Proliferation threats: real or imagined

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Richard has a 34 year history as a diplomat including as: Australian Ambassador to Mexico, the Central American Republics and Cuba; Australian Ambassador to the Republic of Korea; Australian Ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam; and various other diplomatic postings in Tokyo, Rangoon, Tehran and Manila.

Richard has a personal interest in nuclear safeguards and wrote a chapter on this topic in Spent Fuel Storage Regimes in 1979. He is writing a full length book which will look at nuclear safeguards.

Richard will provide an overview of the links between nuclear technologies and proliferations risks, and the challenges these pose.
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Thank you Jason and thank you Sue for giving me the opportunity of speaking at this conference.

One of the heady and wonderful things about no longer being a diplomat and being in a bureaucracy is that you can say what you want without upstaging your Minister. Now I’ve been through several ministers in 34 years. I must say the most recent one we have is one who is not very difficult to upstage.

I’m going to talk about proliferation and technology. I was interested in this morning’s minimum dose levels of millisevers because in my time I’ve crawled through nuclear reactors in Korea and Japan and Mexico and the research reactor in the southern part of Vietnam. I don’t glow in the dark yet, I’m 60 years old, I’ll wait and see how long it takes.

The United States, the United Kingdom, France, the Soviet Union and China, the five original nuclear weapons states all unabashedly developed nuclear weapons without any connection with civil usages. In 1954, the United States - from their Manhattan Project, and the USSR, decided that they could hook generators onto their reactors and make power. At Calder Hall in 1956, the British did the same thing. They were the first to put nuclear power on their grid.

But when you look around the region - and I’d like to start from North East Asia and swing right around into the Middle East and other parts - you can see that most countries who have pretensions towards developing nuclear weapons did in fact do so through so called civil nuclear technology. The biggest proliferator in this world is the United States. They developed the “Atoms for Peace” concept under President Eisenhower in the 50s and a lot of countries have taken advantage of that.

Taiwan

Taiwan acquired a 40 Megawatt heavy water research reactor from Canada in 1967, which was also involved in “Atoms for Peace”, then used for reprocessing and accumulating plutonium for about seventeen weapons. This program was not deflected from its course by International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors, but by a defecting colonel who in 1988 blew the whistle to The Guardian, to say that Taiwan had this plutonium and the United States persuaded Taiwan to send most of its plutonium back to its Lanner River site in South Carolina.

ROK/DPRK

I presented credentials to Chun Doo Hwan in the Republic of Korea and found that he and his predecessor Park Chung Hee and his successor Roh Tae Woo, had developed and were developing a clandestine nuclear weapons program. This in some senses could be understandable, because of the fact that there was still no peace agreement with North Korea, along with the 38th Parallel, the most heavily armed part of the world. This happened during my watch in Seoul, and the DPRK was discovered to have an active nuclear weapons program too at Yongbyong. So that was tit for tat.

Since I’ve been in Korea, the United States has brokered with Japan and South Korea the framework agreement of 1994 all thanks to former President Jimmy Carter, I think one of the best ex presidents the United States has ever had. In this agreement, 2 light water reactors, probably Westinghouse technology, and 500,000 tons of fuel oil a year...
were promised to North Korea. Now, because of US pressure by the Bush administration, Pyongyang says it won't abolish its weaponisation program. We will wait to see. Meanwhile the jury is out. I look to Japan as a country with enormous potential for weaponising very quickly given the right stimuli. Japan was the country I was first posted to as a Third Secretary. It now has 54 nuclear reactors. Mainly light water reactor technology, but they also have two fast breeder reactors and a heavy water reactor. They have reprocessing facilities at Tokai Mura as well as a good deal of plutonium. They have missile technology - the lot. It could be argued - and I think perhaps Frank Barnaby might be one who would speculate - that Japan, like other countries, possibly has all the components of nuclear weapons and is just waiting to put them into place.

**South East Asia**

Under the "Atoms for Peace" program, the United States gave Indonesia three research reactors. One each to the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia Vietnam. Indonesia, under President Suharto, had plans to develop twelve 600 Megawatt reactors by 2015. They were the first two to be constructed on the Mordia Peninsular in Central Java - which is known for earthquakes. All these programs have been put on hold. When the Philippines were constructing - under their President Ferdinand D Marcos and Mrs Marcos of the shoes - a reactor on the Betaan Peninsular, I used to go there by helicopter with the Westinghouse construction manager. I was concerned that Betaan was an earthquake zone, but the manager, Wally Wilgis, brushed that aside. He was a good rough Pittsburgh engineer. He knew what he was doing. I went along with him. Thank God that that reactor didn't come to fruition but who knows what the Filipinos might do in the future?

