

POLICY BRIEF

LOWY INSTITUTE
FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

OCTOBER 2009

RORY MEDCALF
Program Director
International Security
Tel: +61 2 8238 9130
rmedcalf@lowyinstitute.org

AMANDEEP GILL
Visiting Fellow
Center for International Security
and Cooperation
Stanford University
agill@stanford.edu

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS: AUSTRALIA-INDIA COOPERATION IN REDUCING NUCLEAR DANGERS

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

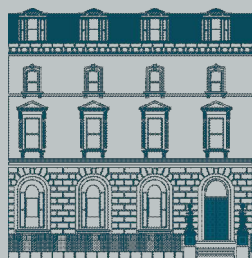
Progress towards reducing nuclear dangers is currently hampered by entrenched divisions between Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty members and non-members, and between Western and non-aligned states. Longstanding differences between Australia and India typify this problem.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

New partnerships and platforms for dialogue would expand the space for agreement and new thinking. An unconventional diplomatic partnership between India and Australia could be a test bed for the larger challenge of how to bridge old divides on nuclear and security issues.

Early steps in such a partnership would include a leaders' statement identifying common aims in reducing nuclear dangers. Non-proliferation export controls could be a primary area of cooperation. Canberra should promote Indian involvement in the so-called Australia Group on chemical and biological weapons export controls, including to raise comfort levels between New Delhi and other non-proliferation arrangements.

A new bilateral nuclear dialogue could consider the prevention of illicit nuclear transfers at sea, the negotiation of a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty, the security of nuclear energy growth in Southeast Asia, the reduced role of nuclear arms in defence postures, and recommendations from the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament sponsored by Australia and Japan.



LOWY INSTITUTE FOR
INTERNATIONAL POLICY
31 Bligh Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Tel: +61 2 8238 9000
Fax: +61 2 8238 9005
www.lowyinstitute.org

The Lowy Institute for International Policy is an independent policy think. Its mandate ranges across all the dimensions of international policy debate in Australia – economic, political and strategic – and it is not limited to a particular geographic region. Its two core tasks are to:

- produce distinctive research and fresh policy options for Australia’s international policy and to contribute to the wider international debate.
- promote discussion of Australia’s role in the world by providing an accessible and high-quality forum for discussion of Australian international relations through debates, seminars, lectures, dialogues and conferences.

This publication is supported by the Lowy Institute’s partnership with the Nuclear Security Project (NSP) of the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI). For more information see the NSP website at www.nuclearsecurityproject.org. The views expressed in this paper are entirely the authors’ own and not those of the Lowy Institute for International Policy or of the Nuclear Security Project.

The Nuclear Security Project was launched by the Nuclear Threat Initiative and Stanford University’s Hoover Institution to galvanise global action to reduce urgent nuclear dangers and to build support for reducing reliance on nuclear weapons, preventing their proliferation and ultimately ending them as a threat to the world. The Project builds on the January 4, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* op-ed by former Secretaries of State George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, former Defense Secretary Bill Perry and former Senator Sam Nunn. The op-ed links a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons with urgent steps designed to reduce nuclear dangers. The Project involves all four authors and NTI serves as the General Secretariat of the Project.

Lowy Institute Policy Briefs are designed to address a particular, current policy issue and to suggest solutions. They are deliberately prescriptive, specifically addressing two questions: What is the problem? What should be done?

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

Introduction

To reduce the grave dangers posed by the continued existence and spread of nuclear weapons, and the risk that they will one day again be used, unconventional diplomacy is needed. Part of the problem is the way in which global agreements or pragmatic interim solutions are often obstructed by longstanding divisions among nations: nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states; Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) members and non-members; Western states and the non-aligned. New partnerships and platforms for dialogue could cut across these stale categories, at least on some issues, and expand the space for agreement and new thinking. Australia and India could take the lead in crafting one such new partnership.

At first glance Australia and India are unlikely partners in such an endeavour. The former is a non-nuclear weapon state party to the NPT and a member of the US-led military alliance system underwritten by a massive nuclear arsenal. It is also one of the world's chief uranium exporters. The latter, with large uranium import needs, developed a nuclear deterrent outside the NPT and has always vaunted its non-aligned approach to world politics. There has been some bitter history, most notably Australia's harsh response to Indian nuclear testing in 1998. On some specific steps, such as the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the two continue to hold different positions.

