his deadly arsenals. Putin's irony

during the Russian-British dialog reflected the sentiments of the average man in the street – not only in Russia but, to an even greater extent, throughout Europe: the Americans and the British are trying to catch a black cat in a dark room, even if there is no cat present.

Obviously, the war in Iraq did not commence because of “proliferation” (why it was started is not the subject of this article); nevertheless, the ongoing struggle against the proliferation of WMD was chosen as a convenient pretext for the war.

According to official U.S. and British estimates of Iraq’s WMD program prior to the war, Baghdad already possessed, or might

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soon possess, nuclear weapons. It was alleged that Iraq made attempts to import uranium and centrifugal equipment for its enrichment; Iraq had restored facilities that formerly had been used for its military nuclear program; Iraq’s biological military program was even more impressive than it had been on the eve of the

1991 Gulf war (at that time, Baghdad had all of the components required for the production of thousands of liters of anthrax, as well as other kinds of biological weapons. These would be capable of killing millions of people). Iraq had at least seven mobile plants for the production of bio-weapons. Finally, Iraq had produced 100 to 500 tons of chemical weapons and had 30,000 munitions for the delivery of chemical and biological agents.⁸

The reality was much more modest.

Investigations carried out by U.S. and British legislators⁹ have revealed that most of the provided information was either based on unverified and inadequate information, or was an exaggeration or distortion of the real state of affairs. It is possible that this was carried out in order to meet short-term political needs, or simply to conform to the pressure of the political leadership. It is true that during the 1980s, Iraq was actively working on its nuclear arms program, possessed chemical and biological weapons (and used chemical weapons

in the war against Iran – with Washington's and Moscow's tacit acquiescence), and worked to improve missile delivery vehicles. However, Operation Desert Storm in 1991, and the subsequent IAEA and UNSCOM (United Nations Special Commission on Iraq) inspections, put an end to those efforts. Iraq's military nuclear program was dismantled, and during the 1990s and the early 2000s the country made no evident attempts to reanimate it.

At the same time, however, Saddam displayed an interest in the development of delivery vehicles with a range of over 150 kilometers; these would be in contravention of UN sanctions. Iraqi emissaries, often disguised as Jordanian businessmen, traveled across Europe, paying particularly frequent visits to Kiev, Moscow and Bucharest, in the hope of improving the range and performance of their missiles and guidance systems.¹⁰ However, their efforts failed to produce the desired results, despite the fact that export controls in some countries were not always up to the standards they should have been.

It is much more difficult to control the development of chemical and biological weapons. It would not be very surprising if traces of chemical weapons, or proof that they were destroyed shortly before the war, were found in Iraq. Apparently, Iraq continued to conduct research in the field of biological weapons; Iraqi scientists who are now being interrogated by the American forces may reveal this.

Saddam Hussein could hardly be portrayed as a man who was not interested in possessing WMD; such a claim would be contrary to the truth. Yet it would also be contrary to the truth to suggest that Saddam's WMD arsenals threatened the world and, consequently, that the war was justifiable. If one follows this line of logic, it would seem necessary to deliver pre-emptive strikes against several dozen countries: those that have developed WMD of their own and remain outside international agreements (e.g. Israel); those participating in international agreements but capable of developing WMD within a short period of time (e.g. Japan); and those working to accelerate their missile programs (e.g. Taiwan). Of course, there is no logic here. Why should one attack, for example, Japan?

This sounds absurd. What really is behind the rhetoric is simply politics “adjusting” the facts so that they “fit” with the already chosen “direction of attack.” At least we should be grateful to President Bush Jr. for having outlined this “direction” with outmost frankness: Iraq – Iran – North Korea. In the White House’s broader interpretation, new targets will also include Cuba, Syria and Sudan, which seem to have become the latest members in the “axis of evil.”

Legislators in Washington and London are now seeking to uncover whether the information about the presence of WMD in Iraq was “ordered” by Bush and Blair from their secret services. Interesting facts are now becoming public: the authors of the intelligence reports on Iraq were apparently pressed to present fragmentary and unchecked information as sinister facts. It has turned out that such juggling of the facts was employed not only with respect to the “Iraq file.” A U.S. Department of State expert, for example, said he felt pressure from higher-placed officials to “substantiate” statements about Cuba’s belonging to the “axis of evil” with a report saying that Havana had a biological weapons program. The expert argued that those assertions were not supported by sufficient intelligence.¹¹

Non-proliferation has proved to be a very effective word, which, repeated as a mantra, helps to solve one’s own problems having no relation to the issue of non-proliferation.