Thailand and Malaysia both have research reactors and have considered reactors to generate electric power. However they have put such plans on hold for the time being. Meanwhile the Vietnamese are actively considering acquiring a 1000 MW power reactor from Japanese companies.

**South Asia**

We all know what's happened in India and Pakistan, but again I have to make the point that nuclear physicists both from India and Pakistan were trained originally in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. India developed, with Canadian can-do technology, unsafeguarded nuclear technology, and by 1974 were able to explode their so-called peaceful nuclear explosion. By 1998 they were able to demonstrate through Pochran their testing and that they in fact had a weaponisation program with missiles to match. Pakistan also has nuclear physicists trained originally in the United States, augmented by technology from China, stolen technology from Germany and the Netherlands. Pakistan's level of technology is to the point where they were forced by the Indian incentive. As President Ali Buthau said in 1965, "if India builds the bomb we will eat grass and leaves, even go hungry, but we will get one of our own". And before he died in his death cell in 1979 he said, "Christian, Jewish and Hindu civilisations have their nuclear capability. The communist powers also possess it. Only the Islamic civilization is without it, but that position is about to change." And changed it has - to the point now where one could estimate, fairly safely, that India has about 125 weapons and Pakistan has 30 and they're beginning to develop their delivery systems as well. As Des Ball, a friend and colleague of mine would say, it's the most dangerous situation you could imagine where both countries do not have a first strike survivable capability, where therefore a decapitation strike could wipe out command and control and put whoever does initiate a nuclear strike in the box seat. And given the bitterness and contempt that Hindus have
for Muslims, and given the open sore of the situation along the Kashmir border, something could happen between those two countries.

**Israel**

Let me go to the Middle East. When the defector, the scientist Mordechai Vanunu blew the whistle about what was going on in Dimona in the Negev, it was already far too late. Israel had 100 to 200 fission bombs and about 35 of them are nuclear bombs, plus the Jericho II missiles to deliver them. Is it any wonder therefore that some of Israel's sworn enemies in the Middle East, Egypt, Iraq, Libya and Algeria particularly, should not wish to develop their own systems? Egypt tried very hard. They tried to buy weapons off the shelf from China and the USSR in the 60s, just as we did from the British at about the same time. They developed a nuclear research facility at Inshach, they acquired a Soviet research reactor, they tried to buy a French reactor without success. President Nixon, that famous statesman, in 1974, when he went to the Middle East said that he would offer both reactors to Egypt and Israel. The Israelis put pressure on him not to do that because they didn't want the Egyptians to acquire the fissile material. In 1981 Egypt ratified the NPT, but has tried to buy reactors from Westinghouse, Bectral, Framatome, Nuda in Italy and Craftverg Union in Germany. But United States diplomatic pressure has stopped that from taking place because of Israeli pressure.

**Iraq**

A former colleague of mine, Richard Butler wrote a book about Saddam Hussein - "Saddam Defiant". This book exaggerates certain aspects of what was going on in Iraq. The fact is, the Iraqis were bombed every time that they began to construct any kind of nuclear apparatus. They had a clandestine program with their sole nuclear research reactor, which was blown up by French saboteurs. In June 1980 the head of the Iraqi Atomic Energy Agency was assassinated in a Paris hotel. In June 1981 Israel bombed the research reactor at Osiraq and there are lots of IAEA inspections which concluded just before the Gulf War that Iraq was a solid citizen as far as the Non Proliferation Treaty was concerned. But after the Gulf War thirteen sites were discovered in Iraq for enrichment, weaponisation and processing.

**Libya**

Libya ratified the NPT in 1975, tried to buy Chinese weapons in the 70s, acquired a research reactor from the Soviet Union in 1975, technology from Pakistan in exchange for $200m which would be used for weaponisation programs, acquired uranium oxide from Nigeria and tried to buy reactors from France and Belgium. It's still not very clear what's going on in Libya anymore than it is in Algeria, where in 1991 they acquired a Chinese research reactor and put it beyond the Atlas Mountains about 125 miles from Algiers. Again like the others, Algeria has joined the NPT, in 1975, but there are allegations that they have built a hot cell, which can be used for the reprocessing of spent fuel.

**Iran**

Iran, which is not an Arab state, had a very ambitious program under the Shah for nuclear technology and nuclear electrification. He wanted to purchase 20 reactors and have them installed by the year 2000. He bought 10% of Eurodiv, a French uranium enrichment plant, he sent thousands of Iranian technicians out for training in Belgium, Canada, France, Germany and the United States. After he fell and the Ayatollah Khomeni came to power in 1979, the program continued, the Ayatollah setting up a nuclear centre
at Esfahan and building a new research reactor there. There are nuclear plant rehabilitation and reconstruction programs being undertaken right now by Russia and they're trying to acquire nuclear weapons technology.