Yet on closer scrutiny, and despite their differences, these Indian Ocean democracies have enough commonalities to warrant efforts to build a bilateral partnership in addressing

the nuclear threat. Both have similar aspirations regarding disarmament and non-proliferation, reflected in a history of diplomatic initiatives, including campaigns launched by their Prime Ministers on, as it happens, the same day.¹ These positions have been underpinned in both democracies by strong domestic political currents in favour of global nuclear disarmament. Second, both are sizeable powers with deep interests and serious influence in the wider Asian region. Their strategists are acutely aware of the geopolitical flux in the region that makes untangling nuclear weapons from larger issues of politics and security such a seemingly intractable problem in Asia. Moreover, as active players in regional security and diplomatic forums – notably the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit – Australia and India are alive to the challenge of building dialogue and trust on security issues in Asia, host today to most of the world's nuclear challenges and opportunities.

Of particular importance, the geostrategic interests of the two countries are essentially congruent. Neither sees the other as a potential security problem, and indeed they openly recognise each other as factors for stability in their shared region.² There are growing constituencies in both countries' security communities for practical cooperation in the face of many shared challenges. Australia strongly supports India's inclusion in Asia-Pacific institutions, notably APEC and a proposed new Asia Pacific Community, and advocates a permanent seat for India on the UN Security Council. On nuclear proliferation specifically, successive Australian governments have for at least several years now accepted that India is part of the solution, not part of the

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

problem; and both nations hold concerns, if with some variation, about Pakistan, North Korea and Iran.

What value could it add?

If we assume that at least a limited bilateral partnership on reducing nuclear danger can be built between Australia and India, what value could it add? Except in the unique US-USSR/Russia context, bilateral breakthroughs have not typically heralded global progress on disarmament and non-proliferation. Negotiations on new treaties in the 65-member Conference on Disarmament (CD) are complex multilateral exercises, as are discussions and votes in UN forums or deliberations within the NPT. Bilateral coordination might influence the political atmosphere in such settings but is unlikely, on its own, to shift core positions.

Yet, partly because of its sheer unexpectedness, a diplomatic partnership between Australia and India on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation could be a building-block in establishing the new networks of trust and cooperation essential to addressing tomorrow's nuclear dangers. It could be a test bed for the larger challenge of how to build dialogue across old divides – between non-nuclear weapon states and nuclear weapon states, and between NPT members and non-members, chiefly India. This partnership could be of value both globally and in a regional context. It could, for example, help strengthen the work of bodies such as the ARF and EAS in crafting region-wide consensus on measures to combat nuclear dangers, such as best practice in export controls or the promotion of dialogue on defence postures and doctrines.

In a purely bilateral sense, meanwhile, such cooperation would also be of intrinsic worth. Australia-India relations hold great promise: rapidly growing trade, major economic complementarities, shared democratic values, common security concerns such as terrorism, and potentially convergent attitudes on how to address uncertainties in their shared wider region, the most profound of which is China's rise. Yet the relationship is hesitating at the brink of a comprehensive, strategic partnership: neither country has quite made it into the front rank of the other's bilateral priorities. New diplomatic initiatives from both sides are needed if the opportunity to realise this partnership is not to be lost. Mutual goodwill exists at the highest political levels, but is held back by undercurrents of diplomatic disappointment.³ These are most notably over the current Australian government's decision not to supply uranium to India for electricity generation – despite the 2008 decision by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, of which Australia is a member, to allow civil nuclear trade with New Delhi. Another area of awkwardness is the way in which separate experiments in quadrilateral disaster-relief talks and naval exercises among Australia, India, Japan and the United States petered out after a brief start in 2007. Mutual misunderstanding lingers over why these ventures proved abortive, reinforcing caution in both New Delhi and Canberra about innovative efforts at dialogue or cooperation.

Australia's priorities

Before ratifying the NPT in 1973 and becoming a leading proponent of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, Australia had occasionally considered acquiring its own

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

nuclear weapons. This fundamental change of policy, and continuing activism, is because of both strong domestic opinion and the fact that successive Australian governments have seen a core national security interest at stake.

