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Civil society and nuclear disarmament

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**Civil society
and nuclear disarmament**

Editor in Chief
Kerstin Vignard

Editor (English)
Jane Linekar

French Translator
Valérie Compagnion

Palais des Nations
CH-1211, Geneva 10, Switzerland
Tel.: +41 (0)22 917 31 86
Fax: +41 (0)22 917 01 76
disarmamentforum@unog.ch
www.unidir.org



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Table of contents

- 1 **Editor's note**
Kerstin Vignard

Civil society and nuclear disarmament

- 3 **Where is the nuclear abolition movement today?**
Lawrence S. Wittner
- 15 **Generations of change:
persuading post-Cold War kids that disarmament matters**
Nina Eisenhardt and Tim Wright
- 25 **From aspiration to success:
shaping civil society action to change nuclear weapons policy**
Alyn Ware
- 39 **Now we can: civil society and governments
moving toward a ban on nuclear weapons**
Dimity Hawkins
- 49 **Nuclear disarmament, civil society and democracy**
Andrew Lichterman

Open forum

- 61 **Close encounter with nuclear deterrence**
Robert Green
- 65 **UNIDIR focus**

The international political environment is at its most receptive point in decades to the concept of nuclear disarmament and abolition. It is also widely perceived that the objective of nuclear abolition will take some time to reach—witness President Barack Obama's often quoted 2009 Prague declaration that a world without nuclear weapons is a goal that will not be reached quickly, and will take patience and persistence to achieve.

The nuclear abolition movement has been patient and persistent. Some might say that the movement has been too patient and has weakened since the end of the Cold War. Current political conditions have provided an opportunity to reinvigorate the movement. But where is the mass movement? In the unprecedented networked era in which we live, why does the movement seem to be so dispersed and fragmented? A wealth of organizations and campaigns—new and old—seem to be competing for audience, for financial resources, for visibility. Or is this just a symptom of campaigns in the era of social media? Should we stop looking for demonstrations in the streets and rather turn our attention to Facebook, Twitter and YouTube?

This issue of *Disarmament Forum* considers the question of civil society and nuclear abolition. How can the objective of nuclear disarmament and abolition once again captivate and motivate the public as it did during and even immediately following the Cold War? Are there lessons that could be drawn from more recent (and more successful) civil society movements in other areas of disarmament? What are the steps to building civil society partnership into the nuclear disarmament dialogue? How can we ensure a “seat at the table” for civil society on nuclear issues, as has been achieved recently with landmines and cluster munitions, where civil society was a valued partner in the process, not marginalized to the role of cheerleader outside the negotiating chamber? The expert contributions to this issue address these questions and more in a manner that is both thought-provoking and forward-looking.

The next issue of *Disarmament Forum* will focus on preparing for the 2011 Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) Review Conference. Despite engaging in substantive discussions on thematic topics in the intersessional period since the last review conference, BTWC states parties face the same concerns of universality, implementation and verification as they have before. In the run-up to the 2011 Review Conference, we will consider what states parties could feasibly do next, and what could strengthen the treaty.

Once again, UNIDIR had an active presence at the annual session of the First Committee of the UN General Assembly. On 5 October, UNIDIR hosted the lunch-time event “Combating Illicit Brokering of WMD-related Materials: Building Effective Responses”. On 14 October, in cooperation with Secure World Foundation, UNIDIR hosted “Space Security: Next Steps for TCBMs”, and on 20 October “Improving the Effectiveness of the PoA: Implementation

Challenges and Opportunities”. UNIDIR Director Theresa Hitchens also made a presentation during the Disarmament Machinery thematic debate.

On 10–12 November 2010 UNIDIR held a regional seminar on “Supporting the Arms Trade Treaty Negotiations through Regional Discussions and Expertise Sharing” in Kathmandu, Nepal. The seminar, focused on countries in South and Central Asia, was organized as part of a project that UNIDIR is implementing for the European Union (EU) following a decision of the EU Council on “EU activities in support of the Arms Trade Treaty, in the framework of the European Security Strategy” (2010/336/CFSP). It was co-hosted by the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific.

The seminar brought together close to 40 representatives from 15 countries, representing ministries of foreign affairs, defence, the economy and the interior, as well as the armed forces. In addition, several experts were invited to contribute to the discussions and to make presentations. The seminar was part of a series of regional events being organized by UNIDIR for the EU to support the negotiation of the ATT, with the objective of making the process as inclusive as possible.

In early 2010, UNIDIR launched the Discourse on Explosive Weapons (DEW) project, which has organized several symposia bringing together practitioners and policy makers from different perspectives to stimulate discussions on explosive weapons issues. Several briefing papers and summary reports have been produced by the project. I invite you to visit the project’s website (<http://explosiveweapons.info/>) and consult its resources to learn more about this important issue. The DEW project, together with others, also disseminates news about explosive weapons incidents causing civilian harm via the Twitter feed <<http://Twitter.com/Explosiviolence>>.

And it is with this issue that we say goodbye to part of the *Disarmament Forum* team. Since her arrival in 2005, Jane Linekar has poured her dedication and creativity into her work on the journal as well as other activities of the Institute. Jane’s contribution to the journal will leave a lasting mark—most recently, she led the redesign of the journal in honour of its 10th anniversary. I express my heartfelt appreciation for her hard work, patience, good humour and persistence—and wish her all the best in her future endeavours.

Where is the nuclear abolition movement today?

Lawrence S. Wittner

The vision of a world without nuclear weapons has not only inspired a widespread and important social movement in past decades,¹ but continues to do so today. Nuclear disarmament is currently a central demand of the world peace movement—a complex network of organizations drawn together on the international and national levels, as well as on the basis of constituency. In addition, nuclear abolition garners the support of many other civil society groups, such as religious bodies, labour unions, environmental groups and political parties. Furthermore, much of the public also backs the development of a nuclear-weapon-free world. This article will examine today's activist campaign against nuclear weapons, as well as public opinion. It also will explore some of the obstacles faced by disarmament activists and discuss how the efficacy of their disarmament campaign might be improved.

Organizations

The largest global peace association is the International Peace Bureau (IPB), founded over a century ago and a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1910. The IPB consists of 320 member organizations in 70 countries, plus some 20 international networks. In addition to the work of its affiliates, over the past year the IPB has participated in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki commemorations of the atomic bombings of 1945, helped plan the major non-governmental organization (NGO) conference and rally at the opening of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, and supported groups working for a nuclear weapons abolition treaty (usually referred to as a Nuclear Weapons Convention). It has also produced a major study of nuclear weapons spending and other dimensions of the nuclear menace and participates in the Special NGO Committee on Disarmament in Geneva.²

International associations of professionals also play key roles in the ongoing nuclear disarmament campaign. International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), another Nobel laureate (1985), has some 57,000 members and affiliates in 63 countries.³ As an organization of doctors and other healthcare professionals, IPPNW emphasizes the medical and public health dangers of nuclear weapons, as indicated in its recent publication, *Zero is the Only Option*.⁴ It makes presentations at United Nations events, at governmental and parliamentary briefings, at medical association meetings and at medical schools, and works to promote a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

The International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms (IALANA), headquartered in Germany and with offices in the Pacific region, South Asia and the United States, has drawn upon the legal expertise of its members to work with IPPNW and the International Network of

Lawrence S. Wittner is Professor of History Emeritus at the State University of New York at Albany. His latest book is *Confronting the Bomb: A Short History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2009).

Engineers and Scientists against Proliferation (INESAP) in fashioning a model Nuclear Weapons Convention and championing its adoption. IALANA also presses for the application of international humanitarian law to nuclear weapons.⁵ INESAP is not a membership organization, but has built a network of hundreds of activists in 25 countries. It champions a nuclear abolition treaty and is active in addressing technical issues of disarmament, such as devising appropriate verification systems for a potential abolition treaty.⁶

The nuclear disarmament movement draws on additional strength from a number of pacifist internationals. These include the International Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi and the War Resisters' International. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is particularly active in the anti-nuclear campaign, which it supports through its Reaching Critical Will project.⁷

International organizing for nuclear disarmament has also made headway among politicians. Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, designed to encourage members of legislatures to become engaged in disarmament, now claims over 700 members of parliament from 75 countries.⁸ Mayors for Peace has been even more successful in building a worldwide movement. Headed by Hiroshima mayor Tadatashi Akiba, Mayors for Peace has to date won the endorsement of mayors from 4,207 cities in 144 countries and regions. The organization champions the development of a nuclear-weapon-free world through meetings, presentations, letter-writing, loaning exhibition materials and other campaigning activities.⁹

Peace organizations that agitate for nuclear disarmament also operate on the national level, and some have substantial memberships. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament UK, which is waging a spirited struggle against the modernization of the United Kingdom's nuclear weapons programme and for a world without nuclear weapons, has 35,000 members. In the United States, Peace Action (the result of a merger between the Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy and the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign) claims 100,000 members and works at opposing modernization of the US nuclear weapons production complex, encouraging US ratification of nuclear disarmament treaties, and pressing for a nuclear weapons convention. Other large national organizations that champion nuclear disarmament include the Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs and the Japan Congress against A- and H-Bombs, as well as France's Mouvement de la Paix (Movement for Peace).

