

Myth of "global zero"

MD. MUHIBBUR RAHMAN

THE world is haunted by its own making nuclear weapons, though this argument makes sense but the growing complexity of international politics, nuclear weapons being inseparably linked, does not allow the strategists to think of a world beyond nuclear shield. This debate has grown bigger with the Obama administration's dismantling of the last US biggest B53 nuclear bomb, a Cold War relic 600 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Though the US is considering this development as a milestone in President Obama's mission to end the world of nuclear weapons and the end of the era of big megaton bombs, the world is not naive enough to accept such claim, rather some thinks of it as a strategic approach to increase US moral authority to take actions against Iran, supported by a subsequent IAEA's report claiming to find evidence of nuclear weapons development by Iran.

The idea of a nuclear free world is a postmodern version of an old idea, general and complete disarmament that has never been successful in actual measures. It begins with a "global zero" concept that appeared in the Wall Street Journal on January 4, 2007, under the title "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons" signed by George Shultz, Henry Kissinger, William Perry and Sam Nunn. There are currently 26,000 nuclear warheads ready to go -- 96% of which are controlled by the United States and Russia. These two countries alone could unleash the power of 70,000 Hiroshimas in a matter of minutes.

Keeping this in mind, nuclear disarmament advocates consider nuclear weapons as the greatest single threat to the survival of humanity. They argue that deterrent of value nuclear weapons is now outweighed by the dangers of proliferation and nuclear terrorism, having the potential "downward spiral" that could lead the world into the dangerous disorder of a fast-growing num-

ber of nuclear-armed states -- North Korea already, with Iran and others to follow. They proposed the relinquishment of all nukes by 2030 and White House dubbed it as "nuclear spring" that comes to signify the apex of arms-control. Grippingly, Obama proposed a nuclear energy bank that nations could access to meet their requirements for peaceful use of nuclear energy.

A complete nuclear disarmament is a utopia. The first and foremost problem here reflects the deficiency of trust and verification of the implementation of disarmament clauses. States will hardly be convinced without concrete evidence that others are destroying their stockpiles and capabilities and still they will be doubtful of the big powers who can secretly maintain their ability to regenerate nuclear weapons again. Since the Global zero is proposing to dismantle US stockpiles at the very last moment when others have already relinquished their stores, countries like India, China, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea will never be willing to jump into the same bandwagon. Regional geopolitical realities such as those of Israel, and also of Pakistan and North Korea, their existence as independent states largely depend on their possession of nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament for them is almost the same as compromising with their sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The smaller and less powerful the country, the more beneficial nuclear weapons are. North Korea, as instance, has rendered itself immune from attack for fear of the consequences. The fear of a rising Chinese ascendancy leaves less room for the US to destroy its apocalyptic bomb, the key pillar of military preeminence, since it is still the only stick by which U.S. dream to rule the world in the coming

decades. Besides, countries operating under US security umbrella in the important strategic regions and NATO will find this disarmament Zion as objectionable and impairment to national and regional security.

What makes the global zero impossible is that US itself is following a double standard

year and to secure "loose nukes" and "vulnerable nuclear material" within four years. But He was more vocal to declare that as long as a nuclear threat existed, the US would retain its nuclear capability. Obama is also asking funding for the US weapons program. In February 2010, it asked for \$80 billion over 10 years, a 15 percent increase over the Bush administration, for the National Nuclear Security Administration, which oversees the US weapons complex.

It is nothing but retelling the same story again and again. Despite a general trend toward disarmament in the early 1990s, Bush administration repeatedly pushed to fund policies such as 'Reliable Replacement Warhead Program', 'Complex Transformation' and 'Nuclear Bunker Buster' for a so called 'new generation of nukes' smaller, easier to maintain but complex and can restore the ability to produce "pits", the fissile cores of the primaries of US thermonuclear weapons and can even penetrate into soil and rock in order to destroy underground targets.