The Labor government of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, elected in November 2007, is taking its cue from the ‘activist middle-power’ style of earlier Labor governments. The Australian way in nuclear diplomacy has three chief strands: the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation and progress towards global nuclear disarmament; concern to preserve a stable strategic environment, including the effectiveness of deterrence; and the application of world-class safeguards to an expanding uranium mining and export industry.⁴ A frequent challenge for Canberra is managing the tensions, real or perceived, among these aspects of its overall nuclear policy. This can be especially difficult under a Labor government, given the rigidly anti-nuclear views (with regard to energy as well as weapons) in the Labor party, especially its Left wing.

Canberra is well known as a champion of the NPT and the IAEA, and conducts regular outreach to encourage more countries to adopt the IAEA Additional Protocol, allowing enhanced access to and inspections of nuclear facilities. But Australia is not averse to less formal arrangements when they have practical non-proliferation impacts. It is a member of the NSG. It applies rigorous non-proliferation export controls, and promotes them to others, including by assisting some developing nations to build their own export control laws and practices. Australia is one of the founding countries of the Proliferation Security Initiative, and has urged others in the region to join this

95-nation arrangement for the interdiction of illicit shipments of nuclear and other WMD-related cargoes. Through the Australian Safeguards and Non-proliferation Office (ASNO), Canberra has assigned scientific resources to contribute to UK and Norwegian research on how nuclear disarmament can be verified.

Australia keenly promotes the addition of what it sees as the missing pieces of a global non-proliferation and disarmament treaty architecture. It has a reputation for avowed opposition to nuclear-weapons testing, encouraging more countries to ratify the CTBT in order to bring about its entry-into-force and eventual universality, as well as hosting many of the global monitoring facilities for the treaty.⁵ Australia also strongly supports the negotiation of a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

Seemingly at odds with its disarmament rhetoric, Australia continues to rely upon its alliance with the United States as a vital part of its defence policy. The alliance has long been understood to include extended nuclear deterrence, even though, at least since the end of the Cold War, Australia has faced no prospective threat to its territory from a nuclear-armed adversary. In its 2009 Defence White Paper, the Rudd Government declared that: ‘for so long as nuclear weapons exist, we are able to rely on the nuclear forces of the United States to deter nuclear attack on Australia’.⁶ It remains unclear whether the extended deterrent is intended to apply to nuclear threats only. The recent initiative by the United States under President Obama to pursue a nuclear weapon-free world – with the possibility that Washington will seek to reduce

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

reliance on nuclear weapons, alongside deep cuts in its arsenal – raises important questions for Australia and other allies under the US nuclear umbrella.

At present the Rudd Government's main enterprise in nuclear diplomacy is the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND). This is a joint undertaking with Japan – although the initiative was Rudd's – and is co-chaired by former Australian and Japanese foreign ministers Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi.⁷ The ICNND is essentially an independent global panel of eminent persons and experts, supported by a well-resourced and worldwide network of scholars and officials. One of its commissioners is the former Indian National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra, and it includes an Indian think tank among its research centres.⁸ The stated ambitions for the ICNND are substantial, including one and possibly two major reports aimed at recommending ways to protect and strengthen the NPT regime at the treaty's 2010 review conference, as well as defining a process to nuclear disarmament that factors in non-NPT states and their security concerns. The commission also is seeking to expand the role of the civil nuclear industry in non-proliferation. It is due to report initially by the start of 2010 and to conclude its work by the end of that year.

It remains to be seen whether or how the Rudd government will respond to its own commission's recommendations by making tangible policy changes. Although the ICNND's action plan will presumably focus on steps to be taken by nuclear-armed states, it might well also call for US allies to support and push the

boundaries of the Obama Administration's campaign, including in reducing reliance on nuclear weapons. For instance, the commission might conceivably endorse something like the Indian agenda of the 'delegitimisation' of nuclear weapons, entailing doctrines of No First Use, Negative Security Assurances and the creation of treaties to make these policies legally binding. Such a position would be a potentially difficult departure from longstanding Australian (and Japanese) policy.

On nuclear issues, India poses some tricky questions for Australia. In September 2007 the conservative Howard government agreed to consider uranium sales to India, conditional on establishment of appropriate, India-specific IAEA safeguards, acceptance of the US-India nuclear deal by the IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers Group, and conclusion of a bilateral safeguards agreement between Australia and India.⁹ This about-face in longstanding Australian policy was short-lived: it ended with the election of the Rudd Labor government in November 2007. In line with its Labor Party platform, the Rudd government immediately ruled out uranium sales to India, on the grounds of that country's non-membership of the NPT. Yet Australia went on to support the US-India deal in the NSG. Rudd's Australia has also lauded India's non-proliferation credentials, despite that country's non-membership of the NPT, and sees some positive non-proliferation outcomes from the US-India deal, such as the expansion of the number of Indian reactors under safeguards. Speculation lingers that Canberra will eventually reconsider the question of uranium sales to India.