Of course, there is considerable membership overlap between international and national organizations. Even within a state, many individuals enroll in more than one group. Thus, an accurate count of the number of people who are members of peace and disarmament organizations is impossible to obtain. Nevertheless, it seems likely that people who belong to organizations that make nuclear disarmament a high priority number in the millions.

In addition, there are powerful international civil society organizations that, despite their focus on other issues, support nuclear disarmament and provide it with enhanced credibility. These include the International Trade Union Confederation (which gathered millions of signatures

on a nuclear abolition petition in the run-up to the 2010 NPT Review Conference),¹⁰ the International Committee of the Red Cross (which long ago called for the abolition of nuclear weapons and continues to do so),¹¹ the World Council of Churches (which recently renewed its demand for a nuclear-weapon-free world),¹² and Greenpeace.¹³ Powerful political parties—especially in the Socialist International, the world body of social democratic and socialist parties—also champion nuclear disarmament and the development of a nuclear-weapon-free world.¹⁴ Sometimes the relationship of these kinds of mass organizations with nuclear disarmament groups is quite close. For example, the UK Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has trade union affiliates with over a million members.¹⁵

In recent years, disarmament organizations have utilized new technologies to reach out to members of these sympathetic civil society organizations and to the general public. The Internet, of course, provides disarmament groups with the opportunity to use mass e-mail messages and listservs to reach their own members and mobilize them for action. Just as important, however, the development of attractive websites and the electronic forwarding of messages assist such groups to secure a larger public audience for their ideas and activities, as well as to attract financial contributions and new members. The rapid growth of electronic publications is particularly useful for disarmament activists, as these new media enable them to break out of the confines of the older, more conservative print publications and television networks. Social networking, too, is helpful to disarmament groups, for it is conducive to linkages and interest group formation.

Campaigns

Anti-nuclear organizations have initiated a number of campaigns for the abolition of nuclear weapons. The oldest of them is probably Abolition 2000, which was organized in 1995 because of dismay among disarmament NGOs that states parties, in renewing the NPT, had left the elimination of nuclear weapons off the agenda. During the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference, a number of NGOs got together and signed the Abolition Statement. Since then, Abolition 2000 has grown to over 2,000 organizations in more than 90 states, but remains a very loose, largely unstructured network, without much focus or common direction for the activities of participating organizations.¹⁶

A smaller, but more dynamic and more sharply defined venture began in 2006 with the establishment of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN). Initiated by IPPNW and inspired by the successful International Campaign to Ban Landmines (as well as the failure of the 2005 NPT Review Conference), ICAN today has the backing of more than 200 organizations in 60 countries, including IPPNW, IALANA, the International Network of Scientists and Engineers for Global Responsibility, Mayors for Peace, Pax Christi International, WILPF, the International Trade Union Confederation and the World Federation of United Nations Associations. It focuses on commencing international negotiations for a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and it produces materials in support of this.¹⁷

Three additional nuclear abolition campaigns should be noted. Mayors for Peace supports other efforts, including ICAN, but has also promoted its own campaign since November 2003. Called the 2020 Vision Campaign, it is designed to rally support for the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2020. It has been endorsed by the parliament of the European Union, the US Conference of Mayors and the Japan Association of City Mayors, among others.¹⁸ The Middle Powers Initiative, founded in 1998, is a collaboration among eight international NGOs and “middle power” governments. Together, they work to convince nuclear-weapon states to take immediate steps to reduce nuclear dangers and begin negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons.¹⁹ Finally, Global Zero, established by a group of high-ranking political and military leaders in December 2008, is working to build support for stopping the proliferation of nuclear weapons, securing all nuclear materials, and ultimately eliminating all nuclear weapons.²⁰ As befits a rather “Establishment” movement, Global Zero is a top-down effort focused on garnering elite support. It has steered clear of peace and disarmament groups, although it is making efforts to appeal to the general public, for example through promotion of the film *Countdown to Zero*.

These nuclear disarmament organizations and campaigns have done much to contribute to the widespread support nuclear disarmament enjoys among the general public. An opinion poll conducted in 21 states around the world during 2008 found that, in 20 countries, large majorities—ranging from 62% to 93%—favoured an international agreement for the elimination of all nuclear weapons. Even in the one holdout state (Pakistan), 46% (a plurality) supported it. Overall, an average of 76% of respondents favoured such an agreement and only 16% opposed it. Among non-nuclear states, support for nuclear weapons abolition was 65% in Turkey, 67% in Thailand, 68% in Iran, 70% in Azerbaijan and in the Palestinian territories, 80% in Ukraine, 81% in Indonesia, 83% in Egypt, 86% in Nigeria and the Republic of Korea, 87% in Mexico, 93% in Argentina and 96% in Kenya. Even among the nuclear powers, there was broad support for nuclear abolition, including 62% in India, 67% in Israel, 69% in the Russian Federation, 77% in the United States, 81% in the United Kingdom, 83% in China and 87% in France.²¹

The May 2010 NPT Review Conference in New York provided an excellent opportunity for the nuclear abolition movement to mobilize this support. One of the high points of this mobilization occurred on 30 April and 1 May, when an international conference, “For a Nuclear Free, Peaceful, Just and Sustainable World”, convened in New York City’s Riverside Church. Welcomed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, approximately 1,000 activists from 25 countries came together to exchange information and ideas. On 2 May, thousands of activists participated in an international nuclear abolition rally in Times Square, a march to the UN Headquarters and a peace festival in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza. Two days later, in the UN General Assembly Hall, the organizers of the mobilization presented the United Nations with more than 17 million petition signatures calling for commencement of negotiations on a nuclear abolition treaty.²²

Movement weaknesses

Despite these indications of strength, today's nuclear disarmament movement is considerably weaker than in its heyday, during the 1980s. When 15,000 people turned out for the nuclear disarmament rally of 2 May in New York City, organizers considered it a success, for this constituted the largest ban-the-bomb event for decades. Even so, in the early 1980s there were much larger outpourings of people at nuclear disarmament demonstrations. These included nearly a million people in the United States and West Germany, 550,000 in the Netherlands, over 500,000 in Italy and Spain, 400,000 in the United Kingdom and Japan, 350,000 in Australia, 300,000 in France, 130,000 in Finland, 100,000 in Austria, Canada and Denmark, and very substantial numbers elsewhere. In October 1983 alone, an estimated five million people took part in nuclear disarmament demonstrations.²³

Just as fewer people are taking to the streets, fewer people are joining nuclear disarmament organizations. In the United Kingdom, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has roughly a third of its 1985 membership. In the United States, Peace Action has only about half the membership its predecessor had in 1988. Elsewhere, mass nuclear disarmament organizations have either dwindled into insignificance or disappeared. IPPNW has less than a third its membership of 1988, while other once-powerful organizations, such as European Nuclear Disarmament and the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement, collapsed long ago.²⁴ To be sure, new organizations have emerged and thrived in recent decades, such as Mayors for Peace. Also, since 2001, after years of decline, there has been some growth in organization membership numbers. But overall, the movement today draws upon a smaller membership base than in the 1980s.

Moreover, there is less organizational cohesion. Today's multiplicity of peace and disarmament groups has its benefits, most notably the ability to appeal to a variety of constituencies. But this organizational fragmentation, common among groups composed of independent-minded dissenters, makes united action around programmes and activities difficult. As a result, the movement is sometimes less than the sum of its parts. Thus far, the modern nuclear abolition movement has not united around a common theme with the same success as its counterpart in the early 1980s, when European Nuclear Disarmament pulled together disarmament groups all across Europe in resistance to the deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles from East and West. Nor is there any current counterpart to the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Campaign of the early 1980s, which drew together disparate organizations throughout the United States—from peace and disarmament groups to religious, labour and professional groups—and appealed strongly to the American public.

