

Viewing Nuclear Weapons through a Humanitarian Lens: *Context and Implications*

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Summary

This paper considers the relevance of viewing nuclear weapons through a humanitarian lens—along with some criticisms of it—with a view to informing contemporary policy debate.¹

Context

The notion of examining the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons use is gaining renewed attention. For instance:

- In its agreed outcome document, the 2010 NPT Review Conference expressed “deep concern at the continued risk for humanity represented by the possibility that these weapons could be used and the catastrophic humanitarian consequences that would result from the use of nuclear weapons”.²
- The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement recently emphasized the immense suffering that would result from any detonation of nuclear weapons, as well as the lack of any adequate international response capacity to assist the victims. It recalled the 1996 advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which expressed the Court’s view that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.³ The Movement also called on all states to ensure that nuclear weapons are never again used and to pursue treaty negotiations to prohibit and eliminate them.⁴
- At the United Nations General Assembly’s 2012 First Committee session, Switzerland delivered a statement on behalf of 34 states expressing their

1 For an earlier, expanded version of this paper see J. Borrie and T. Caughley, “How are humanitarian approaches relevant to achieving progress on nuclear disarmament?”, in R. Johnson (ed.), *Decline or Transform: Nuclear Disarmament and Security Beyond the NPT Review Process*, Acronym Institute, 2012.

2 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Final Document*, document NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)*, 2010, part I, p. 19.

3 International Court of Justice, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, advisory opinion, 1996.

4 Statement of the International Committee of the Red Cross at First Committee of the sixty-seventh session of the United Nations General Assembly, 16 October 2012, www.un.org/disarmament/special/meetings/firstcommittee/67/pdfs/16%20Oct%20GD%20ICRC.pdf.

concern about the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. It noted with approval “that consideration of this issue has garnered greater prominence in a number of General Assembly resolutions and in other fora since 2010”.⁵

- At the same First Committee session, Norway announced its intention to host an international conference in Oslo “on the impact of nuclear detonations, whatever their cause”.⁶ Norway’s subsequent invitation letter indicated that the conference’s focus will be on “the humanitarian consequences of a nuclear weapons detonation”, and will involve “all interested states, as well as UN organisations, representatives of civil society and other relevant stakeholders”.⁷

There is considerable frustration among non-nuclear-weapon states at the conspicuous absence of progress towards nuclear disarmament in multilateral forums, and at the difficulties they face in influencing the nuclear-weapon states to reduce reliance on these arms.⁸ This helps to explain the emergence of new government-sponsored initiatives by small and middle-sized states. Some social movement organizations have also mobilized themselves on the basis of the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.⁹

The influence of humanitarian principles on the regulation of weapons is not an aberrant or even new development although it is often subordinated in arms control negotiations to narrower concerns of state security.¹⁰ Interstate treatment of nuclear weapons has predominantly focused on themes such as deterrence, strategic stability between the major military powers, the dangers of these arms proliferating further, and challenges to compliance with and enforcement of the current nuclear order.¹¹ Greater humanitarian focus now on nuclear weapons is significant because broader renewed awareness of their consequences could alter the discourse concerning the utility and acceptability of such arms, from a normative context in which the threat to use them and planning for doing so are considered legitimate actions by nuclear-weapon-possessing states, to one in which they are not. This devaluation of nuclear weapons is probably essential to their elimination.

For and against a humanitarian lens

What does it mean to view nuclear weapons through a humanitarian lens? Broadly speaking, it means looking at the use of these weapons from the point of view of human impact. It is guided by notions of protecting civilians from particular and persistent harm, or combatants from superfluous injury and unnecessary suffering due to such

5 See www.acronym.org.uk/official-and-govt-documents/joint-statement-humanitarian-dimension-nuclear-disarmament-un-first-committee-2012. This followed an earlier 16-state statement, delivered by Switzerland, at the first preparatory meeting of the current NPT cycle in Vienna in May 2012.

6 See www.un.org/disarmament/special/meetings/firstcommittee/67/pdfs/12%20Oct%20GD%20Norway.pdf.

7 *Letter of Invitation to an International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons*, from Espen Barth Eide, Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 22 November 2012.

8 T. Caughley, *Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons: Tracing Notions about Catastrophic Humanitarian Consequences*, Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons project papers, no. 1, UNIDIR, 2013.

