

**CSCAP Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass
Destruction in the Asia Pacific
Singapore, March 26-27, 2006
Chairman's Report**

The third meeting of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) in the Asia Pacific was held in Singapore, March 26-27, 2006. More than 60 participants and observers attended including representatives from 17 CSCAP member committees and members of the Singapore diplomatic corps. As our meeting was immediately prior to an ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) seminar on WMD proliferation, more than a dozen ARF officials also joined our conference, in their private capacities. In addition, we continued our efforts to integrate the CSCAP discussions with the Pacific Forum CSIS's Young Leaders program: 17 Young Leaders attended, providing insight into the views of the next generation. The report that follows reflects the opinions of the chair; while we have solicited comments on its contents from all participants, it is not a consensus document.

The primary objectives of the meeting were to further awareness of WMD proliferation challenges in the Asia-Pacific region while developing multilateral approaches to better understand the challenges and promote cooperative solutions. The WMD Study Group has as one of its primary goals the development of a Handbook and Action Plan to Prevent the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destructive in the Asia Pacific Region. As a first step in this process, participants focused in this meeting on developing a statement of objectives and basic nonproliferation principles, drawing from and expanding upon the July 2004 Jakarta "ASEAN Regional Forum Statement on Non-Proliferation." The Action Plan should be seen as an effort to proactively approach the challenge of countering or preventing the proliferation of WMD in support of the ARF's stated confidence building and preventive diplomacy objectives.

One major, recurring theme reinforced at the meeting centered on the importance of keeping the WMD nonproliferation effort in proper context. While the WMD debate focuses on nuclear proliferation due to the dramatic and severe consequences associated with nuclear weapons, there are important chemical, biological, and other radiological dimensions of the threat that should not be overlooked. In addition, nuclear non-proliferation should be seen in its broader context as one of the three pillars embodied in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT): nonproliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy. While the CSCAP effort focuses on the first, the Handbook will address all three pillars, as well as the multidimensional nature of the WMD threat.

Summary of Discussions

The meeting began with an assessment of the global nonproliferation regime. Lawrence Scheinman (USCSCAP) provided an overview of recent developments and a framework for thinking about the nonproliferation order. He disagreed with claims that the regime is

failing – noting its 35-year record in checking the spread of nuclear weapons – but acknowledged that it is under strain: the challenges posed by non-state actors, the ability of states to cheat on their NPT commitments, the ability of others to stay out of the regime, the diffusion of nuclear knowhow, and the loss of “discipline” imposed on some governments by the Cold War, have all exposed loopholes in the NPT.

But, Scheinman noted, the regime is dynamic: since its inception, the international community has continually assessed the workings of the NPT and endeavored to fix its shortcomings. The Zangger Committee, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), the development of the Additional Protocol, nuclear weapon free zones, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540, and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI, an issue taken up in detail below) are examples of this ability to “heal” itself. Each has and can continue to contribute to the strengthening of the nonproliferation regime. In particular, Scheinman, like virtually all participants at our meeting, argued that the Additional Protocol is an especially powerful tool that should be universalized to help plug the NPT holes that have become apparent.

Scheinman encouraged participants to think of the NPT as the normative foundation of the nonproliferation order, rather than as its entirety: there is much more to nonproliferation than the NPT. In this light, he suggested that more attention be given to intentions when dealing with nonproliferation issues. In other words, the focus belongs on eliminating the motive for acquiring weapons as well as on preventing a would-be proliferator from acting on that desire.

The success of attempts to “fix” the nonproliferation regime depends on three factors: cooperation among all key players, political will, and political leadership. It is worrying, said Scheinman, that all three were missing in the 2005 NPT Review Conference.

Arundhati Ghose (CSCAP India) then looked at the recent U.S.-India nuclear deal. Under the agreement, India will separate its civilian and weapons-dedicated nuclear facilities and work with the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) to ensure their separation. For its part, the U.S. promises to amend domestic laws that preclude bilateral nuclear cooperation and press the NSG to allow its members to trade with India.