As a result of the Iraqi operation, the word “non-proliferation” has become hackneyed, while the traditional mechanisms for preventing the proliferation of WMD are being ignored – not because they are inefficient but because they can lay bare the substitution; the established non-proliferation architecture is being deliberately jeopardized.

It takes very little effort to cry “Wolves!” and point fingers at Iraq or Cuba, but this will do absolutely nothing to reduce the threat of WMD proliferation. Moreover, these shouts can reduce the international community’s ability to perceive the real threats, as well as its readiness to react to them.

Iraq became a litmus test for the international community, above all for the UN Security Council. The United States and

Britain barred the Security Council from the decision-making process on Iraq.

The former head of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), Hans Blix, was ridiculed by the U.S. administration. However, the inspections conducted by the IAEA and UNMOVIC in Iraq during the prewar months should be considered a success of the international community. The inspections, held in compliance with Security Council Resolution 1441, proved an effective mechanism for investigating Iraq's alleged WMD programs, while preventing their further development.

The U.S. military solution of the Iraq problem, which was never approved by the Security Council, has undermined the entire non-proliferation regime. This may prompt some non-nuclear parties to the NPT to revise their nuclear-weapon policies in the near future.

The military example displayed in Iraq has sent the wrong message to other countries in the Middle East and beyond: if you do not lose time, if you keep your doors closed to international inspectors and obtain nuclear weapons as soon as possible, you can guard yourself against a pre-emptive military attack, and engage in bargaining with the Americans instead. Having attacked Iraq under the non-proliferation slogan, the U.S. has not intimidated other countries about possessing WMD of their own but, on the contrary, prompted them to take moves in exactly that direction. Syria, for example, may see it as an advantage to have chemical and biological weapon arsenals; furthermore, it may now be considering ways of obtaining nuclear weapons, which it has never planned before. Saudi Arabia, instead of spending money and resources for developing its own nuclear weapons, may consider simply obtaining them, together with experts, from Pakistan.

Such scenarios have prompted some American military to consider the deployment of nuclear weapons in Saudi Arabia as a guarantee of Riyadh's security, as well as a counterbalance to Saudi Arabia's possible plans to obtain nuclear weapons of its own. While very few in Washington share this idea, its proponents cite the example of South Korea where U.S. tactical nuclear weapons

ensured Seoul's security interests and, at the same time, restrained its own nuclear ambitions.

Speaking of East Asia, it must be noted that a chain reaction in that region may be initiated at an even faster pace than in the Middle East.

NORTH KOREA

North Korea is a classic example of non-observance of the NPT obligations. The decision of the IAEA Board of Governors to delegate the North Korean issue to the UN Security Council was timely and correct. Regrettably, Russia abstained during the vote. At the same time, Russia put its signature under the G-8's Evian declaration which issued a harsh warning to North Korea: "North Korea's uranium enrichment and plutonium production programs and its failure to comply with its IAEA safeguards agreement undermine the non-proliferation regime and are a clear breach of North Korea's international obligations. We strongly urge North Korea to visibly, verifiably and irreversibly dismantle any nuclear weapons programs, a fundamental step to facilitate a comprehensive and peaceful solution."¹²

Considering North Korea's nuclear and missile capabilities, together with the veil of secrecy over its regime and its unpredictability, one should admit that this country is a serious instability factor both for Northeast Asia and the world. However, a diplomatic solution to the North Korean problem seems quite possible. It could be found on a multilateral basis, perhaps at two levels at once.

The UN Security Council could be the first level. The first action against Pyongyang should not be immediate sanctions, but a warning that such sanctions could be applied in the future. The only obstacle to the Security Council's active and firm position toward North Korea is China; it continues to maintain a traditionally soft, possibly even an encouraging position with regard to Pyongyang. If China continues to pursue such a policy it may become counterproductive.

The second level is a six-sided mechanism (including both Koreas, the U.S., China, Japan and Russia) which would help

draw up a document, even non-binding, that would include two major provisions: first, North Korea's pledge not to withdraw from the NPT and to open all of its territory for unconditional IAEA inspections; and second, U.S. security guarantees for North Korea. These two provisions would have to be presented together in a single package.