9 R. Johnson, “Nuclear disarmament: then and now”, *SGR Newsletter*, no. 41, Scientists for Global Responsibility, 2012. See also the website of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons at www.icanw.org.

10 See N. Cooper, “Putting disarmament back in the frame”, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2006.

11 W. Walker, “Nuclear enlightenment and counter-enlightenment”, *International Affairs*, vol. 83, no. 3, 2007.

weapons' characteristics. The association here with both disarmament and international humanitarian law (IHL) is clear—although a humanitarian lens extends beyond the legal to encompass moral and political imperatives as well. It entails an emphasis on actual consequences and not only on the effect intended or claimed by users of the weapon. Thus, evidence and critical investigation are important elements of any humanitarian lens.¹² As noted in the first paper in this UNIDIR series, considering individuals and their communities as reference points for security contrasts with orthodox security discourse and statecraft.¹³ But it has much to offer in altering the circular, and often unproductive, exclusively state-centric discourse on curbing the risks of use of these weapons.

Calls to consider the consequences of nuclear weapons invite comparisons to other recent humanitarian initiatives, such as those to ban anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. Such comparisons are somewhat controversial.¹⁴ But examining the humanitarian consequences of detonation of nuclear weapons is not contingent on these experiences. For reasons discussed below, though, these successes are relevant and it makes little sense to exclude them.

Of course, there are obvious differences between nuclear weapons and other kinds of arms, such as anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions. For instance:

- Nuclear weapons play a different role in the military doctrines of possessor states. In particular, they are widely seen as much more important than anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.
- Nuclear weapons have a more potent set of meanings and beliefs attached to them than these banned weapons.¹⁵ In particular, a deeply embedded belief exists among some nuclear strategists in the infallibility of nuclear deterrence.
- Nuclear weapons have technical characteristics that differ from conventional explosive weapons. For example, nuclear munitions contain fissile material.
- Unlike conventional explosive weapons, nuclear weapon detonations produce radiation.
- The set of states possessing nuclear weapons differs from those sets of states that held (or, in certain cases, still hold) stocks of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

Largely on the basis of these differences, critics appear to assume that the features of processes to successfully curb nuclear weapons must necessarily be so dissimilar to prior humanitarian initiatives as to make the latter irrelevant. The perceived strategic

12 For further discussion see J. Borrie and T. Caughley, "How are humanitarian approaches relevant to achieving progress on nuclear disarmament?", in R. Johnson (ed.), *Decline or Transform: Nuclear Disarmament and Security Beyond the NPT Review Process*, Acronym Institute, 2012, pp. 35–37.

13 T. Caughley, *Humanitarian Impacts of Nuclear Weapons: Tracing Notions about Catastrophic Humanitarian Consequences*, Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons project papers, no. 1, UNIDIR, 2013, p. 7.

14 According to one senior diplomat of a nuclear-weapon-possessing state, "the purpose of nuclear deterrence is to ensure that the weapons are never used. There is no read across from the bans on landmines or cluster munitions". See J. Duncan, "A nuclear weapons convention: legislating for security", 2010, <http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120406003443/http://blogs.fco.gov.uk/johnduncan/2010/04/01/a-nuclear-weapons-convention-legislating-for-security/>.

15 For instance, see V. Pouliot, "The materials of practice: nuclear warheads, rhetorical commonplaces and committee meetings in Russian–Atlantic relations", *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 45, no. 3, 2010.

importance of nuclear weapons, in particular, is alleged to make the political contexts for curbing them so unlike other weapons that, in effect, the same rules do not apply.

It does pay to be circumspect when considering whether efforts to curb one type of weapon carry over to another. But this assumption that characteristics or “special” dimensions of nuclear weapons make other efforts to delegitimize weapons irrelevant to them does not hold. Because objects of humanitarian concern possess differing characteristics does not mean that international responses cannot have common features, or that there are not insights to be carried over from other issue areas or contexts. After all, the international community carries over many of the same techniques, structures, and practices from different contexts in other areas of international policy,¹⁶ including prohibitions on the other so-called weapons of mass destruction, namely biological and chemical weapons.¹⁷ Common to the rise of norms outlawing these disparate weapons technologies was that prevailing views about their acceptability changed, something also true of later processes banning anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions.