Ghose argued the deal was a win-win-win for both countries and the global proliferation order. It helps India modernize its nuclear energy sector, which will become increasingly important as its economy continues its rapid (7-8 percent annual) growth. It allows the U.S. to forge a stronger relationship with the world’s largest democracy and a regional power with global aspirations by removing a formidable obstacle to improved bilateral relations. Finally, she argued that it strengthens the nonproliferation order by bringing a substantial portion of the world’s nonsafeguarded nuclear materials into the NPT regime. She quoted IAEA Director General Mohammed ElBaradei, who welcomed the agreement, saying it brings India closer to becoming a partner in the nonproliferation regime and is a step forward for the universalization of the safeguards regime

Bernard Sitt (CSCAP-EU) provided a European perspective on recent developments. He noted the rising frustration with Iran and its refusal to quell suspicions about its nuclear program. All diplomatic initiatives to date have failed and there is little faith that the UN Security Council will respond to the challenge. Sitt argued that the only way the world would be able to respond would be for the P5 nations to “take a coherent position.” He endorsed efforts to bring “six plus one” talks, which would bring Germany (a member of the European troika that has been leading negotiations with Iran) into the P5 discussions.

Sitt agreed with other speakers that there needs to be more creative use of diplomatic tools to “mend” holes in the global nonproliferation order. He, like virtually everyone else in the room, agreed that the NPT should be preserved despite its shortcomings: renegotiating or amending the treaty is problematic. Instead, efforts should focus on creating annexes to the treaty that limit the right of states parties to withdraw, that impose additional multilateral constraints when a party is in breach of its obligations, and that a states party lose all past advantages from NPT membership.

Our discussion, as in the past, focused on several basic questions. The first was how to reduce the demand for nuclear weapons. Several speakers noted that there are a variety of reasons why states acquire weapons, from insecurity to status concerns to “mere” bureaucratic momentum. Although each case should be treated as unique with efforts made to respond to its particulars, there seemed to be agreement that security concerns were paramount. This suggested that engaging with states and lessening those fears would help stem the urge to proliferate.

This segued into another familiar theme: whether the nuclear weapons states (NWS), and the United States in particular, were spurring proliferation by failing to live up to their Article 6 obligations to pursue nuclear disarmament. The legitimacy of the global proliferation order, it was argued, rested on the perception that it was “fair and balanced.” The focus on nonproliferation, rather than disarmament, sent the wrong message by ignoring that lapse by the NWS. The failure to make progress on the 13 Steps agreed in 2000 reinforced the feeling that the NPT “bargain” – nonproliferation for disarmament – was not being honored. There had to be universal delegitimization of nuclear weapons for nonproliferation to work.

There was considerable disagreement about the actions of NWS and the impact of their behavior. Several Americans challenged the view that the U.S. had done nothing. They noted that the U.S. nuclear arsenal has diminished substantially and that the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. strategy has also shrunk considerably. They admitted that the U.S. had done a poor job of publicizing those efforts. They also argued that disarmament would have little or no impact on proliferation problems. More to the point, the time frames are different: Proliferation is an immediate threat to the status quo, whereas disarmament is a process that is expected to unfold over a considerable period of time. That does not mean that one should be tackled to the exclusion of the other, but it does explain the differing degrees of urgency attached to the two problems.

In Session 2, the Study Group turned its attention to nuclear energy and nonproliferation. Nugroho Wisnumurti (CSCAP Indonesia) provided a Southeast Asian perspective on the issue. He noted that rising demand for energy, the result of economic dynamism, high dependency on oil, and rising oil prices have prompted many states in Southeast Asia to explore the nuclear energy option. Indonesia, Thailand, and Vietnam have research reactors in operation, and Myanmar has shown interest in nuclear technology for use in medical research and development. Indonesia and Vietnam are planning to build nuclear power plants, while Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines are considering the option.

While Wisnumurti noted that all such activities are consistent with the nuclear nonproliferation regime – all are for peaceful purposes – there are concerns. He highlighted Southeast Asian involvement in the A.Q Khan nuclear black market as one example. A second concern is the possibility that Myanmar may abuse its nuclear program. That government has commenced efforts to build a research reactor with Russian assistance and materials and training have been supplied. Reports of secret nuclear facilities add to worries. Myanmar government officials deny there is cause for concern.