**Latin America**

Bob Tyson mentioned earlier the good side of what's going on. The abolition and turning their backs on nuclear weaponisation by two countries in Latin America, Brazil and Argentina, for which I think the Mexicans have to be thanked as much as anything else. They forced through and negotiated the Treaty of Tlateloco, which virtually turned Latin America into a nuclear free zone as far as weapons are concerned and of course we know the situation in South Africa.

**Non-state actors**

But another group that worries me, are sub national groups. There are so many of them, and any one of them could acquire basic nuclear fission technology. And we all know about the bomb in the suitcase nightmare, against which a nuclear missile defence system is absolutely useless. I won't run through them all but some of the nasties are: Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Gehade, the PFLP, Bin Laden, the millionaire renegade who's living somewhere in Saudi Arabia. You've got Aum Shinrikyo the Japanese group, armed Islamic groups in Algeria and Columbia, in Mexico, the Shining Path in Peru. The list goes on. These are the people that the United States arrogates to itself the right to say are unacceptable rogues and from which they must arm themselves further.

**USA**

Let me conclude by acknowledging that all this creates bad dynamics for disarmament and for non proliferation. But in my view I have to say that the biggest proliferator and the biggest incentive for proliferation right now in the world is the United States. For example, Senator Jesse Helms, a man who suggests that all agreements to which the United States Congress accedes must become domestic American law, that can then be overthrown by the American Congress at any time. It’s because of Jesse Helms that the United States owes $2m in arrears to the United Nations; that the US has not yet formalised its membership of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Land Mines Convention, the Rome Statute for an International Criminal Court and the most recent victory of his, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

It seems to me that the current United States President is mesmerised by the power that that man has in Congress, to the point where in January 1999, President Clinton said that the policy of the US is to deploy as soon as technologically possible an effective National Missile Defence (NMD) system capable of defending the territory of the US against limited ballistic missile attacks. Sorry, that is the Act adopted by Congress and as we know Clinton in July 1999 signed the law and stated, "next year we will for the first time determine whether to deploy a limited nuclear missile defence or not". That's part of the theatre missile defence concept as well which I'll finish by making a couple of observations.

**Japan**

In my view the North/South Korean tension, despite the recent visit by President Kim Dae Jung to Pyongyang remains a very difficult and tough issue. But it's interesting that
the most popular piece of fiction in Seoul over the last couple of years has been a book, which suggests that North Korea and South Korea unify clandestinely to defend themselves against trade wars from Japan. Both countries cordially dislike the Japanese because of the occupation of that country from 1910 to 1945 in which Koreans were not allowed to speak their own language and had to adopt Japanese names. And as well as being distrustful of each other, the right wing in the South, the communist ideologues in the North, there is that complicated triangular arrangement, and in my view China is very likely to proliferate a lot more if America goes ahead with NMD. China, like Russia, cannot afford a shield, but they can afford to buy a lot more spears to overwhelm the shield. China will therefore proliferate. India will as a result do the same, but we always underrate Japan. We did so before the Second World War, we do so now. I don't wish to be alarmist. The Japanese are very good people and there are some very committed pacifists amongst them, but now Japan is the second largest contributor to the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and just about every other multilateral institution that sustains the world order. Money talks and Tokyo is finding its voice.

Japan supplies two thirds of the Asian GDP. Japan's economy is seven times larger than China's. They spent $80b to help the region recover from the economic crisis in 97, mainly to bale out Japanese companies who were doing business there. Increasingly Japan is an independent strategic player in the region. 60% want to change the Peace Constitution. 90% of Diet members are under 50. More than 50% of Japanese view China in a negative light, 30% think a war in Asia is likely in the near future, 80% want contingency legislation to change the Peace Constitution. The succession of Japanese Prime Minister, Kiishi, his brother, PM Sato and PM Nakasone are the most prominent who have said openly, we will have and we are entitled to have nuclear weapons. So it's on the agenda. The right wing in Japan would like them. They are probably able, with lightning rapidity, to develop a full panoply of nuclear weapons and delivery systems and what is urging them or what could urge them in my view is that if American pursues under W Bush or the democratic alternative, any NMD system that is likely to stimulate the Chinese to do more, Japan will follow.

I finish by saying there are violations against human rights, terrible injustices being committed in Ambon and Aceh, in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone and Fiji but Dr Strangelove is alive and well and living in Washington.

Thank you