The most fundamental question in this regard implies whether nuclear disarmament is desirable even if it is possible. A world without nukes could be far more unstable and prone to both smaller and global-scale conventional wars. A nuclear free world will not only crack the regional strategic balance particularly in South Asia, Middle East and East Asia, but also render a global picture that looks startlingly familiar to pre-World War I Europe. The development of 'The Bomb' and its presence as an ultimate deterrent has arguably preempted the advent of global-scale wars since its first and final use in WW II. Tension between the United States and Russia, but there is a

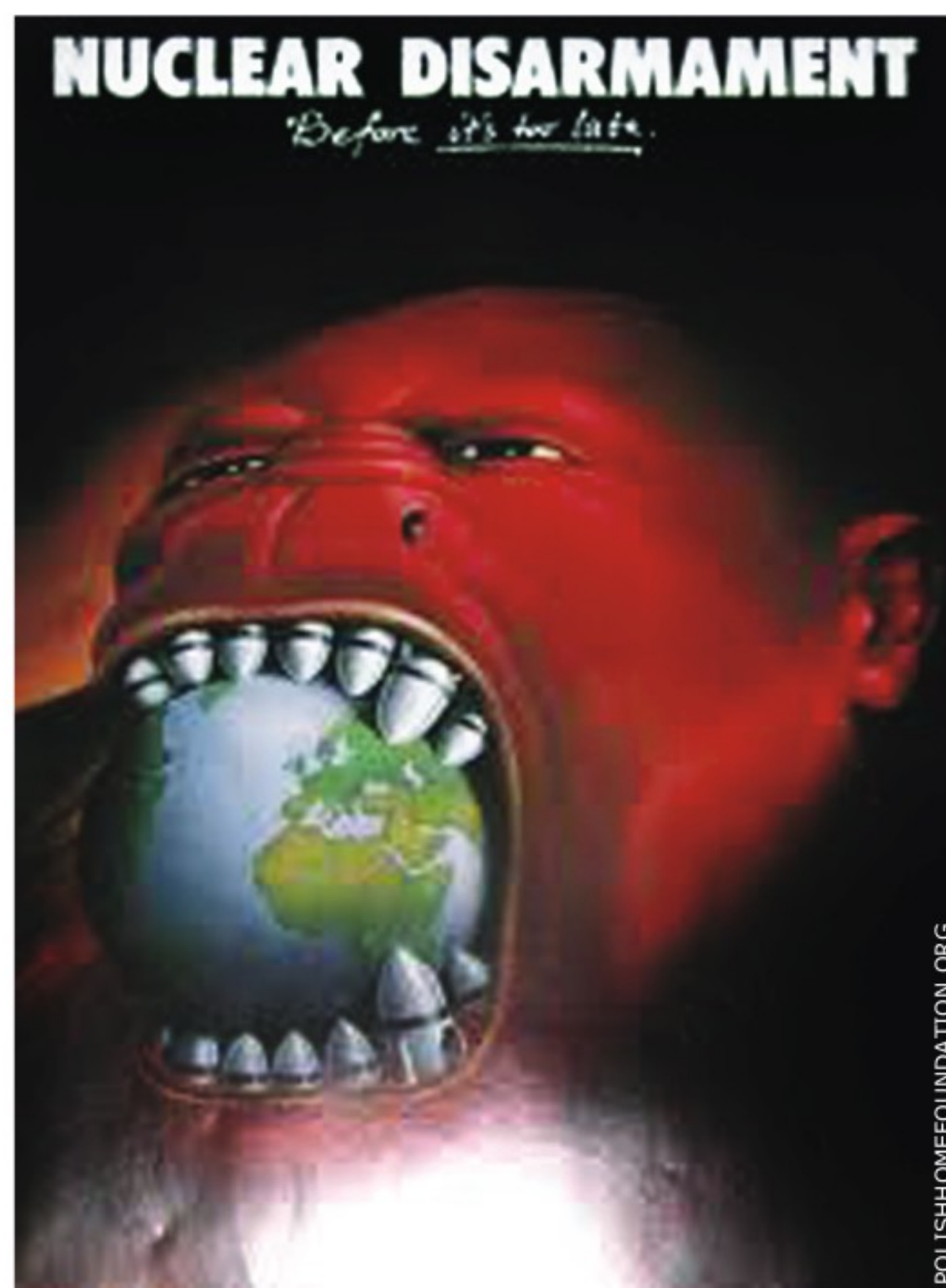
limit to how far each nation is willing to provoke the other. The same can be said for the US relationship with China.