Wisnumurti explained that Southeast Asia has a device to deal with proliferation concerns: the Bangkok Treaty, which establishes the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SEANWFZ). The treaty obligates all states parties not to acquire, develop, possess or have control over nuclear arsenals. The treaty establishes a Commission (which in turn has an Executive Committee) to oversee its implementation. Wisnumurti said the “treaty represents an important legal force and a firm political commitment to nonproliferation.” It contains basic undertakings that ensure the absence of nuclear weapons in the region. States parties have a clear obligation to conclude a full-scope safeguards agreement with the IAEA. (All 10 ASEAN countries have concluded safeguards agreements with the IAEA; Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam have concluded an Additional Protocol with the IAEA.) And the treaty has a mechanism – the Commission and the Executive Committee – to ensure compliance.

Wisnumurti concluded that it is hasty to conclude that ASEAN countries might divert their peaceful nuclear energy programs toward weapons development. Moreover, he underscored that there is no incentive for an ASEAN member to acquire such weapons. To ensure that the region does not become complacent about the risk of nuclear weapons proliferation, he suggested that all ASEAN countries fully implement their treaty obligation to report to the Executive Committee any significant event that occurs on their territory that could affect treaty implementation. Second, treaty signatories should step up information sharing and discussion of their nuclear activities and ways to ensure that the treaty is not violated. Third, states parties and NWS should step up negotiations so that they can accede to the treaty protocol. And finally, he endorsed more dialogue at the bilateral and multilateral levels both among regional countries and beyond (including at the ARF).

David Saltiel (USCSCAP) provided a look at fuel cycle issues. He echoed Wisnumurti’s starting point: the global demand for electricity is projected to grow by 75 percent over

the next two decades and more than half of that growth should come from developing economies. He underscored the proliferation risks attendant to the continued growth of nuclear energy, but noted that nuclear energy expansion and nonproliferation can complement each other if pursued through strengthened international partnerships. This is the core principle of the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership or “GNEP,” a U.S. initiative announced in February. In Saltiel’s opinion, the GNEP has three nonproliferation components: development of advanced safeguards; development of advanced fuel cycle facilities and processes that are intrinsically and extrinsically more proliferation resistant; and deployment of a fuel cycle services regime that offers guaranteed fuel supply and spent fuel take-back services to discourage the spread of enrichment and reprocessing facilities.

The IAEA estimates that more than 225,000 metric tons of spent fuel have been removed from reactors worldwide. Yet, the total spent fuel storage capacity for all commercial reactor sites is estimated to be 185,000 metric tons. This storage shortage will grow more acute as more states turn to nuclear energy. Equally important is securing these facilities. Thus, Saltiel argued that the development and deployment of centralized storage facilities for spent or irradiated nuclear fuel should be considered fundamental to the GNEP project.

Saltiel emphasized the importance of technical cooperation on issues related to the safe and secure management of spent nuclear fuel. Potential areas of collaboration include: fuel acceptance criteria and characterization; safety (environmental management; operating procedures); transportation; transparency and monitoring; security; and safeguards. Every state in Asia can contribute to efforts to solve these problems.

Saltiel suggested states pursue bilateral and multilateral research partnerships in areas such as development of a model transparency framework for a generic facility; data exchange mechanisms; development of common standards on management of nuclear waste and spent fuel; and the establishment of regional demonstration and testing facilities for concepts and technologies.

There was agreement that nuclear energy is an increasingly attractive option for governments. The spread of this energy option magnifies proliferation risks; as one Southeast Asian participant explained, the threat posed by nonstate actors means that all states, not merely those with nuclear energy programs, have to be concerned about the security of those facilities and materials. Moreover, as one participant noted, even solutions can create new problems: for example, the creation of regional waste and fuel storage facilities may reduce the number of such facilities (and hence, targets) throughout Asia, but transportation security then becomes a concern.