That some see nuclear weapons as of more importance than other weapons indicates perhaps a greater level of difficulty in the magnitude of the policy challenge rather than necessarily a major distinction in kind. It actually strengthens the view that humanitarian approaches are worthy of examination because initiatives to address the impacts of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions transformed unpropitious environments for disarmament into productive ones. And, they did so across differing contexts: for all of the similarities between the international initiatives to ban landmines and cluster munitions, there were also significant differences. These differences include the technical characteristics of the weapons dealt with, their roles, and the international contexts in which they were prohibited.¹⁸

The detonation of a nuclear weapon in a populated area is vastly destructive, and the accompanying release of radiation is a distinctive feature that strikes many people as especially horrifying. However, the idea that nuclear weapons are inherently “special” in view of their perceived strategic importance, roles, effects, or in any other way deserves thorough critical scrutiny. Claims that nuclear weapons are “special” has, in effect, allowed nuclear-armed states to take positions claiming that normal humanitarian rules do not apply, for instance in their reservations to 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions.¹⁹ Yet it is not clear why the importance attached to a weapon by its possessor should exclude that weapon from standards of acceptability that apply in principle to all means and methods of warfare.

Even if the relevance of processes like those on landmines and cluster munitions is disputed, comparison and contrast with the nuclear weapons context could still be of

16 See J. Borrie, “Rethinking multilateral negotiations: disarmament as humanitarian action”, in J. Borrie and V. Martin Randin (eds.), *Alternative Approaches in Multilateral Decision Making: Disarmament as Humanitarian Action*, UNIDIR, 2005.

17 See R. Price and N. Tannenwald, “Norms and deterrence: the nuclear and chemical weapons taboos”, in P.J. Katzenstein (ed.), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, 1996.

18 See J. Borrie and T. Caughley, “How are humanitarian approaches relevant to achieving progress on nuclear disarmament?”, in R. Johnson (ed.), *Decline or Transform: Nuclear Disarmament and Security Beyond the NPT Review Process*, Acronym Institute, 2012, p. 37.

19 B. Tertrais, “In defense of deterrence: the relevance, morality and cost-effectiveness of nuclear weapons”, *Proliferation Papers*, no. 39, IFRI Security Studies Center, 2011, p. 22.

use in helping to filter international policy approaches concerning two important, related questions:

- How were unpropitious environments for dealing with the effects of these weapons transformed?
- Do these humanitarian approaches suggest common features (or “building blocks”) that could be relevant in considering the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons?

Transforming unpropitious environments

Once they were underway, the Ottawa and Oslo processes proceeded rapidly by multilateral standards. The Oslo process resulted in adoption of the 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions in just 15 months. In October 1996, Canada hosted an international conference in Ottawa entitled “Towards a Global Ban on AP Mines”, and such a treaty was achieved less than a year later in Oslo in September 1997.²⁰

It might be tempting to conclude that the rapidity of these ban processes must have been because anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions were “ripe” to be banned. This was not really the case for either weapon. One reason for the rapidity was because those states centrally involved in these initiatives believed that they had to move decisively and quickly towards a clear humanitarian objective. In the Oslo process, the core group of states steering it felt that a long process would be difficult to sustain in terms of mobilizing the necessary resources and political focus.

A second point is that the Ottawa and Oslo processes actually represented later phases of reframing the acceptability of these weapons. Each initiative stemmed from a legacy of failed or only partially successful efforts to restrict anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions, among other anti-personnel weapons, dating back to the South-East Asia conflict in the 1960s.²¹ For example, proposals were made to ban cluster munitions and air-delivered mines in 1974. Protocol II of the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) was widely regarded as weak, and efforts to strengthen its rules on anti-personnel mines in the mid-1990s fell short of a ban. And despite concerns expressed by humanitarian organizations about ongoing use of cluster munitions, the 1990s saw no international progress towards systematically addressing the hazards of these weapons.