Other issues that could be discussed include economic, energy and other aid packages to Pyongyang from the above countries and the EU, as well as the issue of missile non-proliferation. Simultaneously, or perhaps later, both Koreas must confirm the Korean Peninsula's nuclear-free status and receive guarantees from the nuclear powers.

Russia can take an active part in the decision-making process on the North Korean crisis if, of course, its efforts are supported by the United States, China and Japan. If such an agreement is reached, Russia could also participate in the provision of energy aid to North Korea. Russia has already proposed building a nuclear power plant in its Far East, not far from the North Korean border, and exporting electricity to the northern state. However, this proposal has not been supported.

The Bush administration has finally welcomed Russia's participation in the talks. However many in Washington hold to their belief that Moscow exaggerates its knowledge of what is actually occurring in North Korea, together with its influence on Pyongyang, whereas Beijing, it is argued, has real levers of influence on Kim Jong Il. Therefore, the problem seems to be how to make China cooperate with the U.S. on the North Korean issue. To this end, Washington has apparently decided to play its "Japanese card."

In the last few months, Tokyo has been discussing, more and more often, the possibility of, and even the need for, a revision of Japan's nuclear-free status.¹³ If Tokyo makes a political decision to develop its own nuclear weapons, it will only require a number of months to resolve the technological hurdles.¹⁴ Experts maintain that Japan, together with North Korea and Iran, has come the closest to acquiring nuclear weapons. But as distinct from North

Korea, which has apparently made a political decision about its intentions, and Iran, which most likely has not, Japan has definitely not made such a decision. It should not be forgotten that Japan is the world's only country that was a target of nuclear attacks, and anti-nuclear sentiments are strong and stable there. Therefore, it seems likely that rumors about Japan's nuclear ambitions are overexaggerated and intended only to make Beijing pay more attention and become more complaisant. It seems likely that there are similar intentions for the rumors concerning Taiwan's military nuclear program.

However, even the most wonderful scenarios often fail, or produce unwanted side effects. Discussions surrounding the "admissibility" of Japan developing its own nuclear weapons in response to the threat from Pyongyang may not help solve the problem but, on the contrary, may open up a Pandora's Box: North Korea, Japan, Taiwan... These may be followed by South Korea's reanimation of its military nuclear program, which was halted in the 1970s owing to U.S. efforts. The risk of a chain reaction in this sensitive area is simply too great.

The next few months will be decisive for the international community in working out its position toward North Korea and its military nuclear program, whether or not these efforts are real or half-hearted. Arriving at some sort of settlement in North Korea is first and foremost a job for the diplomats. Neither the U.S. nor any other country is planning military actions against Pyongyang. But apparently keeping Pyongyang in mind, the G-8 leaders proposed a set of mechanisms for countering proliferation: "international treaty regimes; inspection mechanisms; ... international cooperation and diplomatic efforts; and if necessary *other measures* in accordance with international law... [*italics added*]. We need to deploy the tools which are most effective in each case."¹⁵

These words, it is widely believed, are intended not only for North Korea but also Iran. Personally, I do not believe this to be the case because the situation with Iran is much different from the situation with North Korea.

IRAN

Iran is a party to the NPT and an active member of the IAEA. IAEA Director General Mohamed ElBaradei's report of June 6, 2003,¹⁶ can be interpreted in different ways. Two things seem indisputable: first, Iran's nuclear program is more advanced than was earlier thought. Second, all of the violations of its obligations within the IAEA framework, mentioned in the report, were technical violations. On the whole, Iran is cooperating with the IAEA, which was confirmed by the IAEA director general's visit to that country in July. Finally, there is no definite proof that Iran has developed or is developing nuclear weapons; and if we go by U.S. information on the issue, considering its miscalculations in Iraq, the reports are certainly exaggerated. This is why there are no grounds, nor pretexts, for using force against Iran. Also, there have been no reports concerning any practical plans for such a course of action (although, of course, general calculations for such a scenario have been done, just as in Israel).

The situation concerning Iran and the question of non-proliferation boils down to the ability for making a correct forecast for the next three to seven years. During this period, Iran will probably be able to transfer its ambitious civilian nuclear power program to military purposes, if its leadership decides to take such a political decision. This probability must not be allowed: if Iran possesses nuclear weapons, together with modern delivery vehicles, it would constitute a threat to Russia's national security and international stability.

