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The ending of the Cold War brought about enormous geopolitical changes, not all of which, as it turned out, were good. But it did bring about one positive change of enormous importance: it reduced to nearly zero the danger of a nuclear war resulting from a miscalculation. There still exists, however, the danger of nuclear war occurring by accident. Both American and Russian missiles remain in a launch-on-warning mode. And the inherent danger of this status is aggravated by the fact that the Russian warning system has deteriorated since the ending of the Cold War.

But the greatest danger today is that a terror group will detonate a nuclear bomb in one of our cities. Graham Allison, in his book, "Nuclear Terrorism", states that the likelihood of a nuclear bomb being detonated in one of our cities this decade is fifty percent. He makes a compelling argument that Al Qaeda and other terror groups are trying to get nuclear weapons. He also argues that if they get one, they will use it, with devastating results.

Of course, a nuclear detonation in one of our cities would not be equivalent to a nuclear exchange during the Cold War, which could have led to the extinction of civilization. But it still would be the worst catastrophe of our time. Just one primitive nuclear bomb based on the design of the Hiroshima bomb could result in more than a hundred thousand deaths, and there could be more than one bomb. The direct economic losses from the detonation would be hundreds of billions of dollars, but the indirect economic impact would be even greater, as worldwide financial markets collapsed in a way that would make the market setback after 9-11 seem mild. And the social and political effects are incalculable, especially if the nuclear bomb were to be detonated in Washington, disabling a significant part of our government.

So, almost twenty years after the ending of the Cold War, we still have a dark nuclear cloud hanging over our heads. As the Cold War was coming to an end, the presidents of the United States and the Soviet Union confronted this danger to civilization and sought to end it. They met in 1986 at Reykjavik and engaged in serious discussions on how to end the danger by bringing about an elimination of nuclear weapons. In the end, the two presidents were not able to reach agreement on the major steps they were discussing, and the Reykjavik meeting is considered by many to have been a failure.

Last September, on the twentieth anniversary of the Reykjavik summit, George Shultz hosted a conference at Stanford to see what lessons we could learn from that remarkable meeting, where Presidents Reagan and Gorbachev seriously discussed eliminating not only nuclear weapons but also their delivery means. At our Stanford meeting, we concluded that the nuclear vision pursued by Reagan and Gorbachev at Reykjavik was valid and should be revived.

We put together the main ideas that came out of that meeting in an op-ed that was published by the Wall Street Journal. And this op-ed was signed by George Shultz, Sam Nunn, Henry Kissinger and myself, all of whom played a major role in sustaining our nuclear programs during the Cold War. It was followed in a few days by another op-ed from President Gorbachev who essentially endorsed the views we expressed.

Of course, we understood that it might be many decades before that nuclear vision could be realized. And that in the meantime, nuclear weapons continue to pose an existential threat to our nation and to civilization. Until nuclear weapons are eliminated, we should focus on steps to reduce their danger, or, to use the words of Sakharov, to reduce the risk of annihilating humanity. So we outlined in our op-ed a set of steps that could be taken now that would have the practical effect of greatly reducing that risk. I list in summary form some of the steps that should be considered.

- Increase warning time and thereby reduce the danger of an accidental use of a nuclear weapon
- Reduce substantially the size of nuclear forces in all states that possess them
- Eliminate short-range nuclear weapons designed to be forward-deployed
- Ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
- Improve security for all stocks of weapons, weapons-usable plutonium, and highly enriched uranium everywhere in the world
- Get control of the uranium enrichment process
- Halt production of fissile material for weapons globally

These steps, besides moving us toward the goal of a world free from nuclear weapons, also protect us from the dangers of nuclear weapons until that goal is achieved. On the other hand, I believe that the programs now underway in the United States are inadequate to protect us from those dangers.

The centerpiece of our government's strategy for dealing with a nuclear attack is the National Missile Defense system now being installed in Alaska. That system has been criticized for being technically deficient on the basis of its test firings. But that is almost beside the point. Even if it worked exactly according to its specifications, it is simply irrelevant to the threat of nuclear terrorism. Terrorists would not use a ballistic missile to deliver their bomb; they would use a truck or a freighter. The mode of operation could be like the delivery of the truck bomb in Oklahoma City, but with the truck carrying a nuclear bomb instead of a few tons of explosives. So it seems all too clear that we can not deal with the danger of nuclear

terrorism by missile defense. Similarly, deterrence is not likely to be effective against a terror organization like Al Qaeda.

But there is some good news in this otherwise grim picture. No terror group is able to build a nuclear bomb from scratch; only a nation state can manage a project of that complexity. For a terror group to get a nuclear bomb, they must buy or steal one from a nuclear power, or with more difficulty, put one together from the plutonium or highly enriched uranium they acquire from a nuclear power. So the key to success is to keep them from getting the bomb or the fissile material in the first place.