Global zero will do more to spread than contain nuclear weapons -- directly, by encouraging some non-nuclear states to consider developing nuclear weapons, and indirectly, by displacing and undermining other more effective strategies. Friends and allies of the US including Germany, Japan, and South Korea who are quite capable but have not sought nuclear weapons may decide that they must acquire their own bomb, if the US is seen to be heading toward eliminating its nuclear capabilities, because it will destroy US ability to extend the protection of nuclear deterrent to cover them.

During disarmament process, nations would become distrustful of the others even to the point of complete paranoia and all-out belligerence and any evidence to the contrary could severely escalate tension and thwart the process itself and could lead to even nuclear war. Besides, concealing a few nukes and attempting to gain political and military advantages by nuclear blackmail or attack could give one nation an enormous military advantage over those nations who have been completely de-nuclearised. And importantly, nukes could still get in the wrong hands such as fringe groups, and rogue nations enabling them to take the rest of the world hostage.

However, the ideal projection of the world makes little sense, since the struggle for power and supremacy underlies the objectivity of international competition. It's not a question of opposing nuclear disarmament, rather reckoning the possibilities and consequences afterwards. We do have nuclear weapons in the world and now it is an inseparable part of it, given that the systemic preservation of the world politics is highly dependent on the maintenance of the nuclear weapons. It seems as a devil's advocacy for nuclear weapons, but the effect that this dream would bring speaks otherwise.

The writer is a Research Analyst, BIPSS.



POLISHHOMEFOUNDATION.ORG

policy. Obama pledges, downgrading the role ascribed to nuclear weapons in the US national security doctrines, to ratify test ban treaty and convene global summit for eventual elimination of nuclear stockpiles. He also reaffirmed commitment to reach agreement on a new strategic arms reduction treaty (Start) with Russia cutting warheads by around one third by the end of this

Changes in Myanmar: Lessons for Bangladesh

ASHISH BANIK

MYANMAR has been trying to diversify its foreign orientation in the context of rapidly-changing regional geopolitical dynamics since the military dominated Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) assumed power in November 2010. It has recently witnessed significant political developments which moved the country from the 'policy of isolation' towards a 'policy of engagement.' Political developments include the recently enacted bill in parliament allowing citizens to protest peacefully, initiatives to resume dialogues with other political parties and release of political prisoners. As a result, Myanmar, to some extent, has elevated its position in International Politics. Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) agreed that Myanmar would chair the regional bloc in 2014. These changes have already given an indication that the country wants to realign its foreign policy breaking its long phase of isolation for decades. It also gives an assessment of which direction the country might take in the coming months and years.

In the light of these developments, the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina from 5 December 2011 to Myanmar is of immense importance for Bangladesh. Myanmar, with its geo-strategic location and vast natural resources, has gained a strategic importance among the countries in the entire region. Earlier, in pursuit of improving its relations with other countries by warding off western pressure, the military regime in Myanmar had left no stone unturned to utilize its strategic leverages. Realising the geo-strategic and geo-economic importance of Myanmar, China and India have already ensured their presence in the development process of Myanmar where Bangladesh remains no where. Though Bangladesh is aware about the potential of its look-east policy, it has, to date, failed to achieve anything pursuing this policy with Myanmar. Despite having a close geographic proximity with Myanmar, there is no air links, no direct road connectivity, and no shipping link between the two countries. Therefore, it is the high time to

strengthen the economic and political interactions with that country. Bangladesh needs to understand Myanmar in the context of recent changes which have been undertaken by the present government in Myanmar.

There are a number of seemingly intractable issues, affecting the bilateral relations between the two countries; these are, repatriation of the remaining Rohingya refugees, the demarcation of maritime boundary, smuggling of narcotics and illegal trade. According to different sources, there are more than 300,000 unregistered Rohingyas living among the local population, in slums and villages mostly in Cox's Bazar district but also in smaller numbers in

Bangladesh to improve its relationship with Myanmar. However, Bangladesh needs to inculcate a sense of trust into the mind of the present government of Myanmar that these longstanding unresolved issues would no longer create hindrances in promoting economic prosperity between the two countries. The policy makers in Bangladesh need to address some common areas of concern where both the countries can strengthen their cooperation.