Few question the idea that Iran has a military nuclear program. In 1993, Russia's foreign intelligence reported that Iran "has a program for military applied research in the nuclear field." The report went on and stated, however, that without outside technological and research assistance the appearance of nuclear weapons in Iran before 2001 was unlikely; and even if Iran invested some 1.5 billion U.S. dollars in its nuclear program every year, it would be able to develop nuclear weapons not earlier than 2003.¹⁷

My colleagues at the PIR Center, having assessed all of the new information concerning Iran's advanced nuclear program received in the last few months, have arrived at the following conclusion:

factors that may have caused Iran to accelerate its nuclear program include its wish to "obtain technical capabilities for developing nuclear weapons. In this case, Iran can go very far, while remaining within the frameworks of its international commitments... According to such a scenario, Teheran can receive technical and material capabilities for developing nuclear weapons within months, as soon as it accumulates weapon-grade nuclear materials in the required amount. A political decision to use resources of nuclear materials for developing nuclear weapons can be made if Iranian-U.S. relations become aggravated and the U.S. starts preparing an operation to overthrow the incumbent regime in Iran, or if the U.S. or Israel bombs Iranian nuclear facilities..."¹⁸

Interestingly, despite the frequent lack of coordination between the government agencies now controlling the defense industry, and despite the lack of necessary funding, Iran has been displaying an impressive ability for independently achieving its goals. In the first half of the 1990s, Russia declined Teheran's request for building a uranium enrichment plant in Iran. Nevertheless, Iran has managed to build such a plant on its own, without Russian assistance, and much faster than one could have expected.

But there is still no reason for categorically stating, as some analysts now do, that Iran will decide in favor of nuclear weapons. Nothing is predetermined in Teheran at the present time, and there is still time for working out a system of measures for reducing the risk of Iran obtaining nuclear weapons. The most important thing is to reduce or liquidate those incentives that are motivating Iran to possess WMD. Paradoxically, the U.S. operation against Iraq has already liquidated one such incentive, since the primary enemy of the Iranian military strategists was not Israel or the U.S. but Saddam's Iraq.

Now the question arises: does Teheran deliberately maintain uncertainty about its plans (the way its sworn enemy Israel has done, thus keeping its nuclear policy under a shroud of complete secrecy) in order to broaden its room for further bargaining? Or do the Iranians themselves not know what they should do next? The latter thesis seems more probable. In the continuing tug-of-war

between the groups of Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Hoseini-Khamenei, President Mohammad Khatami, and ex-president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's elites seem to be divided over the question concerning the direction of their civilian nuclear program, and how it should be developed; with whom and how they should bargain (and whether they should bargain at all) over a possibility of Iran's giving up its nuclear weapons ambitions? And most importantly, what should they demand in return for their cooperation?

Judging by Teheran's rhetoric, its main concern is the presence of nuclear weapons in Israel. Double standards in the U.S. Middle East policy are particularly manifest on the issue of Israel's nuclear weapons. Whereas Washington includes Iran in the list of countries belonging to the "axis of evil" merely for its intentions (never proved, though), Israel's nuclear arsenal is accepted as a reasonable matter of course. True, such double standards damage both the settlement process in the Middle East and adjacent regions, as well as the non-proliferation principles. And still, would Iran be ready for the mutual suspension of all nuclear fuel facilities in the region? (This refers to only two nuclear sites: at Israel's Dimona and Iran's Natanz.) I am not sure Teheran would find this proposal very tempting or practical.

The Iranian leadership obviously includes groups that hope for a strategic rapprochement with the U.S. Washington displays less interest in such a scenario, yet some policymakers there seem interested. Both countries are now holding the most rigid positions so that they could later reduce the stakes, while leaving much room for bargaining and, ultimately, for a compromise. Teheran does not have a unified U.S. policy, nor does Washington have a unified Iran policy. This factor reduces the possibility for bargaining but does not rule it out. In this case, pro-U.S. forces in the Iranian leadership will hardly consider cooperation with Russia. On the contrary, Iran will possibly avenge itself on Russia for its inconsistency (real or imaginary) on the various issues of nuclear cooperation, for the delay in the construction of the Bushehr nuclear power plant and the withdrawal from other contracts.

Presently, there are signs that the prevailing view in Teheran is that Iran will benefit from a long-term strategic partnership with Russia. Similarly, Russia will benefit from such a partnership, too, above all for geopolitical reasons and only then for economic ones.