It appears that today's public opposition to nuclear weapons, although widespread, does not always run very deep. Despite the majorities in favour of an international ban on nuclear weapons revealed in the 2008 poll, such a ban was "strongly favoured" by only 20% of those polled in Pakistan, 31% in India, 38% in Russia, 39% in the United States and 42% in Israel.²⁵ The

shallowness of public opposition to nuclear weapons is also illustrated by the relatively low turnout at nuclear disarmament demonstrations in recent decades.

Another factor undercutting the ability of disarmament groups to mobilize the public is widespread ignorance of nuclear issues. One of the most important defeats for the world nuclear disarmament movement occurred in 1999, when the US Senate rejected ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (or CTBT, which still awaits entry into force). Tellingly, a Gallup poll taken a week after the key vote found that, although most Americans supported the treaty, 34% had never heard of it and only 26% knew that the Senate had rejected it.²⁶ Young people seem particularly ill-informed about nuclear issues. In 2010, a poll of people aged from their teens to their thirties, conducted in eight countries, found that large majorities did not know that China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and other states possessed nuclear weapons. In fact, only 59% of American respondents knew that their own country was a nuclear power. Among Britons, only 43% knew that the United Kingdom maintained a nuclear arsenal.²⁷

Explaining movement weaknesses

At a time when even many government leaders are now publicly discussing the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free world, how should we explain the nuclear disarmament movement's weakness relative to the 1980s?

Probably the most important factor undermining the movement is the lack of a perceived nuclear crisis. The three great upsurges of movement growth and activism occurred in the late 1940s (amid a furor over world destruction provoked by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), in the late 1950s and early 1960s (when hydrogen bomb testing horrified people around the globe), and in the early 1980s (when détente ended, the Cold War re-emerged, and the world seemed on the brink of nuclear war). Today, by contrast, with the Cold War at an end, nuclear testing marginalized and public threats of nuclear war abandoned, members of the public no longer feel a sense of urgency about nuclear disarmament.

In contrast, there is a sense of urgency about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Most of the organizations agitating for disarmament are *peace* organizations and, naturally, when the nuclear crisis appears to ebb, they focus more on other peace issues. For the younger generation, particularly, nuclear disarmament seems like an old-fashioned issue, of more interest to their parents than to their peers, while the massive bloodshed and disruption of ongoing wars has attracted their attention, concern and action.

The same problem arises when we consider the support of sympathetic social movements. Environmental, religious, social justice and human rights movements, though supportive of abolition, are often preoccupied with issues that seem more pressing: climate change, the adverse effects of corporate globalization, world poverty and the global economic meltdown. Thus, although leaders of major religious denominations and labour federations have recently

spoken out in favour of a nuclear-free world, they have not done much to mobilize their very substantial memberships behind this goal.

This lack of urgency may also in part be explained by ignorance of nuclear issues. The education of the public about nuclear weapons and nuclear disarmament has been poor in recent decades. With television, radio and newspapers increasingly in the hands of giant corporations, interested primarily in profits and maintenance of the status quo, the mass communications media, for the most part, have abdicated their responsibility to inform the public adequately on these matters. Thus, it is hardly surprising that so many people are ill-informed about nuclear dangers and the role of nuclear disarmament in confronting them. In addition, with the exception of what takes place in scattered peace studies programmes, public education in schools and universities about nuclear issues is remarkably weak.

The sense of complacency regarding nuclear weapons is reinforced by the incremental gains of the past two decades. Over the course of history, small-scale advances have often reduced the fervour of social movements. This certainly has been true of the nuclear disarmament movement, which declined substantially in the late 1960s after the signing of the Partial Test Ban Treaty and again in the late 1980s, after Reagan and Gorbachev fostered nuclear disarmament agreements and an end to the Cold War. In the 1990s, there were further nuclear arms control and disarmament treaties (START I, START II and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty) and important reductions in world nuclear arsenals. The New START of 2010 and recent talk by US President Barack Obama and other government officials of building a world free of nuclear weapons have certainly heartened advocates of nuclear disarmament, but they have also had the effect of contributing to popular complacency. After all, why go to the trouble of joining a nuclear disarmament organization and participating in its activities when it appears that government leaders are coping with the nuclear weapons problem?

There has even been some falling-off in zeal within the ranks of hard-core activists. Despite impressive talk about building a nuclear-weapon-free world, the Obama Administration has done little more than sign a modest nuclear disarmament agreement with the Russian Federation. At the same time, as peace and disarmament groups have complained, the administration has sought to buy support for this treaty in the US Senate by championing a \$180 billion, ten-year build-up of the US nuclear weapons complex.²⁸ During the recent NPT Review Conference, when leaders of peace groups asked whether the administration was planning to work on developing a nuclear abolition treaty, officials laughed at the idea as utopian. Thus, a substantial gap has arisen between the expectations of nuclear abolition raised by administration rhetoric and the reality of traditional, step-by-step arms control and disarmament ventures. This gap is leading to growing cynicism and demoralization among activists.

This same tension between long-term goals and immediate gains is also played out to some degree among civil society organizations. A number of peace and disarmament

groups, recognizing the limited nature of government disarmament practices and plans, are determined to be “realistic” and restrict themselves to working for incremental steps along the path to disarmament. Other groups, while conceding the importance of incremental steps, are equally determined to continue to press for the onset of negotiations for a nuclear abolition treaty. Indeed, they are careful to say that the implementation of the New START and the CTBT should not be a prerequisite for the latter. As a result of these alternative perspectives, some leading arms control and disarmament groups did not participate in the nuclear abolition events organized around the NPT Review Conference.

This differing emphasis also affects funding for the movement. In general, major foundation funding tends to go to the incrementalists, as most foundations are more interested in immediate results than in what might prove to be a utopian goal. This fact leaves the nuclear abolitionists with very limited financial resources. Thus, for example, the nuclear abolition events surrounding the May 2010 NPT Review Conference were almost entirely funded by the sponsoring organizations themselves. At a time when the worldwide economic downturn has diminished financial contributions to social movements, including peace and disarmament movements, this preference for funding projects linked to incremental changes undermines groups pressing for a nuclear-weapon-free world.

There are also a number of long-term factors limiting the effectiveness of the nuclear disarmament movement. Foremost among them is the traditional reliance of governments on military might, including weapons, to safeguard national security in an anarchic world. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan once complained: “[I]n a world where states continue to compete for power ... the case for disarmament does not get enough of a hearing.”²⁹ Beyond this, there is also the influence of powerful vested interests—military, scientific and corporate—in the production and maintenance of nuclear weapons. Nor should we forget the easy connection between nuclear power and nuclear weapons, a connection that has facilitated the development of nuclear arsenals in a number of countries and that has the potential to facilitate it in yet others. Finally, there is the psychologically attractive alternative of denial. It is difficult, after all, to confront the prospect of worldwide nuclear annihilation, or at least to confront it for very long.

Yet another long-term difficulty confronting the movement is that nuclear disarmament issues are not the same in all countries. For example, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has worked for decades to make the United Kingdom a non-nuclear country. And in the midst of the current economic slump, with the huge costs of modernizing Britain’s nuclear weapons system confronting the nation, British activists are hopeful that they stand on the brink of success. In a non-nuclear state, such as Sweden, or in a nation still divided over ratification of the CTBT, such as the United States, the issues facing peace activists appear quite different. Thus, although a great deal of cooperation takes place among national peace and disarmament movements, their priorities sometimes differ.

Of course, despite these obstacles, activists have been able to form a very substantial global movement for nuclear disarmament. By drawing upon millions of people around the world, they have fostered nuclear arms control and disarmament measures, chilled the enthusiasm of national leaders for waging nuclear war, and pushed the idea of nuclear abolition to the forefront of the international political stage. These are certainly major accomplishments, and they should not be ignored.³⁰

Strengthening the movement

Even so, it appears that, if a nuclear-weapon-free world is to emerge one day, the nuclear disarmament movement will have to be strengthened. Ideally, this would include uniting in a single powerful worldwide organization. But, given the organizational, strategic and other obstacles mentioned, this kind of unity seems unlikely to materialize. There remain, however, a number of ways to increase the movement's strength and cohesion.

One way is to develop a more focused goal, especially an inspiring ideal, which appeals broadly to the disarmament movement. Without an inspiring goal, movements lose the energy and support of activists. During the 1980s, one such goal was a nuclear-free Europe. In the future, the inspiring goal could be a nuclear-weapon-free world. Certainly, the idea of a world without nuclear weapons is in the air, and is already trumpeted by disarmament organizations and government officials. Among disarmament groups, it often takes the more specific form of demanding a nuclear abolition treaty.