Evidence of humanitarian consequences

What changed? It is difficult to simply credit contextual factors such as the end of the Cold War, since many post-Cold War efforts failed to gain traction. What can be asserted with confidence is that the nature of the evidence being collected about the effects of these weapons altered. It helped to generate new critical questions and arguments made about their effects. (This, in turn, generated further demand for research and evidence, creating a feedback loop with policy analysis and proposals.) It is significant here that observing and documenting the real effects of such weapons in the field often fell to

20 For accounts of both of these processes see J. Borrie, *Unacceptable Harm: A History of How the Treaty to Ban Cluster Munitions Was Won*, UNIDIR, 2009.

21 E. Prokosch, *The Technology of Killing: A Military and Political History of Antipersonnel Weapons*, 1995.

non-state actors, such as health professionals, researchers, or sometimes those dealing with weapon contamination, such as humanitarian deminers.²² States by themselves often lacked the expertise or even incentive to initiate the process of reframing views of the weapons.

This feedback loop of evidence and argument about human impact was crucial. For example, in the 1970s, proposals to ban cluster munitions were founded upon concerns about the effects of “cluster warheads” on combatants in conflict at time of weapon use. However, such proposals were thwarted because of an absence of supporting information at the time—the feedback loop was not established. In contrast, a range of evidence concerning the post-conflict hazards of these weapons to civilians substantiated humanitarian concerns about cluster munitions in the twenty-first century. This belied the circular discourse states were accustomed to in multilateral forums such as the CCW in which they could claim no specific rules on cluster munitions were necessary as, in effect, they would never use weapons that would systematically or foreseeably violate humanitarian law. Harm to civilians was isolated and manageable within current rules, many states assumed.

Reframing

The origins of changes in state policymakers’ perceptions about the value of the weapons in question occurred after new, critical questions were asked based on consideration of the humanitarian consequences of use, which successfully challenged existing beliefs and assumptions. Focusing on the humanitarian consequences of the weapons enabled users/possessors’ privileged claims about the legitimacy of their arms to be challenged. Information about such effects could be collected without dependence on the claims or cooperation of users. Analysis of this information showed some claims to fall short, for instance concerning the purported reliability of explosive submunitions,²³ or the military necessity of anti-personnel mines.²⁴ It was shown that the humanitarian hazards caused by these weapons were not isolated incidents, but reflected a pattern of harm foreseeable across a range of practical contexts.²⁵

The introduction of such evidence and critical argumentation was not universally welcomed by states in either the anti-personnel mine or cluster munition discourses. It created tensions for states to manage in terms of their conflicting interests. And it posed internal challenges for those states acknowledging the humanitarian evidence of impact of these weapons. This acknowledgement implied possession or use of the weapons to be at odds with their national identities as “responsible states”, or as “humanitarian powers” as established in their own rhetoric. (This included two nuclear-armed states, France and the United Kingdom, as well as many states living under extended nuclear deterrence, for instance in NATO.)

22 For discussion about the implications of this, see R.M. Coupland, “The effects of weapons and the Solferino cycle”, *British Medical Journal*, vol. 319, 1999, pp. 864–865.

23 C. King, O. Dullum, and G. Østern, *M85: An Analysis of Reliability*, Norwegian People’s Aid, 2007.

24 International Committee of the Red Cross, *Anti-Personnel Mines: Friend or Foe? A Study of the Military Use and Effectiveness of Anti-Personnel Mines*, 1996.

25 For instance, see R. Moyes and B. Rappert, *Failure to Protect: A Case for the Prohibition of Cluster Munitions*, Landmine Action, 2006.

Restructuring discourse

Some states were loathe to reform or bypass the structures contributing to blockage. The prime multilateral structure in the cases of anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions was the CCW, which imposed constraints on how evidence could be discussed and evaluated, how non-state actors with information to contribute were treated, and how decisions could be made. Taken together, these factors reinforced rather than interrogated the humanitarian acceptability of the weapons in question, and tended to lead to low-common-denominator outcomes.