My own impressions gained during a recent trip to Iran made me conclude that, despite a sharp rivalry inside its leadership, the prevailing wisdom seeks to play by the international rules. These same forces are actively working toward eliminating any possibility for the emergence of nuclear weapons in Iran. They want Iran to remain an important party to the NPT and the IAEA. At the same time, these forces are very ambitious in other realms. They would like to see Iran quickly develop itself technologically; this would include the civilian nuclear power sector. The "progressists" hope that the development of this and other high-tech sectors will proceed together with their efforts to introduce more democracy into their country.

In a situation like this, Russia has much room for pursuing its foreign policy. Moscow is interested in a stable and technologically developed Iran that desires a stable level of cooperation with Russia. It wants Iran to be free of nuclear weapons, and other weapons of mass destruction, and not to be a haven for international terrorists. Finally, Russia is interested in a comprehensive settlement of the entire Mideast situation.

This is why Russia should not suspend or freeze its cooperation with Iran in the field of nuclear power engineering — both in the construction of the first reactor at the Bushehr nuclear power plant and in the possible construction of other (up to six) reactors in that country — at least until Russia has direct proof that Iran is developing nuclear weapons of its own. When President Putin spoke in Britain about the "proximity" of the Western and Russian positions with regard to Iran (this "proximity," he said, is much greater "than it seems"), he stressed that the non-proliferation campaign must not become a loophole for unfair competition on the global markets. France, which occupies a similar position on Iran's nuclear program, is also ready to compete for Iran's nuclear markets.

Other types of cooperation with Iran in the field of nuclear energy (namely, the training of specialists, and the introduction of

other possible projects and supplies) should be made dependent on Iran signing and ratifying the IAEA's Additional Protocol. If Iran is not planning to develop nuclear weapons of its own, joining the protocol will not be an insurmountable problem (even though it may bring about some discomfort in its internal political environment). It can be expected that the European Union, above all Germany, will exert serious pressure on Iran concerning this issue. Russia should abide by the position earlier expressed by Nuclear Energy Minister Alexander Rumyantsev on the return of spent fuel from the Bushehr nuclear power plant to Russia.¹⁹ Until Iran signs the Additional Protocol, Russia will not supply it with fresh fuel. It would also be wise to reduce the amount of time that the fuel is stored in the power plant's cooling ponds. Efforts in this direction are already being made, but they should be stepped up.

RUSSIA—U.S. LTD.

Russia is interested in a nuclear weapon-free Iran not because the U.S. and Israel are pressing it. This is an independent and intelligible position based solely on Russia's national security interests.

In the second half of the 1990s, when the "Iranian issue" was a constant irritant during the Russian-U.S. negotiations, Russia often took a defensive position, trying to prove its "innocence."

This is understandable considering how many times during President Boris Yeltsin's rule the decision-making mechanism often failed, producing astounding results. For example, the head of a government committee attempted to carry to Syria various components used in the production of chemical weapons (for which he was removed from office in 1994); in Teheran, a Russian minister signed a protocol of intent for the export of several items that were banned for export by Russian laws (for which he was almost dismissed in 1995); another minister helped a research institute — which he patronized — conclude with Iran a contract which was dubious from the viewpoint of Russia's export control laws (for which the General Prosecutor's Office initiated criminal proceedings for illegal export).

One can site more examples of this kind, but the above is enough to understand how the chaos in the Russian economy in

the 1990s weakened Russia's position for serious negotiations. It made Russian negotiators feel like students who were excusing themselves to their teachers for not finishing their homework assignments. Occasionally, Russia made attempts to press a particular issue: during the FBI director's visit to Moscow, he was informed that U.S. companies were illegally supplying missile equipment to Iran,²⁰ or, in May 2002, in a conversation with Bush, Putin expressed Russia's concern over Washington's missile cooperation with Taiwan.²¹ However, those attempts had been rather poorly prepared and did not produce any long-term effect.

It took Russia many years to establish order within its economy, and create effective systems of export control at the national level, as well as in hundreds of enterprises across the country; this is very critical from the point of view of non-proliferation. Now that the export regime has been brought under control, and Russia has established priorities in its foreign policy, it is time for it to pursue a more active policy on the non-proliferation of WMD and their delivery means. Russia should take the initiative and develop a package of proposals and subjects for discussion for its upcoming negotiations with the U.S. and the G-8. Jointly with the U.S., it should assess potential international threats to security. Finally, it must be determined how safe are the nuclear weapons and nuclear materials possessed by Pakistan; this is one of the most vulnerable spots in the world as far as non-proliferation is concerned.