It also is necessary to integrate incremental advances into this broad, inspiring framework. Without working on incremental changes, social movements become cut off from the reality of everyday life and strike observers as demanding pie in the sky. Not surprisingly, effective social movements have understood the utility of linking immediate demands to a long-range, visionary goal. In this model, the visionary goal generates the inspiration, while the short-term gains provide a sense of accomplishment to activists along the way. Admittedly, short-term gains sometimes lead to complacency. But this is an unavoidable price of success.

As mass public pressure is needed to alter the traditional reliance of governments on powerful weaponry, it is necessary to develop a public educational campaign around the necessity for nuclear disarmament. This kind of campaign, focused on nuclear weapons dangers and pointing to nuclear disarmament as the alternative, is needed to increase public knowledge and strengthen public support for nuclear abolition. With substantial foundation funding, the task of public education would be greatly simplified. Even without it, however, activists, organizations and sympathetic government officials could work more effectively to utilize the mass media, especially the Internet, to which activists have considerably greater access. They could also work harder at using the extensive networks of sympathetic organizations—religious denominations, professional groups, unions and environmental organizations—to

press the case for nuclear abolition through articles in their publications, communications to their constituencies and mobilization of their members.

Even without organizational unity, peace and disarmament groups could develop closer organizational cooperation and coordination through coalitions, simultaneous demonstrations, joint petitions, mass e-mailings, and national and international conferences on nuclear abolition. This would not only strengthen the movement directly, but would also provide the world with an attractive model of a global citizens' movement.

Finally, the peace and disarmament movement could strengthen itself by highlighting the linkages between what are sometimes seen as separate issues. There is no reason to place the issue of nuclear weapons and the issue of war in separate baskets. After all, they reflect the same problem: the problem of violent conflict among states. Seen in this light, they can be dealt with in the same way: by enhancing international security. In fact, the tide has been moving in this direction for some years now. Increasingly, the world peace movement has been working closely with the United Nations to cut back on the war-making prerogatives of nation states. Whether these allies can succeed in building a nuclear-weapon-free world remains to be seen. But they have made an impressive start.

Notes

1. Lawrence S. Wittner, *The Struggle Against the Bomb*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press [*One World or None*, 1993; *Resisting the Bomb*, 1997; *Toward Nuclear Abolition*, 2003].
2. For more on the IPB's activities, visit its website at <www.ipb.org>.
3. For more details, visit the IPPNW website at <www.ippnw.org>.
4. IPPNW, 2010, *Zero is the Only Option*, Somerville, MA.
5. See John Burroughs, "The Humanitarian Imperative for Nuclear Disarmament", Briefing Paper for the Middle Powers Initiative/Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs conference "From Aspiration to Reality: Nuclear Disarmament after the NPT Review", Geneva, 14–15 September 2010. See also <ialana.net>.
6. INESAP's website can be found at <www.inesap.org>.
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8. See the PNND website at <www.gsinsitute.org/pnnd>.
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Generations of change: persuading post-Cold War kids that disarmament matters

Nina Eisenhardt
Tim Wright

Our parents' generation grew up at a time of intense global instability, with two superpowers madly competing to build the biggest, most ferocious nuclear arsenal, capable of destruction on a scale beyond anybody's imagination. For progressive-minded people everywhere, nuclear disarmament was the cause of the moment—one in which everybody, young and old, had an equal stake. Thousands demonstrated in the streets to demand an end to the lunacy of government policies and programmes that threatened to annihilate entire nations. In literature, cinema, music and art, nuclear weapons featured prominently. Like climate change today, the bomb was centre stage.

But then, as the Berlin Wall came crashing down and the Soviet Union disbanded, nuclear weapons began to disappear from the evening news and fade from the collective consciousness. They did not, however, disappear from national arsenals—despite the excited exclamations of some stalwart disarmament advocates who believed their job had been done.¹ Two decades since the end of the Cold War, the promise of a more peaceful world free of nuclear weapons remains unfulfilled. The two former Cold War foes still maintain more than 20,000 nuclear warheads between them, many on hair-trigger alert. In large part because of this monumental failure to disarm, the nuclear club has expanded, in our lifetime, to include India, Pakistan and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Thus, the instability of the dim Cold War years has been passed on to our generation, but in a different, less visible form. If the Doomsday Clock maintained by the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* is an accurate measure of nuclear risks, then the world is in as perilous a state now as it was in 1988.² This raises important questions for today's youth, who have—on the whole—failed to grasp the gravity of the nuclear threat and the urgent necessity of abolition. With cataclysmic climate change emerging as the great moral challenge of our time, and terrorism taking over as the predominant theme in global security debates, we post-Cold War kids have spent little time worrying about the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity, and much less time working to eliminate them.

Reinvigorating the youth disarmament movement will be essential if we are to guarantee that this generation is the last to grow up under the shadow of nuclear weapons. Sceptics may scoff that the chances of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world within this decade are slim—no nuclear-weapon state is currently preparing for a future without these devices, and the spread of nuclear know-how has heightened the risk of further proliferation—but much can change

Nina Eisenhardt, 20, is coordinator of the Ban All Nukes generation (BANg) and is studying political science at the University of Technology in Darmstadt, Germany. Tim Wright, 25, was responsible for implementing the global strategy of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in New York leading up to and during the recent Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference. He is the author of *Learn Peace: How Students Can Rid the World of Nuclear Weapons* (ICAN, 2010).

in a short time when large-scale public resistance is combined with enlightened leadership. Few German students growing up in the 1980s would have predicted the events that unfolded at the end of that decade. And despite a long campaign against apartheid in South Africa, the regime seemed entrenched almost until its final days. Time and again, naysayers who believed that the world could not change have been proven wrong.

Today we must challenge government rhetoric that positions nuclear abolition as a far-off goal, not a present possibility. In July 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton remarked in a thank-you speech to the staff involved in negotiations on the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty: “I am personally very grateful for everything you’ve done to move us toward our goal of a world someday, *in some century*, free of nuclear weapons” [emphasis added].³ Her implication that nuclear disarmament is a centuries-long process should be a wake-up call to anybody who thinks that a few high-level handshakes are proof enough that all is well in the world of disarmament. Sorely missing from today’s debate about nuclear weapons is any sense of real urgency for achieving our goal. Young people—who often lack some of the cynicism of their elders—must join the movement en masse and demand disarmament now. Unless we challenge the status quo of government inaction, how many more generations will be burdened with the bomb? Unless we succeed in persuading our political leaders that they need to achieve abolition now, not in decades’ or centuries’ time, can we reasonably expect that the 65-year record of non-use of nuclear weapons will be extended forever?

Mobilizing young people and engaging them fully in the movement will not, of course, be easy. But it would be a mistake to dismiss today’s youth as too apathetic and self-absorbed to care about issues like nuclear disarmament. Young people have selflessly devoted themselves to campaigns to curb climate change, alleviate extreme poverty, confront HIV/AIDS and promote respect for basic human rights. And there are signs of hope that a new and powerful youth movement for disarmament is emerging—children and teenagers all over the globe are standing up in their classrooms, writing to their leaders and taking to the streets to reject this world of nuclear madness they have inherited.

Youth demanding urgent action

Young people have much to offer the nuclear abolition movement, and are already contributing in a variety of ways, from creating human roadblocks outside nuclear bases to participating in conferences at the United Nations. In many countries, young people are leading the way in efforts to educate their generation about this fundamental threat to our common future—motivating one another, sharing ideas and joining forces to generate change. But, if the fledgling youth movement is to have any real impact in advancing the abolitionist agenda, it must expand considerably over the coming years, reaching out to new audiences. We must strengthen the linkages among groups working in distant nations and regions, collaborating on projects and raising our voice.

In May 2010, in an effort to galvanize government support for nuclear abolition, more than 500 young people attended the review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), taking part in side events, street actions and dialogues with delegates. Japanese youth submitted two million petition signatures to the United Nations' top disarmament official, Sergio Duarte, calling on governments to commence negotiations now on a convention banning nuclear weapons. He said, in response, that "widespread support from civil society is the strongest possible foundation for future disarmament initiatives".⁴ Two student-run groups, NPT TV and Disarm TV, provided online video coverage of the conference, allowing anyone, anywhere in the world, to monitor their governments' contribution to the debates and access expert analysis on a daily basis.⁵ Thirty-five students also simulated negotiations on a comprehensive nuclear abolition treaty, showing the diplomats how it could be done.⁶ Groups such as the Ban All Nukes generation (BANg) and the Nuclear Weapons Inheritance Project held meetings with parliamentarians and government officials from nuclear-armed states in the lead-up to the conference, making an urgent plea for action.