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

India's priorities

India's current priorities can be gauged by examining recent high-level official statements in the background of the significant evolution of India's positions on disarmament and non-proliferation in the last decade.¹⁰ At the last session of the UN General Assembly's First Committee in October 2008, the Indian representative sought to 'stimulate debate and promote consensus on the way forward' on nuclear disarmament by referring to seven specific points including reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons and negotiation of a No First Use agreement among nuclear weapon states. These steps were reflected in two of India's resolutions tabled at the General Assembly on prohibition of use of nuclear weapons and on reducing nuclear danger; a third reflected another significant priority – measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction.

Within these two broad political aims – nuclear disarmament through a process of delegitimisation of nuclear weapons and the reduction of immediate nuclear danger including by lowering the possibility of terrorist access to nuclear devices – the statement reiterated India's support for negotiations on a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) as well as on international arrangements to assure non-nuclear weapon states against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In light of India's own burgeoning use of outer space and the strategic dimensions of the issue, the statement also called for efforts to strengthen international law on space security. Without referring directly to the CTBT, the statement

noted India's continued moratorium on nuclear explosive tests.

A March 23 2009 speech by the Indian Prime Minister's Special Envoy Shyam Saran is also noteworthy as it addresses specific issues of the disarmament and non-proliferation agenda likely to be pursued by the Obama Administration. It does so from 'a sense of assurance and confidence' engendered by the success of the internationally controversial US-India civil nuclear initiative. Like the October 2008 statement, it places the highest priority on nuclear disarmament. Shyam Saran supports Obama's call for a high-level dialogue among the declared nuclear weapon states while suggesting that the best venue to pursue nuclear disarmament is the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Again, like the October 2008 statement, the Saran speech next emphasises an FMCT. In this context, the speech advocates a range of bilateral consultations on the likely mandate and scope of the FMCT negotiations.

In the context of nuclear terrorism, while acknowledging concerns in India about the consonance of the US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) with international maritime law, Saran supports efforts to expand PSI's coverage to include eradication of proliferation networks such as the A Q Khan network. He welcomes the growing acknowledgment of the integral link between non-proliferation and visible and concrete progress on disarmament. Noting India's support for an FMCT as a non-proliferation measure, he expresses India's readiness to work on practical steps to discourage proliferation. This includes regional or multilateral fuel banks on Indian or third-country soil to supply nuclear fuel to other

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

states under appropriate IAEA safeguards. The fuel bank idea is endorsed from the perspective of a putative supplier nation with the caveat that there ought not to be a discriminatory legal regime, which would allow only some states to possess reprocessing or enrichment facilities, but not others.

Saran also notes the link between the peaceful uses of outer space and nuclear stability and international security. He calls for multilateral efforts to prevent military conflict in space and to negotiate an agreement to prohibit the testing of anti-satellite weapons. Finally, he notes both India's voluntary moratorium on nuclear explosive testing and the reasons for India's opposition to the CTBT. He suggests that as the world moves toward nuclear disarmament, the divergence between India and its partners on the CTBT would recede to the background.

In summary, India's current priorities on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation appear to be:

- High-level and purposeful dialogue on nuclear disarmament involving all declared nuclear weapon states, preferably in a UN setting;
- Measures to address nuclear danger in the interim through reduction of the salience of nuclear weapons and through agreements among nuclear weapon possessors on prohibitions on nuclear use;
- Negotiation of a universal, non-discriminatory and verifiable FMCT as a contributor to non-proliferation in all its aspects;
- Reduction of the threat of nuclear terrorism through cooperative efforts to discourage

trafficking of nuclear materials and to enhance nuclear security;

- Engagement on measures to discourage the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technologies to those who do not currently possess them, albeit in a multilateral (IAEA), cooperative and legally non-discriminatory fashion.

The above list should also include international agreements to ban anti-satellite weapons as well as the deployment of weapons in outer space, even though strictly speaking these are non-nuclear issues.