Russia should also discuss the promise forwarded by the Americans, although unofficially, following the NPT's indefinite extension in 1995, to persuade Israel to join the NPT in several intermediary stages. A definite answer should be provided concerning the future of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. Russia is vitally interested in this document, which is now hanging in mid-air, although not through any fault of Russia.

There are other serious issues which must be explored: ways need to be introduced for deblocking the current impasse in the Conference on Disarmament, for beginning work on a Convention on the Ban on the Production of Fissionable Materials, and finally, to prevent the deployment of nuclear

weapons in outer space. In sharp contrast with the NPT and the decisions of the 2000 NPT Review Conference, the United States has announced plans to explore the development of low-yield nuclear weapons. This problem is no less serious than Iran's nuclear future. Or does it not concern Russia?

Of course, Russia should not conduct the bilateral dialog with the U.S., the multilateral dialog within the G-8 framework, and discussions at the UN Security Council as ping-pong with the Americans. In the long run, Russian and U.S. views on non-proliferation still unite rather than disunite the two countries. Both states describe proliferation as the main threat to their national security. Bilateral exchanges of information and a joint assessment of the perceived threats are critically important.

However, no matter how important the ongoing dialogs with the U.S. are, Russia should not forget about the importance of multilateral diplomacy and multilateral mechanisms and institutions — a resource that has not been tapped to its full potential in recent years. The IAEA and the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva could play a more active and constructive role in reducing the risks of proliferation. Skepticism about their excessive bureaucratization and sluggishness is partially justified. Nevertheless, events in Iraq have graphically demonstrated that it is international institutions that can become an alternative center for decision-making, which would greatly reduce the need for using military force for solving international crises. U.S. administrations come and go, and their priorities will change, but international institutions will always be with us.²²

Non-proliferation priorities will remain with us as well. "North Korea and non-proliferation" is not a new subject. In the early 1980s, Soviet and U.S. negotiators put aside other problems that complicated their relations and jointly discussed Pyongyang's nuclear plans, while jointly studying satellite images of North Korean nuclear sites.

The Iranian issue dates back even further, to the Shah's nuclear program of the 1970s, which the Americans both encouraged

and feared. It is easy to get the impression that Iran is presently patterning its nuclear program after that particular program.

“Non-proliferation and disarmament” has been a subject of constant discussion since the NPT conclusion in 1968. There have been many impasses in the NPT history, which ultimately were broken through negotiations.

Actually, there is only one new subject on the present agenda: proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and non-state actors – international terrorist organizations and transnational criminal groups seeking to obtain WMD through the cooperation of other states or directly. Countries must focus their attention on this new growing threat and it must be made a subject of special analysis.²³

In 1995, shortly after the NPT was extended for an indefinite time, one of my colleagues at an international seminar in Monterey, California described the situation in the following graphical way: “The operation has been a success, the patient is alive but is now being given resuscitation.”

In 2003, the patient is again being given resuscitation (if, of course, he has ever left the emergency room). Does the patient require another operation? I don’t think so. What the patient does need is a timely and regular intake of the earlier prescribed medicines. This may sound dull: no emotional sensations or the revolutionary destruction of the established regime. But one should not forget: observance of the established therapy can be more difficult than surgery.

¹ Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction – A G-8 Declaration. Evian, June 1-3, 2003, p. 1.

² BBC Breakfast with Frost Interview with President Putin. Broadcast on June 22, 2003.

³ India, Israel and Pakistan are not parties to the NPT. North Korea has withdrawn from the NPT.

⁴ See: Vladimir Malevanny. Israel’s Intelligence Community. *Nezavisimoye Voyennoye Obozreniye*, May 15-22, 1998, p. 7. Unlike the author of this article, I hold that Israel tends to exaggerate rather than play down the size of its military nuclear program.