Young people have not shied away from taking part in direct action either. At the University of California a growing coalition of student organizations is working to demilitarize the campuses through non-violent protests and, according to its website, "the subversive utilization of creativity and humor".⁷ The university has been heavily involved in the design, testing and production of nuclear weapons at the Los Alamos and Lawrence Livermore National Laboratories since the laboratories were founded. Students regularly organize hunger strikes and boycotts, capturing nationwide attention. Similarly, the US-based Think Outside the Bomb collective has organized street demonstrations, camps and conferences to mobilize young people to "actively resist the dangerous and destructive nuclear cycle".⁸ "Bombspotters" in Belgium, most of them young people, have been trespassing onto the Kleine Brogel airbase, which houses US nuclear weapons as part of a NATO nuclear-sharing arrangement (431 were arrested in April 2010), and their exploits have gained worldwide media coverage.⁹ More recently, BANg helped to organize protests at the US military base in Buechel, Germany, and coordinated a youth blockade with British student groups in Faslane, Scotland—home to the United Kingdom's nuclear-armed Trident submarines.

In August 2010, medical students from as far afield as Australia, Ecuador, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia and Ukraine rode bicycles across Europe in an act of endurance aimed at freeing the continent of nuclear weapons.¹⁰ And, to date, over 20 million people have signed a petition organized by youth from the Religions for Peace movement as part of the Arms Down campaign, which calls for nuclear weapons to be abolished and military spending to be redirected toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals.¹¹ Many of these groups and initiatives have sprung up only in the last few years, suggesting that there is real potential for a formidable youth abolition movement to take off.

Making the case for abolition

If we are to persuade more young people to join the movement, we must first overcome a widespread misperception that the nuclear problem largely went away at the end of the Cold War, and that today it is limited to would-be proliferators like Iran. The nuclear powers, aided by a sympathetic press, have been hugely successful in deflecting responsibility for disarmament by keeping the spotlight on “rogue states”. In nuclear-armed countries, youth are typically more familiar with the terms “nuclear non-proliferation” and “arms control” than they are with “nuclear disarmament”. So long as the public conversation is focused on halting the spread of nuclear weapons, and not achieving a universal standard of zero for all, we risk perpetuating government policies that are inconsistent with the goal of achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Thus, the argumentation we adopt to attract young people to the cause must challenge official discourse designed to lull the public into thinking that the source of the threat lies elsewhere. Our message to youth must concentrate on the basic inhumanity of nuclear weapons—their unique destructive power and the unspeakable human suffering they cause, from uranium mining through to their use and decades after—no matter who possesses them. We must also debunk the myth of nuclear deterrence, which has gone largely uncontested since the end of the Cold War.

Most youth recognize that nuclear weapons do nothing to address any of today’s major security threats, from terrorism and intra-state wars to extreme poverty and climate change. In fact, quite the opposite, they contribute to all of these problems by exacerbating global inequalities and generating mistrust among peoples. In the globalized world of the twenty-first century, we are less inclined to see enemies in the people of other nations, races or religions. To most young people, the idea that nations would threaten one another with nuclear weapons is not only alarming, but also bizarre. As youth representatives Barbara Streibl and Fatih Oezcan informed assembled diplomats at the recent NPT Review Conference: “Today young people have friends all around the world. People in other countries are no longer distant and strange enemies to us. We speak to them every day.”¹²

As military budgets continue to rise at a staggering rate, and the global financial crisis plunges more of the world’s poor into deeper poverty, the need to redirect money spent on weapons toward meeting human needs has never been clearer. We cannot feed hungry children with missiles. Although the nuclear arms race is supposed to have ended long ago, today there are nine nations that spend a combined total of roughly US\$ 90 billion a year on their nuclear forces¹³—more than enough to halve extreme poverty by 2015.¹⁴

Most young people would no doubt find the arguments for nuclear abolition compelling. But the magnitude of the nuclear problem can be daunting, indeed overwhelming. How can a lowly student, with only a small network of friends, take on the well-muscled nuclear powers? Why should this generation succeed in ridding the world of nuclear weapons when others have

failed? Localizing the problem is a necessary strategy for helping to overcome these feelings of powerlessness. Students at the University of California have done this well by focusing their efforts on campus officials and benefactors. Student activism at nuclear facilities has similarly been useful in influencing the attitudes of nearby communities and building pressure on local elected representatives. But it is often difficult to see the fruits of our labours, no matter how hard we work, and this tends to create a high level of frustration. In other movements for change, there are often more visible ways for people to make a difference. Environmental campaigners, for example, have long focused not only on influencing government policies and priorities, but also on changing the behaviour of individuals—persuading us to get on our bikes instead of driving cars, or to install energy-efficient light bulbs in our homes. Development and human rights organizations have asked us to buy products that are traded fairly and manufactured under acceptable conditions. But what can an individual do to prevent nuclear catastrophe on a personal level? What are the practical steps that ordinary people can take for nuclear disarmament?

If we are to engage more young people—and build a genuine movement for change—we must diversify our methods of campaigning. Not everyone has the means or inclination to attend UN meetings, and nor should it be a core aim to boost numbers at such events. Instead we should focus on tackling the source of the problem at the local level: the companies, academic institutions, politicians and others who benefit most from a thriving nuclear weapons industry. In the 1980s, a well-orchestrated boycott of General Electrics forced it to sell off most of its nuclear-weapon-related enterprises. The following decade, consumers worldwide said “non” to French wine and cheese, helping to bring nuclear testing in the Pacific to a halt.¹⁵ Mass grassroots action of this kind has the potential to alter community attitudes indelibly, and to knock down some of the barriers to abolition.

A further problem is that the disarmament movement lacks prominent role models with strong youth appeal. Celebrity anti-nuclear advocates like Hollywood actor Michael Douglas and artist Yoko Ono, while well known to generations young and old, are unlikely to attract hordes of youth to the cause. Recruiting a greater diversity of ambassadors to the campaign could be an effective way to reach many of the audiences who have not yet confronted the issue, not least Generation Y. In the same way that Princess Diana brought the scourge of landmines into the mainstream by placing it on the pages of women’s magazines, we need popular endorsers of nuclear abolition who have the star power and charisma to mobilize youth.

Embracing new media

Young people involved in the disarmament movement typically use the Internet as an instrument of both communication and organization. This was evident at the NPT Review Conference, where, as we have seen, student groups documented events on the video sites YouTube and Vimeo. The youth speech delivered to delegates had been prepared using a “wiki”, which allowed people in all parts of the world to take part in the drafting process

without the expense or hassle of meeting in person. “Communication gives us the ability to bring down borders”, one contributor typed. Social networking sites such as Facebook have enabled us to publicize protests to larger audiences more efficiently, and to stay in contact with people we meet at international gatherings, while Skype gives us the chance to see each other through video link-ups. These methods are now integral to how most youth-run disarmament groups operate. However, they do not diminish the importance of—let alone replace the need for—face-to-face meetings or street action. Rather, they facilitate them.

The Million Pleas campaign is an example where the use of new media has been combined with traditional methods of campaigning.¹⁶ Started by a group of schoolchildren in Hiroshima on the 65th anniversary of the atomic bombings, it allows people to upload videos as part of an online effort to create the world’s longest video message to leaders. However, capturing large numbers of videos and reaching out to new audiences often requires campaigners to record pleas offline—in the streets and the schoolyard. The beauty of this initiative is its novelty. Instead of seeing thousands of signatures on paper, our leaders will see people’s faces and hear them speak. Such a video petition may not have been possible even a few years ago, as it is only very recently that large numbers of people have gained access to personal video devices built into laptops and mobile phones. Naturally, the vast majority of the pleas have come from youth, but older people are also embracing the medium.

Informing a generation

Technology is also key to disseminating information. In November 2009, at an international meeting of anti-nuclear campaigners in Stockholm, UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Sergio Duarte delivered a keynote address in which he lamented the lack of democracy in the disarmament process. So many decisions about nuclear weapons, he said, are made in secret, beyond the scrutiny of citizens—“decisions to acquire such weapons, decisions on how and under what circumstances they should be used, decisions on which weapons to produce in the future ...”.¹⁷ Even basic information about the size and composition of nuclear arsenals is often hidden from public view. It is little wonder, then, that there is a high level of ignorance in the community about nuclear weapons, especially among younger generations, who rarely encounter disarmament in the media or at school.