The CTBT, on the other hand, does not appear to be an issue of priority for the Indian government. There has been no official indication, for instance, that India would fairly much automatically move towards joining the CTBT if the United States and China were to ratify. Indians do not see the treaty, as it was finalised in 1996, as part of a wider movement on disarmament, although this could change if, as promised by Barack Obama, the United States were to take the lead in de-emphasising nuclear weapons. Because of the history of the treaty's negotiations, significant sections of opinion in India also see the CTBT as targeting their country, just as the NPT regime supposedly does.

An important underlying aspect of the above diplomatic posture is India's sense of its acceptance as an equal and responsible partner in international civil nuclear commerce, which gives India the confidence to re-engage proactively on the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. 'An equal partner and not a target' is a phrase that comes up frequently in Indian statements. Conversely,

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

any move that sharpens the divide between NPT members and non-members, or implies that India's disarmament and non-proliferation credentials are still judged on the NPT touchstone, is bound to affect Indian engagement negatively. In particular, after the September 2008 NSG decision to support the US-India nuclear deal, Indians are likely to see denial of nuclear fuel or technology to India because of its non-participation in the NPT as an act of bad faith.

Scope for dialogue and cooperation

The foregoing appraisals of national priorities in non-proliferation and disarmament suggest some priority areas for the beginning of a partnership, and other areas where differences remain so stark that little congruence is likely to be accomplished in the near term.

A starting-point in defining and expanding common ground on nuclear issues might be public acknowledgement, at the highest political level, of shared aspirations, scope for working together, and a willingness to pursue dialogue and cooperation despite differences. Such a statement could emerge from a forthcoming prime ministerial meeting or visit, of which there is a strong prospect before the end of 2009.

The statement could include mutual recognition of each country's potential and aspirations in contributing to non-proliferation and disarmament as well as shared support for elements in the future report of the ICNND that reflect the two countries' aspirations on disarmament and non-proliferation. It would also be useful to ensure complete clarity

bilaterally about India's needs as an energy consumer, including in relation to nuclear energy, as well as about the intent of Australian uranium export policy.

A dialogue could then begin on how Canberra and New Delhi could work together to reduce nuclear dangers. This could take the form of a high-level working group on non-proliferation and disarmament led by the Foreign Ministries but including officials from specialist agencies such as Australia's safeguards office, ASNO, and its Indian counterpart. Issues for this dialogue could include:

- Identifying how India and Australia might most effectively contribute to the campaign for a nuclear-weapon-free world, including through examining which ICNND recommendations both countries could support;
- Exploring how all nuclear-armed states, including India, can participate in a global nuclear disarmament process and the role non-nuclear weapon states can play in such a process;
- Sharing assessments of how steps towards nuclear disarmament might affect strategic stability, and what supporting measures, say in the area of space security, are necessary to minimise destabilising consequences;
- Establishing an understanding of the conditions under which both Australia and India can actively support the delegitimisation agenda of No First Use, Negative Security Assurances, de-alerting, and treaties to bind such undertakings;
- Establishing an understanding of the conditions under which a global ban on nuclear testing and an FMCT can be achieved, and how these might be expedited;

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

- Sharing assessments of proliferation trends and cases, including in relation to North Korea, Iran and risks of Pakistani nuclear weapons or materials reaching the hands of terrorists;
- Exploring ways to promote non-proliferation, export controls, effective security measures for nuclear materials and facilities, and restrained nuclear weapons postures in the shared Asia-Pacific security environment, including through regional forums.

Much of the initial value of such a dialogue would lie in building familiarity and a degree of trust between two wary national policy establishments. But the mechanism could also serve as a springboard for unconventional ideas about addressing regional and global proliferation challenges. For example, although there is already a surfeit of UN General Assembly resolutions on nuclear disarmament, their agendas and constituencies often fail to cut across traditional voting blocs such as the non-aligned and Western groups. A co-sponsored Indo-Australian resolution in the UN, or a joint initiative regionally, could attract new and unlikely coalitions of support.

One field where Australia and India have an intriguing opportunity is in promoting a common agenda to reduce nuclear dangers in the Asian region. Both have a strong interest, for example, in the highest possible standards and awareness of non-proliferation in Southeast Asia, a region with no nuclear industry at present but with reasonably ambitious plans to develop nuclear energy in the years and decades ahead. Coordinated outreach to these countries to promote such standards and awareness is one possibility.