At present, the trade volume between Bangladesh and Myanmar is very small. It was reported that in 2008-09 Bangladesh's exports stood at \$9.17 million and imports from Myanmar at \$66.65 million. To increase trade, the joint trade commission of Bangladesh and Myanmar held its fifth meeting on July 21-22, 2011. It was agreed that the two countries would raise bilateral trade to \$550 million by \$160 million now by two years.

Bangladesh should undertake steps to boost up trade with Myanmar. These steps include diversification of the export items of Bangladesh targeting the domestic market of Myanmar, establishment of a smooth channel of financial transactions as well as building direct road and air links between the two countries and signing of an inland water transport protocol. At present, Bangladeshi

importers have been settling their payments for bulk shipments through bank drafts issued by foreign banks to a third country. To deepen connectivity between the two countries, Bangladesh can proceed with Myanmar in joint investment to build a hydroelectric project from where electricity could be supplied to Bangladesh. It can also set up a fertilizer plant under a joint investment where Myanmar might supply natural gas.

However, the prospectus of this relationship depends how Bangladesh can seize the opportunities to expand its relations with the present government of Myanmar. Bangladesh should undertake a pragmatic approach to foster cooperative efforts and interconnectivity which are considered as catalysts for economic growth and prosperity for the two peoples.

The writer is a Research Officer, BEI.



NEWSBNN

the Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is a major concern for Bangladesh that the Myanmar is reluctant to accept these persons as their citizens. Concerning the demarcation of maritime boundary between Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal, the hearing is on at the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) which will give its verdict by 2012. The smuggling of narcotics in the Bangladesh- Myanmar border has become a critical issue between the two countries. Media reports revealed that Myanmar's businessmen have set up many factories in the Shan Province, near Thailand border, to produce YABA targeting the domestic market of Bangladesh. Bangladesh has already given a list of businessmen to Myanmar who are involved in the smuggling of narcotics in the Bangladesh Myanmar border.

Given the existing challenges between the two countries, it would be a challenge for

Russian arms in US backyard: Back in Cuba

RUSSIA has launched a military partnership project with its Cold War ally Cuba, amid rising tensions over US plans to deploy an anti-missile system in Europe.

Russian contractors are to supply production equipment for manufacturing 7.62-mm rifle rounds, Kommersant daily reports. Cuban arms plant called Comandante Ernesto Che Guevara will also receive a license and technology for recycling used ammo.

The daily cites its sources as saying that Havana officials decided to purchase the equipment after visiting a similar production line in Venezuela. The insider did not reveal any details on the financial terms of the future deal, but said it was close to being sealed.

Russian arms producers further hope to win a contract for upgrading the whole ammunition plant in the future. It was built in late 1970s early 1980s with the help of Soviet specialists.

The United States are maintaining a decades-old trade blockade of Cuba. Russian companies, which would supply military equipment there, risk sanctions by the US.

Communist Cuba was a major ally of the Soviet Union during the Cold War era, with an estimated gross value of arms supplied to Havana reaching \$16 billion. The USSR delivered tanks, Mig fighter jets, helicopters, rocket air defense systems, submarines, small arms, communication equipment among other things. The close military collaboration resulted in the most serious tension of the period, when Moscow deployed its missiles on the island in response to a similar move by the US in Turkey.

The collapse of the USSR and the economic perils new Russia faced weakened its trade and military ties with Cuba. In 2001 Russia shut down the radio reconnaissance base in Cuba, the last of its military facilities there.

However in the late 2000s Moscow and Havana began to re-establish relations on many levels. In September 2008 two Russian strategic bombers carrying top Air Forces brass visited Venezuela. The aviation generals also visited Cuba and later voiced possible plans for renting and upgrading an air base on the La Orchila Island, which would allow Russian military aircraft patrol the Caribbean.

Also in 2008, Russian Army generals visited Cuba to inspect its air defense forces. Possible upgrade of the old equipment and supply of spare parts was on the table. The moves were viewed by many observers as Russian response to the Bush administration plans to deploy an anti-ballistic missile system in Europe.

The news on the upcoming round production deal comes as Moscow and Washington are reaching new heights of tension over AMD system. The US refuses to provide guaranties that the system would not be used against Russia.

Russia's latest move in the row was to open a new early warning radar in its western exclave, the Kaliningrad Region. President Medvedev has also threatened deployment of short-range ballistic missiles capable of destroying American ABM facilities, should it be required.

Source: defencetalk.com



DEFENCETALK