Throughout our meeting (as in previous ones), participants agreed that regional efforts to deal with local problems are most likely to succeed. It is easier to get support for initiatives that originate at home than those that are imported; local standards are perceived as more legitimate. Thus, there was considerable support for using the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapons Free Zone as a starting point for efforts to shore up the

global nonproliferation regime – for example, it was suggested that it be amended to include a voluntary ban on reprocessing and enrichment activity. In addition, states can work together on regional questions to both develop habits of cooperation and begin the preparations for tackling the big issues. Developing the infrastructure to handle a growing nuclear energy industry in Asia requires assessment of a wide range of technical challenges: states need to understand the conditions under which a regime can work before they can intelligently debate what they are going to do. The GNEP can serve as a baseline for that effort.

In our third session, we once again examined the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Hee-seog Kwon (CSCAP ROK) explained that over 70 countries now subscribe to the PSI and that it has held over 19 interdiction exercises since its inception; five more are scheduled for 2006. Even though some governments continue to harbor doubts about the legality of the PSI, he noted that the UN High Level Panel encouraged all UN members to join the initiative, as did Secretary General Kofi Annan in his report, “In Larger Freedom.” The decision by key flag states to permit access to its ships should also diminish concerns about the program’s legality. Still, the ROK, explained Kwon, despite supporting the PSI’s objective and philosophy, has opted for only limited cooperation over concerns about the impact membership would have on inter-Korean relations.

Ron Huisken (AusCSCAP) explored the history of the PSI and argued it is turning the corner. After a shaky start – the product of its provenance as a U.S.-led initiative at a time of widespread suspicion of U.S. foreign policy, a broad mandate, and a small core group of only 10 members – it has assuaged many concerns about its legality and is now seen as contributing to the norm against the proliferation of WMD.

The PSI is an activity, not an organization. While that description is intended to dispel concerns about its workings, it has also introduced some mystery as well. It has hard to tell how many governments support the initiative and who they are. A participant explained that a meeting planned for Warsaw in June will help make clear who are the most active backer of the PSI and how much international support it enjoys. He also explained – as did several others – that PSI is not intended as a magic bullet: it is a tool to deal with loopholes in the nonproliferation regime. It is designed to facilitate functional cooperation across a wide range of sectors – police, customs, intelligence, to name a few. While its focus is nonproliferation, it also lays a foundation for cooperation in a range of crises and emergencies. Several other Southeast Asian participants noted that their concerns about the PSI were diminishing over time although some questions remain. They suggested that more states might be signing up soon.

Nonetheless, several speakers expressed profound reservations about the initiative. While agreeing on the need to counter the proliferation of WMD, a presentation by CSCAP-DPRK complained that the PSI was really a U.S.-led program designed to blockade independent sovereign states, asserting that it violates the UN Charter and encourages small states to take measures that protect their independence. Participation in the PSI by members of the Six-Party Talks makes it still harder to solve the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula.

Another participant echoed many of those complaints in less fiery terms, explaining that the problem was PSI methods, not its aims. While the declaration of interdiction principles pledges that all acts will be consistent with international law – and indeed, there have been no such violations – concerns remain that “the possibility of a violation still exists.” Who will judge whether the materials targeted for interdicted can be used for WMD and what standards will they use? How will dual-use items be treated? Who will judge the accuracy of the intelligence that is used to support interdiction, and how? Who will pay for losses or damage caused by interdiction?

Several other participants tried to quell those concerns, noting that PSI is not aimed at any particular country, and that the initiative is designed to enforce existing national authorities. In other words, it will be used to enforce existing export control laws, which answers most of the questions raised about the program. Another participant reminded the group that PSI was created because the UN had failed to tackle nonproliferation issues. Participants have pledged to honor international law and have done so without fail. Any state that still has questions about the initiative was encouraged to send an observer to Darwin in April, where the next PSI interdiction exercise will be held. It is a no obligation offer that should answer whatever concerns remain.

We then turned to the Six-Party Talks. Ouyang Liping (CSCAP China) gave a Chinese perspective on the talks. She argued that the U.S. and the DPRK are the two key actors in the talks and the primary responsibility for seeing the negotiations to a conclusion rests on their shoulders. While the Sept. 19, 2005 Joint Declaration was an important development – all six parties agreed on the goal of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula on the basis of “action for action, commitment for commitment” – the talks have since stalemated. She outlined the primary disagreements between the two parties: the U.S. imposition of financial sanctions against DPRK companies, the timing of the provision of a light-water reactor to the DPRK, the sequencing of any deal, the existence of a highly enriched uranium (HEU) program, the scope of a verification agreement, and the terms of the normalization of bilateral relations. She contended that the U.S. was in the driver’s seat: it has more room for maneuver and should therefore be more flexible to help solve this dispute.