In the lead-up to the recent NPT Review Conference, the Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai International surveyed more than 4,000 young people in eight countries on their knowledge of and attitudes toward nuclear weapons. Less than 60% of US respondents and only 43% of British youth were even aware that their governments possessed nuclear weapons, and almost 18% of all participants considered the use of nuclear weapons to be acceptable in certain circumstances.¹⁸ In a press release, survey organizer Takahisa Miyao chose instead to emphasize the positive, pointing out that a majority of respondents oppose nuclear weapons: “Building on the widespread rejection of nuclear weapons by youth is key to efforts toward their abolition”, he said.¹⁹

The uptake of disarmament education by schools around the world will be vital in challenging the perception of nuclear weapons as a source of national and global security, and empowering young people to participate effectively in the nuclear abolition movement. At the start of the last decade, the United Nations conducted a landmark study on disarmament and non-proliferation education, which provided a suite of recommendations for action by governments, international organizations and community leaders.²⁰ The final report stressed the importance of understanding how the excessive manufacture, trade and stockpiling of weapons can exacerbate war and make it more lethal and dangerous, and how this affects health, destroys the environment and hinders development. It described its work as complementary to the peace studies and conflict resolution programmes that gained popularity in higher education in the 1980s and 1990s. In the foreword, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan expressed his hope and determination that disarmament and non-proliferation education would become “an integral—and natural—part of the education of the next generation”. He said:

It is striking for someone of my generation to think that an entire new generation of human beings is coming to maturity without an ever present terror of nuclear catastrophe. Yet it is so, and that is for the better. The downside, however, is ignorance of the real dangers that do exist, especially the legacy of nuclear weapons inherited from the last century.²¹

The companion of ignorance, he wrote, is complacency: “what we know little about, we care little to do anything about”. Successful disarmament education is thus education *for* disarmament, not merely education *about* disarmament. The Learn Peace initiative of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) is an example of such action-oriented learning. It focuses on critical thinking and empowerment, rather than feeding students with facts.²² Educators encourage their pupils to enter the global decision-making arena by holding model UN debates on nuclear abolition, or to conduct opinion polls in their local communities and publicize the results. Students may attempt to design new anti-nuclear symbols that rival the original in popularity, or role-play historical events like the Cuban missile crisis with the aim of averting nuclear catastrophe. Often, they also devise their own strategies for promoting a nuclear-weapon-free world, including through the use of new media.

But has disarmament and non-proliferation education become an integral and natural part of our education, as Annan hoped? Every two years, the UN disarmament office compiles reports from Member States on their implementation of the Secretary-General’s study, but only a small handful have contributed so far—and their initiatives have been modest at best.²³ While expressions of support for disarmament education have now become *de rigueur* at NPT review meetings, there is little evidence that it is a properly integrated part of the school curriculum anywhere. Supporting a few postgraduate university scholarships on disarmament and arms control does not demonstrate a firm commitment. Disarmament education must reach children and the wider public, not just the highly educated, but it remains primarily

the responsibility of grassroots organizations, which often lack the resources needed to get through to large audiences effectively. States must pay more than lip service to disarmament education if they are serious about realizing their professed goal of a world free of nuclear weapons. A generation of students well informed of nuclear dangers could prove a formidable force for abolition.

Time to stand up

Throughout the twentieth century, young people were at the forefront of some of the most significant and far-reaching movements for social, cultural and political change. Today we must rise to the challenge of finishing the decades-long job that our parents' and grandparents' generations started: freeing the planet of nuclear weapons. The price of inaction in the face of this monumental threat could be unbridled catastrophe—misery on a scale previously unknown to humankind. Are we prepared to take that risk? For how much longer will we place our faith in the hands of a small number of individuals who control the world's nuclear forces? Youth have the opportunity to confront the nuclear menace afresh, unhindered by the disillusionment or cynicism of many who have gone before us. We can and must bring sorely needed energy, passion and new thinking to the movement.

Older generations likewise have a duty not to trivialize the views of young people or to undermine their contributions. Too often young people adopt conservative positions—such as support for a reduction in national arsenals rather than their elimination—because hardened “realists” have told them, with all the wisdom that comes with experience, that it is not practical to advocate for a complete ban on nuclear weapons. However, Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams, who spearheaded the international effort to ban landmines in the 1990s, has offered us quite different advice. She remarked at the launch of ICAN in Vienna three years ago: “Some governments tell us that a nuclear weapons convention is premature and unlikely. Don't believe them. They told us the same thing about a mine ban treaty.”²⁴

Indeed, in 1995, the then Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans, who recently co-chaired the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, commented in a letter to the Editor of the *Canberra Times* newspaper:

You may regard landmines as ‘patently inhumane’. But they are no more or less inhumane than other conventional weapons of war. Certainly, it would be nice to ban all weapons of war, but governments have a fundamental responsibility to provide for their nations’ security and defence. That is why most governments will simply not accept a total landmines ban.²⁵

But, to date, more than 150 states have banned all anti-personnel landmines (including Australia). And we are confident that, in turn, those who now dismiss a Nuclear Weapons Convention as impractical, naive and idealistic will also be proven wrong. That will only be the case, however, if we work hard to muster support from a broad cross-section of society,

including youth, in all parts of the world. We have a moral responsibility to breathe new life into the movement and revive it from its dormancy. Moreover, we should be fearless in pursuing our goal. As the youth representatives quipped to diplomats at the NPT Review Conference in May: "Nuclear weapons are now 65 years old. Don't you think it's time for compulsory retirement?"²⁶

Notes

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7. See the website of the Coalition to Demilitarize the University of California, at <ucnuclearfree.org/blog/coalitiontodemil.html>.
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16. Million Pleas campaign, at <www.millionpleas.com>.
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18. "Youth Reject Nuclear Weapons, Survey in Eight Countries Shows", Soka Gakkai International, May 2010, at <www.peoplesdecade.org/about/efforts/survey.html>.
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20. *United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN document A/57/124, 30 August 2002.

21. Ibid., p. 4.
22. Learn Peace materials can be downloaded at <www.icanw.org/learn_peace>.
23. The latest such report is *Disarmament and Non-proliferation Education: Report of the Secretary-General*, UN document A/63/158, 21 July 2008.
24. Statement by Jody Williams at the launch of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Vienna, Austria, 30 April 2007.
25. Gareth Evans, "Landmine Ban Impractical", *Canberra Times*, 14 June 1995.
26. Streibl and Oezcan, op. cit.

From aspiration to success: shaping civil society action to change nuclear weapons policy

Alyn Ware

Sixty-five years after the United Nations General Assembly first called for the elimination of nuclear weapons,¹ US President Barack Obama reignited the vision for a nuclear-weapon-free world, but added that realizing such a vision might not happen in his lifetime.²

During the past four decades the international community has achieved treaties prohibiting and eliminating other inhumane weapons, such as anti-personnel landmines, cluster munitions, biological weapons and chemical weapons. However, the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons, the most inhumane and destructive of all, remains elusive.

Civil society action was instrumental in the achievement of the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions, building political will to counter and override the pressure to keep such weapons due to their military utility. Two key factors in the success of the campaigns were a focus on the humanitarian consequences of the use of these weapons, and the application of international humanitarian law. Media images of victims and survivors of landmines and cluster munitions generated popular support for treaties to ban the weapons and stimulated like-minded governments to bypass the deadlocked consensus-based processes in Geneva with a direct treaty negotiation process.³ It has also been argued that a focus on the humanitarian aspects of chemical and biological weapons provided the key to achieving conventions to eliminate them.⁴

Many advocates of nuclear disarmament thus call for a similar humanitarian framework to be applied to the campaign to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.⁵ This would involve a shift from a technical, step-by-step process—which could indeed take generations to complete—to a prohibition process, whereby success could potentially be achieved much more quickly.

Such a shift in focus opens the door to a range of actions by all states to advance nuclear abolition. Non-nuclear-weapon states would no longer be spectators on the sidelines calling for the nuclear-weapon states (NWS) to reduce their numbers and for threshold states not to acquire nuclear weapons. Instead, the non-NWS could be active: prohibiting nuclear weapons in their own jurisdictions and among themselves, and building the legal, technical, political and institutional elements of the framework required to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. This could include pursuing a like-minded process similar to the processes that led to the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Munitions by undertaking preparatory work for negotiations on a Nuclear Weapons Convention and developing initial aspects of an enforceable global prohibition treaty.⁶

Alyn Ware is a Consultant for the International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms, member of the Middle Powers Initiative, Global Coordinator of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, Vice-President of the International Peace Bureau and co-founder of the Abolition 2000 international network promoting a nuclear weapons convention. The author thanks Robert Green and Kate Dewes for their assistance in preparing this article.

