

Introduction

On October 21, 2005, the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and the American Academy of Diplomacy co-sponsored a conference on “Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction: Current Challenges and New Approaches.” Major addresses by Dr. Robert Joseph, U.S. Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security, and Dr. Hans Blix, Chairman of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission were complemented by two panels of distinguished policy-makers and experts. This volume is the outcome of that conference.

The conference was motivated by a growing sense that the existing non-proliferation regimes are in crisis. Despite some notable successes in the 1990s, including the strengthening of International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards and the coming into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention, recent years have seen major shocks to the system. Specific challenges presented by Iraq, North Korea, and Iran have exacerbated problems associated with the spread of technology, the collapse of talks on a verification protocol for the Biological Weapons Convention and the terrifying prospect of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) falling into the hands of terrorists.

Yet times of stress also present opportunities for innovation. Traditional approaches to non-proliferation—the negotiation of a multi-lateral treaties and verification mechanisms to monitor compliance—are giving way to new approaches. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Initiative, which began as a bilateral U.S.-Russia arrangement to destroy WMD in the former Soviet Union, expanded into the G-8 Global Partnership. Similarly, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) began as an arrangement among 11 states to interdict ships suspected of carrying WMD-related material in their territorial waters, and now includes more than 70 supportive governments. In a striking extension of its traditional crisis-management role, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolution 1540 in 2004 obliging states to enact a wide range of non-proliferation measures aimed mainly at non-state actors.

A critical question addressed at the Fletcher/American Academy conference is whether these new approaches reinforce or undermine existing regimes. Arguably, the PSI and Resolution 1540 fill gaps in the treaties—gaps that would not be filled quickly enough if traditional approaches to multilateral decision-making were pursued. And yet the existing regimes are based on a carefully calibrated set of bargains and compromises, which could be thrown off by these new approaches. Similar questions are raised by the prospect of enforcement. Multilateral enforcement of non-proliferation norms—through the Security Council, for example—has been rare. Can the system survive if it fails to deal effectively with blatant violations? Is unilateral enforcement in the form of pre-emptive action a viable alternative?

Participants wrestled with these and other questions in considering whether all this activity would lead to more comprehensive and coherent non-proliferation policies, or alternatively to fragmentation and breakdown of the regimes. This collection of speeches and essays reflects our deliberations and, we hope, will stimulate further debate.

Many people deserve thanks for this undertaking. The conference originated in the shared vision of Ambassador Anthony Quainton of the American Academy of Diplomacy, and Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, Dean of the Fletcher School. They were instrumental in designing the program and attracting such an illustrious group of speakers, as well as providing financial support. Turning their vision into reality was the responsibility of Gerard Sheehan, Executive Associate Dean of the Fletcher School, and the many Fletcher staff who devoted their time, energy and imagination. Special thanks go to Laura Peterson Nussbaum and Connie Schneider, editors of *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, for their diligence in producing this Special Issue. Finally, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to Natasha Bajema, Fletcher Ph.D. candidate and non-proliferation expert. Without her intellectual input and organizational skills, the conference would not have been the success it was.

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