Ju Wang Hwan (CSCAP DPRK) agreed that the Sept. 19 Joint Declaration was a step forward, but charged that the U.S. hostility toward the DPRK has stalled the talks. In his eyes, the U.S. does not want peace on the Korean Peninsula or in Northeast Asia. Rather, it aims to subvert the government in Pyongyang. He pointed to the recently released *National Security Strategy* for a glimpse of U.S. intentions: it seeks to contain China and strengthen U.S. alliances; it aims to develop a rapidly mobile military and missile defense; and it endorses preemptive strikes against enemies. As a result, he charged the U.S. has no interest in resolving the nuclear crisis or making progress in the Six-Party Talks. Indeed, he claimed the financial sanctions imposed immediately after the Sept. 19 Joint Declaration were intended to undermine the progress made. He called on the U.S. to make the political decision to co-exist with the DPRK and to abandon its anti-DPRK

policies. The test of U.S. sincerity is its readiness to provide a light-water reactor. As a first step, Washington should immediately lift all financial sanctions against the DPRK.

Hong Kyudok (CSCAP ROK) also applauded the Sept. 19 statement, noting that his government saw it as validating ROK efforts to bridge the gap between the U.S. and the DPRK. It is, in South Korean eyes, proof that engagement “is the only viable option to move Pyongyang forward.” Significantly, South Koreans see the Sept. 19 Joint Declaration as opening the door to talks on a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. Those hopes were dashed by the imposition of financial sanctions by the U.S. on DPRK companies and Pyongyang’s subsequent decision to stay away from the talks. The ROK is still trying to encourage dialogue and find common ground between the two governments, but its influence in Washington and Pyongyang is limited and the room for compromise is shrinking.

While there is still support in the ROK for engagement, Hong noted that there is increasing unease in the South with turning a blind eye to the DPRK’s illicit activities and its human rights practices. Moreover, there is mounting frustration with the North’s reluctance to reciprocate Seoul’s confidence building measures. In this situation, Hong advised the South Korean government to link discussions of a peace regime to progress in the abandonment of nuclear arms. For its part, the U.S. should avoid being seen as attempting to block real progress on the Korean Peninsula. In this context, Seoul should not give the impression it is willing to move forward on the peace regime without the full support of the U.S. He counseled the DPRK to accept the presence of U.S. forces on the peninsula even after the signing of a peace treaty: that would be an important confidence building measure.

The discussion sought to clarify several key points in the presentations. How, an American asked, does China see its role in the talks? How is the North’s demand that the U.S. provide a light-water reactor as a starting point consistent with the Joint Declaration’s call for “action for action” or with NPT rules and obligations?

Several speakers felt the U.S. was demanding too much. Its call for putting nuclear weapons, human rights practices, missiles and conventional weapons on the agenda overloaded already strained negotiations. It also created opportunities for Pyongyang to divide the other five parties.

Several suggestions were provided on how to break the stalemate. One speaker said the easiest solution was to declare the talks in permanent session. Alternatively, the working groups could convene even if the higher-level plenary session is not held. Several called on the DPRK to make a statement of its aspirations to help define its goals. North Korean speakers asked for the U.S. to provide the hard evidence of its illegal activities and to provide equally hard evidence of a change in U.S. policy. An American countered that if the DPRK truly believed that the imposition of financial sanctions was designed to undermine the progress made in the last round of Six-Party Talks, there was an easy way to frustrate those machinations – to return to the table and resume negotiations.

The WMD Study Group was formed with the mandate to develop an Action Plan to counter the proliferation of WMD in the Asia Pacific region. This effort used, as one point of departure, the European Union Strategy to combat WMD proliferation. Previous meetings had discussed the EU plan and its applicability to the Asia Pacific. At this meeting, Brad Glosserman (USCSCAP) provided a draft Action Plan that was intended to stimulate discussion and suggest ways to proceed. (The draft was sent to all member committees and all Study Group participants were provided a copy in advance and at the meeting itself.) In session 5, we took up that challenge.