There is fertile ground for such an approach following the agreement in the 2010 NPT Review Conference *Final Document* that “all States need to make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons.”⁷

However, there are a number of questions as to whether the processes and civil society campaigns that helped to achieve the Mine Ban Treaty and Convention on Cluster Munitions are replicable for nuclear weapons. Civil society has already tried to carry out such campaigns with respect to nuclear abolition, with rather limited success. In the 1960s and 1980s, non-governmental organizations mobilized millions of people using the destructive humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapon tests and potential use in war as a primary organizing tool. Such action was effective in achieving a ban on nuclear testing, and probably helped to build a norm against use that has prevented any use in wartime since 1945.⁸ However, only in a very few cases has such civil society action been able to move governments from policies embracing nuclear deterrence to policies of prohibition.⁹

Civil society action has been effective in changing public attitudes to nuclear weapons, especially in the states possessing nuclear weapons or covered by extended nuclear deterrence. Whereas public opinion polls in the 1980s indicated majority acceptance of nuclear weapons,¹⁰ recent public opinion polls indicate the majority now supports the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons.¹¹

However, such a change in public opinion appears to have had only a minimal impact on government policy. There has been a slight shift, in that most governments now accept the vision and responsibility for achieving a nuclear-weapon-free world. Nonetheless, few of the NWS or their allies are prepared to abandon nuclear deterrence, prohibit the threat or use of nuclear weapons, or commence negotiations on anything other than minimal steps toward disarmament.

Indeed, Kissinger, Shultz, Perry and Nunn¹² and many of the other similar “gangs” of high-level former advocates¹³ of nuclear deterrence now supporting the vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world generally indicate that their change in viewpoint was not a result of civil society action, but rather of a change in political conditions that made the doctrine of nuclear deterrence less sustainable.

Many of them also argue that the current obstacles to progress are not lack of public attention or civil society engagement, but ongoing security concerns, which rule out the possibility of moving to zero nuclear weapons in the short or medium term. Their view is encapsulated in this quote from the first article by Kissinger et al.: “In some respects, the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons is like the top of a very tall mountain. From the vantage point of our troubled world today, we can’t even see the top of the mountain. We must chart a course to higher ground where the mountaintop becomes more visible.”¹⁴

The real potential of civil society to effect change in nuclear weapons policy is probably somewhere between two polarized perspectives: public pressure is not irrelevant to a political realist world, but nor is it a magic cure that will by itself deliver the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Limits to civil society impact on nuclear doctrines

Several factors place greater constraints on the role of civil society in effecting change in the nuclear weapons arena than was the case for cluster munitions and landmines.

First, the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions and landmines was current and demonstrable to the public and media. Landmines and cluster munitions were killing and maiming thousands if not millions of people during the periods leading up to the treaty negotiations and throughout the negotiations. The civil society campaigns were thus able to get media coverage and public attention to the plight of those affected. The humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons is, in contrast, more historical and hypothetical. Moreover, radioactivity is a silent and elusive killer, making the full extent of its impact on health much more difficult to see and to prove.

Second, nuclear weapons have not been used in wartime since 1945, which diminishes the importance and urgency ascribed to the issue by the general public. Other issues appear much more pressing, such as climate change, environmental damage, conventional wars, the flow of small arms, terrorism and development.

Third, nuclear weapons are hidden in silos and submarines—out of sight and out of mind—and this reduces further the general knowledge of and public attention given to the issue.

Fourth, cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines were used in military operations. The prohibition campaigns could argue that such use was not militarily necessary as there were alternative military strategies available to meet the same goals. Once military planners replace the operational need for such weapons, there is no justification for retaining them.¹⁵ Nuclear weapons, on the other hand, have a primarily political role. The fundamental purpose ascribed to them is not for use in military operations, but as a deterrent.¹⁶ There is a widespread, though misplaced, perception that their use ended the Second World War, and that their threatened use has prevented a major war between nuclear-armed states ever since. Even if civil society effectively convinces governments that the use of nuclear weapons would violate international humanitarian law, it would not necessarily lead to immediate prohibition of possession. In the case of chemical weapons, for example, it took nearly 70 years after the use of chemical weapons was prohibited¹⁷ to achieve a convention banning the possession of chemical weapons. Up until the conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention, a number of states maintained such weapons primarily as a deterrent and retained the option of retaliatory use.

These factors indicate that replicating the widespread civil society campaigns that were generated against nuclear testing and the nuclear arms race in the 1960s and 1980s, and those generated against landmines and cluster munitions in the 1990s and 2000s, would be difficult if not impossible. Moreover, even if it were to be achieved, it would probably only have a limited impact on nuclear policy, unless it was strategically targeted.

Increasing public support: making nuclear abolition more relevant

There are ways in which civil society campaigns for nuclear abolition could muster more support. Making nuclear abolition more obviously relevant to the current concerns of the public would increase the reach of anti-nuclear campaigns and enhance the potential for media and public attention.

Highlighting the cost of nuclear weapons and the link between nuclear disarmament and funding for social and economic needs could bring development-oriented organizations into the campaign. It is reported that countries possessing nuclear weapons spend approximately US\$ 90–100 billion per year.¹⁸ Think how this could be better spent on education, social services or development aid.¹⁹

Nuclear weapons use is also tightly bound to environmental concerns. The environmental consequences of even a limited use of nuclear weapons would be devastating. The detonation of a hundred nuclear devices, less than 1% of the global arsenal, would generate enough smoke to cripple global agriculture. Temperatures in the Northern hemisphere would drop, and millions would starve, even in countries far from the conflict.²⁰

Engaging the development and environmental communities could build public support. However, to succeed in changing policy a civil society campaign must address the continuing rationales and drivers for nuclear deterrence and engage directly with policy makers.

Key drivers and rationales for nuclear weapons

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) identified a number of key drivers and rationales that perpetuate reliance on nuclear deterrence, which include the following perceptions.

- Nuclear weapons have deterred, and will continue to deter, war between the major powers.
- Nuclear weapons deter large-scale conventional attacks.
- Nuclear weapons deter chemical or biological weapons attack.
- Extended nuclear deterrence is necessary to reassure allies.
- Any major move away from nuclear deterrence is inherently destabilizing.
- Nuclear weapons cannot be disinvented so there is no point trying to eliminate them.

- Nuclear weapons confer unrivalled status and prestige.
- Nuclear weapons cost less than conventional arms.
- Nuclear weapons establishments are needed to maintain expertise.²¹

Another key driver is the corporate interest in perpetuating a high nuclear weapons budget. Nearly US\$ 100 billion are spent annually on nuclear weapons and their delivery systems,²² leaving the industry with considerable resources to advocate for the retention of nuclear weapons.

The prospect of success will be greatly enhanced if civil society campaigns address these rationales and drivers. Nuclear abolition should be relevant to politicians' and the general public's interests. The campaigns should stigmatize and delegitimize nuclear weapons: highlight the environmental and humanitarian costs as well as other risks of nuclear weapons, expose the myths of nuclear deterrence and reinforce the illegality of nuclear weapon use. The campaigns must also propose viable alternatives to nuclear deterrence, and a verifiable and enforceable disarmament regime that builds prestige into nuclear disarmament rather than armament.

Stigmatizing nuclear weapons

The overwhelming majority of states agreed to prohibit chemical and biological weapons and to discard them as unusable because they came to be seen as inhumane, "dirty", "poisonous", and indiscriminate terror devices unworthy of being considered weapons.²³ Similar stigmatization by civil society of landmines and cluster munitions underpinned the successful campaigns for treaties banning them.²⁴

The even more repulsive and devastating characteristics of nuclear weapons need to be brought home to political leaders in particular, for some of whom possession of a nuclear arsenal seems to have become imbued with almost fetishistic power.²⁵ As General Lee Butler said:

Nuclear weapons are the enemy of humanity. Indeed, they're not weapons at all. They're some species of biological time bombs whose effects transcend time and space, poisoning the earth and its inhabitants for generations to come.²⁶

Delegitimizing nuclear weapons

The general illegality of threat or use of nuclear weapons was confirmed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in its 1996 Advisory Opinion. The ICJ based its conclusion on the principles and rules of international humanitarian law (IHL) which are "intransgressible", thus applying to any use of nuclear weapons.²⁷ The ICJ applied additional law relating to the threat or use of force, including Article 2(4) of the UN Charter, to determine that the threat to use nuclear weapons was also generally illegal. However, the Court's judgment included a caveat that it "cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful

or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake.²⁸

The NWS have not fully accepted the Court's decision. However, Switzerland's success in including reference in the 2010 NPT Review Conference's *Final Document* that IHL must apply at all times²⁹ increases the political possibilities to advance, reinforce and apply the 1996 ICJ Advisory Opinion in order to build political momentum for abolition.