The Proliferation Security Initiative was established a few years ago as a cooperative international program to interdict nuclear weapons or material being illegally transferred. This is a useful program in many respects, but we should never believe that it is likely to be successful in preventing a nuclear power from smuggling a bomb to a terror group. A “so-called” tactical bomb could be put in a suitcase. The plutonium need to make a bomb as destructive as the Hiroshima bomb is about the size of a grapefruit. There is no interdiction system that exists or that is conceivable that would have a good probability of stopping a clever smuggler from transferring either of these.

Our government’s near-term strategy should be focused on programs designed to accomplish two objectives:

1. Reducing and protecting existing nuclear arsenals; and
2. Taking all feasible actions to keep new arsenals from being created.

Both of these objectives require a concerted effort on the part of our government, but neither can be fully successful without the cooperation of many other governments; most importantly, the cooperation of all other nuclear powers.

I will first describe the challenge of reducing and protecting existing nuclear arsenals. During my tenure as secretary of defense, I made that my top priority, using a program that had been inspired by two visionary senators, Sam Nunn and Dick Lugar. Our greatest success with the Nunn-Lugar program was in getting Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus to give up all of their nuclear weapons. And at the time we started this program, Ukraine was the third largest nuclear power in the world, with more nuclear weapons than China, England and France combined. At the same time, we took actions in cooperation with the Russian government to substantially improve the safeguards on nuclear weapons, material, and technology. The Bush administration has continued the Nunn-Lugar program, but has not made it a priority. It should be our top priority to strengthen the Nunn-Lugar program and extend it to include all nuclear powers and to deal with fissile materials associated with commercial power reactors.

The second challenge is to keep new nuclear arsenals from being created. During my tenure as secretary of defense, I must say that we failed to prevent India and Pakistan from building and deploying a nuclear arsenal (not from lack of trying), but did succeed in holding North Korea and Iran at bay. During the last six years both North

Korea and Iran have substantially advanced their nuclear weapon programs, even though the administration has stated that they considered such programs “unacceptable”.

I believe that the administration’s diplomacy has been hobbled by a policy of not talking to “evil” nations, which they have described as rewarding bad behavior. One can argue about the merit of that policy, but no one can argue about the results it has produced. During six years of the United States applying this theory, North Korea has built six to ten nuclear bombs, has tested one of them, and has tested a number of ballistic missiles.

But it appears that this policy is changing. The administration, in just the last few months, has authorized its ambassador to have direct talks with North Korea. This change of policy has led directly to a new agreement with North Korea. This agreement has a long way to go before it can be considered successful, but at least it is evidence that the administration has constructively changed its policy.

Beyond North Korea and Iran, there are several dozen countries that have the capability to build nuclear weapons in a year or two. These nations have voluntarily joined the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and renounced the building of nuclear weapons. But this non-proliferation regime is exceedingly fragile. It is threatened today by the emergence of India and Pakistan as nuclear powers, and would be entirely undermined if North Korea and Iran are free to build nuclear arsenals.

But it also could be undermined by the policies of the two major nuclear powers, Russia and the United States. Russia has declared that, because of the weakness of its conventional military forces and because of the American deployment of a National Missile Defense System, it must depend more on nuclear weapons. They have renounced their previously stated “no first-use policy; they have re-MIRVed their old ICBMs; they have undertaken the development of new ICBMS; and they have maintained a large stock of tactical nuclear weapons.

The Bush administration, for its part, has requested Congressional authority to build new nuclear weapons, most notably the so-called “Bunker buster”; has not ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (while still complying with it); and has requested the authority to build a “reliable replacement warhead”.

The actions of the United States and Russia have weakened the NPT, which was already undermined by the nuclear programs of India and Pakistan, and was being further undermined by the emerging programs of North Korea and Iran. Any attempt to prevent a hemorrhage of proliferation requires all of the nuclear powers to act in concert, and in particular requires Russia and the United States to show leadership in complying with the requirement of the NPT for the nuclear powers to move towards nuclear disarmament.

One specific question faced by this committee is whether to authorize the Reliable Replacement Warhead (RRW) program. There are two valid arguments for proceeding with the RRW program: that it will maintain the capability of our nuclear weapon designers, which will become important if we ever need to design more nuclear warheads; and that it allows the design of a warhead that cannot be detonated by a terror group even if they were able to get one. A countervailing argument is that if the United States proceeds to develop new nuclear warheads it will substantially undermine our ability to lead the international community in the fight against proliferation, which we are already in danger of losing.

My best subjective judgment is that the proliferation argument outweighs the other two. But I understand that we live in a very dangerous and uncertain world, and I firmly believe that we have to maintain an unequivocal deterrent capability for the foreseeable future. So my judgment would be different if I thought that our present nuclear force could not be maintained to provide that capability for many decades in the future.

On balance, I believe that we could defer action on the RRW program, and I have no doubt that this would put us in a stronger position to lead the international community in the continuing battle against nuclear proliferation, which threatens us all. And I believe that our best protection against nuclear terrorism is robust programs that keep nuclear weapons and fissile material out of the hands of terrorists.