There was agreement that the region should take steps to shore up the global nonproliferation order. Most of the discussion focused on specific language that should be employed in the first two chapters: the statement of objectives and the basic principles. Since the draft is only a device to commence discussion and it is a work in progress, this report will spare the reader the details. A new Handbook Index of Core Components will be distributed in short order, influenced by the following observations:

First, participants agreed that the principles should reaffirm the commitment to disarmament and the elimination of WMD, not merely preventing their spread. Second, essential to “selling” any Action Plan is the perception that it is trade enabling. (In his presentation, Glosserman argued that a robust nonproliferation order would help invigorate trade and be seen as a confidence building measure.) Third, several participants called for an emphasis on WMD delivery systems. Fourth, there was general agreement that there should be more specific attention to the role of nonstate actors when dealing with proliferation concerns. There was also agreement that there should be a discussion in the handbook of the threats posed by the various forms of WMD.

As noted earlier, the July 2004 ARF meeting produced a statement on nonproliferation. A consensus emerged that CSCAP should use as much of the ARF language as could be borrowed, but that the declaration should not limit the Study Group’s ambitions. If CSCAP feels that the Action Plan should go beyond the parameters agreed at the ARF, then it should make that case. While any proposal should be realistic, it is track two’s job to push official discussions (and the ARF has identified CSCAP as one of the track-two organizations with which it seeks closer ties). Thus, there was general agreement on: the need for an expansive definition of the global nonproliferation regime (rather than its strictly legal elements); identifying issues that require additional analysis (such as ways of ensuring the reliable provision of nuclear fuel); and thinking more ambitiously about regional export control cooperation, given increasing economic integration within the region and the hope to create single markets (which would facilitate the mobility of goods and services – and WMD knowhow, materials, and technology).

Some participants argued that the Action Plan should include an agenda for cooperative research that will build a stronger understanding of the technical issues associated with countering the proliferation of WMD to support better policymaking as well as on topics that can help create the conditions under which the Action Plan’s principles can be realized. Such a research agenda might include topics such as the development of requirements for the creation of a reliable fuel cycle services supply regime. To develop

this requirements document, policymakers with expertise in energy security and economics should meet with nuclear fuel cycle experts to understand the technical possibilities and constraints for the reliable supply of nuclear energy and fuel cycle services. Here too the GNEP could serve as a starting point of or guide for analysis.

Our final session turned to other WMD threats. Junko Horibe (CSCAP Japan) began the discussion by noting that we met 11 years after the Aum Shinrikyo sarin attack on the Tokyo subways. That tragedy underscored the grim reality that the chemical and biological weapons (CBW) threshold is lower than that of nuclear weapons. More worrying, the spread of chemical and biological industries means that the technology and knowhow is more readily available. In addition, different perceptions of the CBW threat – and the failure to take it seriously – have created holes in the nonproliferation order.

The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is often held out as a model arms control treaty. But Horibe noted it has troubles. There has been slow implementation of national obligations, mostly, she argued, as a result of a failure to understand the nature of the dual-use problem; the convention is not yet universal; some states continue to produce offensive weapons; and transparency is lacking.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) has problems of its own. It has no organization, no inspection, verification, or surveillance mechanisms, and its enforcement regime is ambiguous. Horibe noted that the BWC was completed 20 years before the CWC but is compared unfavorably with it. Worse, she worries that bioterrorism is now a serious threat but it is beyond the capacity of the BWC to deal with.

Horibe suggested that CSCAP has several contributions to make in these areas. First, it can coordinate regional efforts to assist nations to implement CWC obligations. Second, it should work with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons to find out who among its members needs assistance and who can help, and help craft a regional strategy to put the two together. Third, it can draw on UNSCR 1540 filings to identify national shortcomings and help fix them. Finally, CSCAP can conduct outreach to identify constituencies whose input would help combat BWC proliferation risks.