⁵ Among recent publications on North Korea, I would like to single out a detailed analysis in the report by G. Bulychev, A. Vorontsov, V. Novikov. What the Crux of the Choice on the Korean Issue Is. Ways to Overcome the Crisis on the Korean Peninsula. Moscow, 2003. The status of North Korea’s military nuclear program is analyzed also in: D. Yevstafyev. The Nuclear Crisis on the Korean Peninsula: Possible Scenarios. *Yaderny Kontrol*, No. 2 (68), Summer 2003, pp. 131-138; D. Yevstafyev. Regional Peculiarities of

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- the International Non-Proliferation Regime. In: *Yadernoye Nerasprostraniye*. Moscow, PIR-Center, 2002, Vol. 1, pp. 196-199; Joseph Cirincione et al. *Deadly Arsenals: Tracking Weapons of Mass Destruction*. *Carnegie Endowment*, 2002, pp. 241-254.
- ⁶ R.M. Timerbayev. *Russia and Nuclear Non-Proliferation*. Moscow: Nauka, 1999, p. 172, pp. 137-161.
- ⁷ Joseph Cirincione. Can Preventive War Cure Proliferation? *Proliferation Brief*, Volume 6, No. 12.
<http://www.ceip.org/files/nonprolif/templates/Publications.asp?p=8&PublicationID=1308>
- ⁸ Ibid.; Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction. The Assessment of the British Government. September 2002. www.pm.gov.uk. The International Institute for Strategic Studies was much more flexible: its conclusions can be interpreted as both proving the presence of WMD in Iraq and supporting later conclusions by UNMOVIC, which the author finds grounded: Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction. A Net Assessment. An IISS Strategic Dossier, September 9, 2002.
- ⁹ See: James Risén and Douglas Jehl. Expert Said to Tell Legislators He Was Pressed to Distort Some Evidence. *New York Times*, June 25, 2003
- ¹⁰ See: Vladimir Orlov, William C. Potter. The Mystery Of The Sunken Gyros. *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November/December 1998; Vladimir Orlov. Iraq: Hunt for Russian Missile Components and Technologies (1993-1995). In: *Export Control in Russia: Politics and Practices*. Moscow, PIR-Center, 2000, pp. 143-156.
- ¹¹ James Risén and Douglas Jehl. Expert Said to Tell Legislators He Was Pressed to Distort Some Evidence. *New York Times*, June 25, 2003.
- ¹² Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction – A G-8 Declaration. *Evian*, June 1-3, 2003, p. 1.
- ¹³ It does not seem accidental that the Asahi newspaper on February 20, 2003, published a classified report by Japan's Defense Agency. According to the newspaper, the agency, together with the armed forces' command, on instructions of the Japanese government in 1995, discussed the expediency of the development by Japan of nuclear weapons of its own to counter North Korea's nuclear potential.
- ¹⁴ See: The Non-Proliferation Treaty. Problems of Extension. Report by the Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia, 1995, pp. 68-70; *Nuclear Non-Proliferation*, Vol. 1, p. 200.
- ¹⁵ Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction – A G-8 Declaration. *Evian*, June 1-3, 2003, p. 1.
- ¹⁶ IAEA Board of Governors. Implementation of the NPT Safeguards in the Islamic Republic of Iran. Report by the Director General. GOV/2003/40 June 6, 2003.
- ¹⁷ New Post-Cold War Challenge: Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia, Moscow, 1993.
- ¹⁸ V.F. Lata, A.V. Khlopkov. Iran: Nuclear-Missile Riddle for Russia. *Yaderny Kontrol*, No. 2 (68), 2003, p. 45.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 52
- ²⁰ M. Kirillin. Several U.S. Missile Companies Have Ties with Iranians. *Yaderny Kontrol*, No. 2 (68), 1998, pp. 37-43.
- ²¹ See: *Noviye Izvestia*, May 25, 2002, p. 1
- ²² If we take, for example, the position of the New Agenda Coalition, an informal association of Sweden, Egypt, New Zealand, Ireland, Mexico, Brazil and other countries, it rather coincides with Russia's position than runs counter to it. If Russia enters into an active dialog with these countries, they may become its serious partners in resolving long-term national security issues. Also, Russia should pay close attention to the recent Geneva 'five ambassadors' initiative (Chile, Algeria, etc.) to end the stalemate in the work of the Conference on Disarmament. In general Russia has officially expressed support of the initiative, with amendments approved in June 2003.
- ²³ For details see: Superterrorism: New Challenge of the New Century. A.V. Fyodorov (Ed.), Moscow: Prava Cheloveka, 2002, pp. 60-79; Vladimir Orlov. Gray Zones: This Is Where the Threat to the Non-Proliferation Regime Comes From. *Yaderny Kontrol*, No. 4, Vol. 7, Fall 2002, pp. 4-8.