There could be particular value in a joint focus on Indonesia, a country with plans for nuclear energy, and good relations with both India and Australia. Australia's safeguards and export control specialists have much expertise to offer, and India could share its experience as it develops an ambitious civil nuclear sector now being separated from its military complex and under IAEA safeguards.

As the Australian and Indian navies continue to deepen their dialogue and operational interactions, it would be logical for them to develop bilateral understandings in information exchange and coordination at sea, which potentially might come into play in some future scenario involving illicit WMD-related shipments. This need not strictly occur under the umbrella of the PSI.¹¹ But in time such cooperation could build India's comfort levels with PSI and its informal willingness to cooperate with PSI participants and objectives, with the possibility of India's eventually revisiting its stance on participation, if in particular its concerns on NPT-derived discriminatory language can be addressed.

Finally, Australia could be a uniquely valuable partner for India if it wishes to coordinate its non-proliferation export controls with other countries for maximum impact in curbing the spread of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons as well as missile technology. Presently India does not belong to any of the major export control regimes in this field, the Nuclear Suppliers Group on nuclear technology, the Missile Technology Control Regime, or the Australia Group (AG) on chemical and biological weapons. Traditionally, some in India, and in some other non-aligned countries, suspected these

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

arrangements as vehicles to obstruct civilian technology transfer to the developing world. As India has taken its place as a global and major power, however, there appears to have been an increased recognition in New Delhi that the global non-proliferation export control order can be consistent with Indian interests, as evinced by the NSG decision on the US-India deal.

The notion of India's one day being admitted to the NSG is a radical one. The NSG was, after all, formed in response to India's 1974 nuclear explosive test. Until last year, part of its work was essentially to prevent nuclear commerce with India, and it remains impossible to envisage India's becoming party to the NPT as a condition of joining the group. However, the NSG's September 2008 decision has opened a new chapter, and it may eventually become possible to envisage some form of membership or associate status as the relationship between the NSG and India evolves.

The Australia Group, on the other hand – permanently chaired by Australia – would seem an easier candidate for India's debut as a partner in an export control arrangement.¹² India already has export control laws based on AG guidelines, large chemical and bioscience industries, and growing experience in sharing sensitive security information with a range of countries. Formal Indian participation in the AG would be a major step forward in its practical coordination of export controls with multiple security partners, and further evidence of its major stake in and contribution to the global WMD non-proliferation order. Australia is well placed to begin soundings within the AG about possible Indian admission, and building the consensus that would be required.

The difficulties are considerable. These include India's consistent support for an export control regime based specifically on the Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, in line with its concerns over the impact of ad hoc export control regimes on developing countries. Another challenge is that some in the AG may be reluctant to admit New Delhi because of outdated thinking about India as a non-proliferation target, or because the admission of any major new participant might reawaken interest among less attractive applicants. Nonetheless, there would be wider benefits from Australia Group admission, with India's being inside the tent on CBW non-proliferation, and building trust and collaboration with other AG countries, many of them also NSG members, and key non-proliferation players more broadly. More specifically, this experience could transform relations between the Australian and Indian arms control communities, building a bedrock of trust for exploring practical cooperation in other areas of non-proliferation and disarmament, including nuclear.

Regardless of the prospects for India's admission to the AG or other export control regimes, it would make good sense for Australia and India to share experiences and insights regarding their own national export controls, including in enforcement. After all, as India grows into one of the world's largest economies, it will become a major international supplier of goods with dual uses – that is, potential military as well as civilian applications. Australia would be helping itself, as well as India and the international community, to do more to share its practices in this field.

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

A wider footprint

There is very little chance that the NPT can be amended or that India could join it in some manner. A universal Nuclear Weapons Convention which would permanently end the divide among NPT and non-NPT states is still not on the horizon. However, India's unique nuclear history should allow for the possibility of pragmatic solutions to shared nuclear dangers. One such bridge – the civil nuclear understanding between India and the NSG – is under construction. Other bridges across the divide could be crafted from the issues of the prevention of nuclear terrorism and the security of nuclear facilities. President Obama's call for a Global Summit on Nuclear Security offers an opportunity. Yet another, more ambitious, enterprise would be dialogue on nuclear doctrines, deployments, delegitimation and disarmament.