Guy Wilson-Roberts (CSCAP New Zealand) pointed out that the end of the Cold War challenged assumptions about the nature of WMD threats. He echoed Horibe's concerns about the CWC and BWC and argued that attention should be devoted to delivery systems, missiles in particular. He suggested that regional security discussions are likely to again take up the impact of missile defense.

Adam Dolnik (CSCAP Singapore) took up the question of nonstate actors and WMD. He explained that traditionally terrorists were thought to want an audience, not victims, and thus they were not interested in WMD. The rise of "new terrorism" has changed that calculus. He pointed to the rise of religion as a motivating force for terrorist acts, the proliferation of advanced technologies, and the globalization of terrorist groups (and their ability to network) as factors that have altered the ways terrorists think and act.

Nonetheless, Dolnik argued the notion that WMD terrorism is inevitable is misconceived. To pull off WMD terrorism, a group has to have the motivation and the ability to acquire, mobilize, and deliver WMD. That is a rare combination. Terrorists that use WMD materials typically aim at a specific target – they are not aiming for mass casualties. Those motivated to resort to chemical, radiological, biological or nuclear (CRBN) means usually can't. As Dolnik noted, it is hard and expensive to develop a WMD capability. Most terrorist groups don't have the funds or the skills.

Thus, the terrorist WMD threat may not be as imminent as feared. Exaggerating the concern plays into terrorists' hands, since they seek to create panic. Still, states should not be complacent. He suggested that CSCAP maintain its current focus and activities and cautioned against becoming overly concerned about nonstate actors: that, he warned, could undermine efforts to win state compliance with WMD obligations.

Finally, Pham Ngoc Uyen (CSCAP Vietnam) noted that the Cold War may be over, but the mind set lingers, as does the deep distrust it breeds between states. He called on CSCAP to push confidence building measures that would bridge that mental divide. He agreed with other speakers that the WMD threat in all its forms was a genuine concern to Southeast Asian nations, but noted that many governments did not have the resources to carry out their international obligations. He called on CSCAP to focus on helping member states build national capacity through training, financial assistance, and technical support. Pham suggested that CSCAP develop education programs to raise social awareness of WMD risks. He pointed to the devastating effect Agent Orange had on his country and asked for assistance to mitigate its impact. He echoed many of the other suggestions at our meeting, calling for universal compliance with the CWC and BWC, working for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and promoting better coordination between tracks one and two to heighten international vigilance and better control of CRBN materials and technologies

In our discussion, participants highlighted several concerns. The first was the need for governments to muster the political will to act. The Japanese government knew that the Aum cult was dangerous – it had previously used sarin gas in a village in the countryside. But the government chose not to respond. The lesson, one participant noted, was plain: governments cannot ignore threats and assume they will go away. Another participant suggested that a key problem with the BWC was the fact that many scientists are unaware that their technologies could be used for weapons. Since there was consensus that modifying the BWC – giving it “teeth” – was out of the question, educating them to the potential dangers of their work seemed essential.

Next Steps

At this point, discussion segued into an assessment of what the Study Group should put on its agenda. First, and most obvious, are continuing efforts to create the Asia Pacific Action Plan and Handbook. Between now and the next CSCAP Steering Meeting, language will be drafted and the Statement of Objectives and Basic Principles and the broader handbook Index of Core Components will be reviewed by study group

participants. As part of the handbook/action plan building effort, a CSCAP Export Controls Expert Group (XCXG) meeting will be held in Beijing on May 11-12, 2006. All member committees were encouraged to send experts to the XCXG meeting. It was also suggested that the group examine the 13 Steps outlined during the 2000 NPT Review Conference to determine their continuing relevance and applicability. The prospect of reviving the Nuclear Energy Experts Group (NEEG) to focus more on energy security issues was also examined; here we anticipate the GNEP will be a cornerstone of our analysis. Finally, it was suggested that the Study Group look hard at UNSCR1540 filings and try to see how they can be used to shore up national and regional nonproliferation efforts, recognizing that 1540 provides a vehicle to explore a wide range of WMD concerns and could keep the Study Group in business for years to come.

Submitted by Ralph A. Cossa (USCSCAP) and Kwa Chong Guan (CSCAP Singapore) Co-Chairs, CSCAP Study Group on Countering the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the Asia Pacific, May 28, 2006.