This is compounded in multilateral disarmament and arms control by the consensus rule or practice, which usually holds sway. By exploiting procedural tactics, an obstructive few are able to—and often do—prevent the emergence of cooperation through formal channels that could yield general benefit. The general problem is that if there is evident need to negotiate a robust new legal norm (say, a treaty to ban cluster munitions on humanitarian grounds), in many cases the humanitarian problem is the consequence of the self-interested behaviour of certain parties, in this case users of cluster munitions. Logically, these users, who perceive benefit from that behaviour, would then object to such a norm and prevent the consensus to act from emerging. It is relevant in this respect that the consensus decision-making rule is not the norm in multilateral domains beyond disarmament and arms control, for instance in international humanitarian law.²⁶

It is also pertinent that the treaties to ban anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions were achieved outside established multilateral structures for discourse on weapons. The Ottawa process emerged after CCW negotiations had run their course and fallen short of an anti-personnel mine ban. The Oslo process emerged after negotiations on an instrument to address the humanitarian impacts of cluster munitions did not come to pass after years of discussion in the CCW. The Oslo process's emergence in turn galvanized those states opposed to its goal of banning those cluster munitions causing "unacceptable harm" to civilians to start much less ambitious CCW negotiations (which ultimately failed). For a time, the Oslo process and the CCW thus operated in parallel. While the CCW process was concerned with balancing military and humanitarian considerations, the Oslo process adopted as its basis for discourse the need to ban those cluster munitions causing unacceptable harm to civilians. The process of investigating this permitted the claims of users of cluster munitions on matters like submunition reliability to be compared with real-world evidence.

Constructively upsetting the status quo through successive phases of cooperative effort

As discussed above, non-state actors of various kinds had useful things to contribute, and indeed they laid the groundwork for state reframing and state-led processes towards humanitarian treaty objectives. An improved picture of the actual consequences of use challenged claims about weapon acceptability. In turn, for states with humanitarian identities, reframing in effect circumscribed the situations in which that weapon's use could legitimately be envisaged, thus diminishing the utility of the weapon for them.

26 J. Borrie and A. Thornton, *The Value of Diversity in Multilateral Disarmament Work*, UNIDIR, 2008, pp. 62–63.

Once this reframing began to occur beyond a few states, overcoming the status quo discourse on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions became a prospect. It did not require a large number of states to call these weapons into question. Nor was destabilization of an unproductive status quo contingent on the behaviour of all of the users or stockpilers of the weapons in question.

The humanitarian processes to ban anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions involved successive phases of effort. Concerned individuals, non-state entities and then representatives of a few interested states dominated the early phases of effort. These overlapping phases were concerned with understanding and building the case for the humanitarian problem, then developing critical argumentation to challenge or “reframe” prevailing policies on the weapons. This early effort paid off in that it influenced diverse states’ positions. It also prepared the campaigns to address the impacts of these weapons to take full advantage of events (such as the large-scale use of cluster munitions in Southern Lebanon in 2006), and to adjust to opportunities for rapid transitions, for instance from existing multilateral machinery to new, free-standing processes focused on humanitarian goals.

These early phases gathered what one senior diplomat involved in both the Ottawa and Oslo processes termed “the right people, enough resources, and political backing toward a clear objective”.²⁷ This included a core group of states willing to commit to leadership towards such a goal working in partnership with international organizations, social movements, knowledgeable practitioners and sympathetic states, all of which enable the respective Ottawa and Oslo processes.

The adoption of new international legal standards such as the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions is often regarded as representing the birth of new norms delegitimizing “unacceptable weapons”. And so it is, provided it is also kept in mind that these births resulted from the development and spread well before then of the idea that these weapons are not acceptable. Such was the accumulating strength of the respective campaigns against anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions that these weapons were becoming stigmatized to the point that governments gathered the courage to ban them—an action that continues to strengthen the stigma. As well as binding those formally adhering to the ban regimes from possessing or using these weapons, these regimes also appear to be constraining the behaviour of those states outside them.

Building blocks

Figure 1 summarizes some of the distinctive factors common to the international campaigns leading to the treaties prohibiting anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions discussed above. There is not space in this paper to offer a detailed analysis justifying these factors as potential “building blocks” in considering the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons. However, as noted above, it would appear likely that these are of likely relevance in view of the success of those processes in achieving their humanitarian objectives. This included altering commonly held beliefs about the weapons in question—something crucial in the context of the perceived value of nuclear arms if these are ever to be eliminated.

27 J. Borrie, *Unacceptable Harm: A History of How the Treaty to Ban Cluster Munitions Was Won*, UNIDIR, 2009, p. 320.

Figure 1. Some distinctive factors common to international humanitarian processes on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions



Implications

It is clear from the discussion above that viewing any weapon through a humanitarian lens is not a value-neutral exercise. Examining data and critically investigating claims about aspects of the weapon in question may alter state policymakers' beliefs about the utility and acceptability of a given weapon. And that is the point.