As dialogue and cooperation develop on some of these possible new approaches, it may become easier to overcome differences on more traditional arms control agenda items like an FMCT. One challenge will be to persuade all key countries to be willing to think anew about ways to reduce nuclear dangers and about the unconventional partnerships they may need to cultivate to get there. Australia and India have great potential as bridge-builders in a changing global arms control regime, even more so if they can begin bridging their own differences.

POLICY BRIEF

UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERS

NOTES

¹ Kevin Rudd, Building a better world together, speech at Kyoto University, 9 June 2008: <http://www.pm.gov.au/node/5755>; Manmohan Singh, speech at the international conference on a world free of nuclear weapons, New Delhi, 9 June 2008: http://www.pugwashindia.org/article_detail.asp?aid=137.

² Joint press release on India-Australia strategic dialogue, 30 August 2001: http://www.india.highcommission.gov.au/ndli/PA_12_01.html.

³ Another recent challenge in Australia-India relations has been concern in India over the safety of Indian students in Australia. This has harmed Australia's image in Indian society, but has not damaged government-to-government relations – indeed, will likely accelerate efforts to strengthen them.

⁴ Australia possesses about one third of the world's known low-cost global reserves and is among the top three uranium suppliers, with Canada and Kazakhstan.

⁵ Joint ministerial statement on the CTBT, 24 September 2008: http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s080924_CTBT.html.

⁶ Australian Government, *Defending Australia in the Asia-Pacific century: Force 2030*. Canberra, 2009 p 50.

⁷ Joint statement by Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi, Co-Chairs, 25 September 2008, ICNND website: http://www.icnnd.org/releases/080925_js_evans_kawaguchi.html.

⁸ The Delhi Policy Group. The Lowy Institute is the Australian Research centre for the ICNND.

⁹ All these conditions have since been fulfilled with the exception of the bilateral safeguards agreement.

¹⁰ Hamid Ali Rao, Indian Ambassador for Disarmament, Statement to the UN General Assembly's First Committee, 10 October 2008. Shyam Saran, Indian Prime Minister's Special Envoy, remarks at the Brookings Institution, 23 March 2009: <http://mea.gov.in/speech/2009/03/23ss02.htm>. India's Working Paper of 2006 on Nuclear Disarmament (UNGA Document A/C.1/61/5). Manmohan Singh, speech at the international conference on a world free of nuclear weapons, New Delhi, 9 June 2008: http://www.pugwashindia.org/article_detail.asp?aid=137. For an excellent academic view see Rajesh Rajagopalan, Nuclear non-proliferation: an Indian perspective, *FES Briefing Paper*, October 2008, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Berlin.

¹¹ These objections arise from concerns about perceived inconsistencies with international law and because of the NPT-related language in the amended Suppression of Unlawful Activities at Sea Convention.

¹² The Australia Group was proposed by Australia in response to the use of chemical weapons by Iraq in the Iran-Iraq war, and associated concerns over the use of precursors from Western industry in that weapons program. It first met in 1985: <http://www.australiagroup.net/en/index.html>.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Rory Medcalf directs the International Security program at the Lowy Institute. He has previously worked as an intelligence analyst, diplomat and journalist. From 2003 to 2007 he was with the Office of National Assessments, Australia's peak strategic analysis agency. Prior to that, Mr Medcalf was an officer of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. His diplomatic experience included a posting to New Delhi, a secondment to Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, policy development on the ASEAN Regional Forum, and managing the secretariat of the Australia Group on chemical and biological non-proliferation export controls. He assisted the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and helped draft the report of the subsequent Tokyo Forum. He is Australian convener of the Australia-India Roundtable and a consultant for the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

Amandeep Gill is a member of the Indian Foreign Service and has served in Geneva, Tehran and Colombo. He has served in the Disarmament and International Security Affairs Division from 1998 to 2001 and again from 2006 to 2008 at critical junctures in India's nuclear diplomacy. He has also served as an expert on the UN Secretary General's panels of experts on Small Arms and Light Weapons and on Missiles. He was on a visiting fellowship at Stanford's Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) from August 2008-July 2009 where his research focused on nuclear disarmament, nuclear learning and India's role in future nuclear regimes. His contribution to this publication emerged from research during his sabbatical at CISAC. The views expressed in the publication are in his personal capacity and do not reflect the official views of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

LOWY INSTITUTE

FOR INTERNATIONAL POLICY

WWW.LOWYINSTITUTE.ORG