Clearly, there are marked differences between the use of nuclear weapons on the one hand, and anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions on the other. These distinctions do not stem merely from their comparative levels of destructiveness, but extend to the purposes for which these weapons are or might be deployed, the sets of their possessors, and the contexts in which the discourses about their utility, legitimacy, and continued existence have occurred. Nonetheless, the Ottawa and Oslo processes succeeded in reframing international discourses from those in which arguments over these weapons' intended uses were paramount, to those in which their actual effects received focus.

It is not simplistic to conclude that there is something to learn from the dynamics of these initiatives and to adapt to nuclear disarmament efforts. This is because (as in the Ottawa and Oslo processes) real movement towards abolition will likely only occur when enough policymakers and publics are persuaded that a situation in which the weapons continue to exist indefinitely is not acceptable, their purported legitimacy can no longer be tolerated, and that a ban process must be pursued without further delay irrespective of what existing possessors would prefer.²⁸

²⁸ See also P. Lewis, "A new approach to nuclear disarmament: learning from international humanitarian law success", *ICNND Papers*, no. 13, International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament 2009, p. 20.

Analysts have observed that despite the importance of components of the current nuclear-weapons-control regime, such as the NPT, it represents a status quo that suits nuclear-armed states and infantilizes the NPT non-nuclear-weapon states.²⁹ The latter periodically voice their grievances about the continued existence of nuclear weapons legitimized by the regime, while non-proliferation and enforcement crises involving political outliers such as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Islamic Republic of Iran dominate. This dynamic of blockage and a circular discourse dominated by possessor states is a familiar one. Efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons remain out of reach because the international community is stymied in its ability to delegitimize them. This is likely to lead to erosion of the norm against nuclear weapons.

Viewing nuclear weapons through a humanitarian lens suggests that a route to reverse this trend and further delegitimize them is in examining the real consequences of weapon detonation and, by extension, the acceptability of nuclear weapons. This may cast purported nuclear deterrence and associated assurances of possessors that nuclear weapons could never be used in a rather less flattering light. Regardless of how low the probability of a nuclear weapons detonation might be, it could be very high consequence in humanitarian terms. As one recent study observed, "so long as large ready-to-launch nuclear arsenals exist (and especially if more states acquire nuclear weapons), the risk that these weapons will one day be detonated is not negligible".³⁰ Considering this soberly may compel states to summon the courage to redouble their efforts to eliminate these weapons before the allegedly unthinkable occurs.

Seeing nuclear weapons use through a humanitarian lens may also help governments to set aside accumulated ideological differences or restrictive geographical caucuses that serve to obstruct meaningful collective progress, as occurred with landmines and cluster munitions. And, this lens could help to counter the view widespread among nuclear strategists of nuclear weapons as "peace enforcers", a (mistaken) view that has also trickled into the public consciousness in many countries despite nuclear deterrence's many internal logical contradictions, and the paucity of solid evidence to support it.³¹

In sum, recent humanitarian processes on anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions highlighted concerns about these weapons and assumptions underpinning their legitimacy. Crucially, this was duly linked to credible and practical ways of pursuing those concerns in the form of a humanitarian objective and process. The movements to ban anti-personnel mines and cluster munitions may not have ranked high in terms of global causes, but they had demonstrable and palpable purposes, and were considered achievable by those involved in pursuing them. Such humanitarian perspectives are surely relevant as policymakers seek ways to strengthen the norm against nuclear weapons, and move towards a situation in which possession and use are universally considered unacceptable.

29 For instance, see N. Ritchie, "Valuing and devaluing nuclear weapons", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 2013 (forthcoming); and R. Johnson, "The NPT in 2010–2012: a control regime trapped in time", in R. Johnson (ed.), *Decline or Transform: Nuclear Disarmament and Security Beyond the NPT Review Process*, Acronym Institute, 2012.

30 G. Perkovich and J.M. Acton, "Abolishing nuclear weapons", *Adelphi Papers*, no. 396, International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008, p. 10.

31 K. Berry et al., *Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons: Examining the Validity of Nuclear Deterrence*, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 2010, p. 71.

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