Citizens in NWS can use these documents in legal challenges to deployed nuclear weapons.³⁰ Citizens in non-NWS can also use the Court's opinion of general illegality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons to advance legislation in their own countries prohibiting nuclear weapons and making it illegal for citizens to be involved in activities relating to their threat or use. This could include extraterritorial application, as in New Zealand, or even moves toward universal jurisdiction.³¹

Another possibility for reinforcing and applying the norm of illegality is through an amendment to the Statute of the International Criminal Court, which would make the employment of nuclear weapons, or the threat of their employment, a crime under the jurisdiction of the Court. Mexico has proposed such an amendment, which has been supported by a number of other countries and by parliamentarians around the world.³²

A treaty prohibiting the use of nuclear weapons is another way that non-NWS could affirm the illegality of the use of nuclear weapons. Such a treaty could be a catalyst for public discussion in countries that are allies of NWS: should they relinquish their dependence on extended nuclear deterrence or be seen to support the potential use of nuclear weapons by remaining outside the treaty?³³

The norm of non-use could even be advanced among NWS. The US Nuclear Posture Review does not accept the illegality of threat or use, but does reinforce a practice against use: "It is in the US interest and that of all other nations that the nearly 65-year record of nuclear non-use be extended forever."³⁴ There have been suggestions that the NWS might be amenable, with some encouragement, to a UN Security Council resolution affirming the practice of non-use.³⁵

Beyond legality, recent reports have challenged the legitimacy of the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, and placed greater onus on the proponents of nuclear deterrence to give evidence for their claims.³⁶ Whilst these are important and possibly influential initiatives, they will not convince everyone.

Thus, while initiatives to debunk deterrence are important, they will need to be complemented by efforts that do not necessarily challenge nuclear deterrence, but look beyond it—at how deterrence is being overtaken and can be replaced completely by other security mechanisms and conditions.

Alternatives to nuclear deterrence

The obligation to achieve nuclear disarmament is not contingent upon finding alternative security mechanisms to nuclear deterrence. Rather, this obligation has been confirmed by the ICJ as unconditional and by the states parties to the NPT as unequivocal.

Nonetheless, paying attention to the development of non-nuclear security mechanisms makes nuclear disarmament more feasible, opening the door to engagement with policy makers in the 30 or so states still relying upon nuclear deterrence. Although security through nuclear deterrence is risky and possibly illusory, NWS and their allies, and policy makers supportive of nuclear deterrence doctrines, are unlikely to abandon such doctrines without the strengthening or further development of alternative non-nuclear mechanisms or security conditions.

This dynamic was evident in the 2010 NATO Parliamentary Assembly discussion in Latvia on the US nuclear weapons deployed in Europe as part of extended nuclear deterrence. Rapporteur Raymond Knops, noting a division between those supporting a removal of the nuclear weapons and those wanting them retained, requested that parliaments discuss and report back on “What alternative measures might member states find acceptable in ensuring their defence should a change to the status quo take place?”³⁷

It is also reflected in the US Nuclear Posture Review, which links a reduced role for nuclear weapons with strengthening non-nuclear means for attaining security. “Although nuclear weapons have proved to be a key component of US assurances to allies and partners, the United States has relied increasingly on non-nuclear elements to strengthen regional security architectures.”³⁸

Some argue that the mechanisms and conditions for non-nuclear security already exist, even if they are not yet adequately utilized.³⁹ These conditions include the more integrated global financial, trade, political and communications systems rendering aggression, in most circumstances, now counterproductive and nonsensical for the potential aggressor. The mechanisms include the UN bodies, treaty bodies, regional security structures and a range of approaches such as diplomacy, mediation, negotiation, arbitration, adjudication, and enforcement through sanctions and collective action under the United Nations. These mechanisms have been used to deal successfully with conflicts and threats involving nuclear weapons, thus demonstrating that states could abandon nuclear deterrence doctrines even before there is a global nuclear abolition regime,⁴⁰ as some states have already done. Many other states never subscribed to nuclear doctrines in the first place.

One alternative security mechanism is regional nuclear-weapon-free zones (NWFZs). These confirm that nuclear weapons will not be deployed on the territories of states parties, and include guarantees that the NWS will not threaten or use nuclear weapons against NWFZ states parties. In addition, they provide a forum for the states in the region to discuss security issues within a common security framework. NWFZs have already contributed to enhancing security

and reducing the role of nuclear weapons in a number of regions, overcoming complicated political relationships to do so.⁴¹ The exploration and development of NWFZs in North-East Asia, Central Europe, the Arctic and the Middle East would further marginalize the role of nuclear weapons and would enhance non-nuclear security in these regions.

Moreover, there is a growing awareness that the real security threats in the twenty-first century are not threats of invasion that need to be deterred by military force and possibly nuclear weapons, but the human security issues of poverty, climate change and resource depletion. As leaders of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament have noted these threats "... can only be overcome by nations and the global community working in cooperation—something not possible while nations maintain large and expensive militaries and threaten to destroy each other."⁴²

Finally, it should be noted that the very process of developing the cooperative regime that would be required to verifiably eliminate nuclear weapons would in itself contribute to the global cooperative security framework.

Developing a verifiable and enforceable nuclear disarmament regime

The willingness of NWS to accept a comprehensive prohibition against use of nuclear weapons and move to eliminate their stockpiles will also depend to some degree on their confidence that a verifiable and enforceable nuclear disarmament regime is feasible.

One possible regime, which features in the UN Secretary-General's five-point plan for disarmament, is outlined in the model Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC).⁴³ The model NWC builds on existing non-proliferation and disarmament mechanisms, includes some which would be part of the step-by-step disarmament process, and proposes others that would also be necessary and which could be developed at different stages of the disarmament process.

Building prestige into nuclear disarmament

Civil society can have some influence on reversing the drive to acquire and maintain nuclear weapons derived from the perceived status and political power they confer by helping to generate prestige and political power for the rejection of nuclear weapons and the achievement of global nuclear abolition.

The US peace movement's support for New Zealand when it walked out from under the nuclear umbrella in the 1980s, for example, was very influential in strengthening New Zealand's resolve to stay nuclear-weapon-free despite pressure from the US government and other allies, and then to take additional leadership globally, which assisted New Zealand's international status.⁴⁴ New Zealand's new-found prestige was reportedly influential in increasing trade and tourism, winning a temporary UN Security Council seat in 1993 and in a New Zealand judge gaining membership of the International Court of Justice in 2006.⁴⁵

Robert Green postulates that the greatest breakthrough in this regard would be if one of the NWS were to reject nuclear deterrence, and that the United Kingdom is probably best placed to do this: an anti-nuclear “breakout” by the UK, one of the principal NWS, would transform the nuclear disarmament debate overnight. “The UK would gain a global role it has not enjoyed since the British Empire was at its zenith. This time, however, its influence and prestige would be welcomed as truly a ‘force for good’”.⁴⁶

Removing the corporate interest in nuclear weapons

Corporate interest in developing and maintaining nuclear weapons can be challenged, checked, reduced and removed through budgetary decisions, conversion, boycott and divestment. Boycotts and divestment can be carried out by non-nuclear governments and by individual consumers and investors, investment brokers and group investors (churches, universities, cities) anywhere. Influencing budgetary decisions and conversion requires the collaboration of legislators and other decision makers in the nuclear-weapon states, although boycotts and divestment campaigns against nuclear weapons corporations could severely impact their stock prices and place pressure on them to convert. Both the Norwegian and New Zealand governments, pushed by parliamentarians and civil society, have divested their pension funds and other major government funds from corporations involved in nuclear weapons.⁴⁷ Others could be encouraged to follow suit.

Engaging with policy makers

UN High Representative for Disarmament Sergio Duarte, recognizing the importance of engaging legislators, notes: “Legislatures appropriate funds, hold officials accountable, debate policy, undertake investigations, ratify treaties, adopt implementing legislation, represent voices of public opinion. Parliaments help to give disarmament not only vision, but also some backbone, muscle, and teeth.” In 2010, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon wrote directly to every parliament in the world to encourage their efforts to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world.⁴⁸

Mass movements, media attention, rational arguments and political pressure become effective in shaping policy change when linked to specific opportunities and processes in the arenas where political decisions are made. Engaging effectively and strategically with decision makers, particularly government officials and legislators, is thus vital to ensure success.

The *substance* of such engagement should address the core issues identified above, which are holding back progress on nuclear abolition. The *processes* for engagement are varied, and include direct advocacy by citizens with their own political representatives, engagement with legislators involved in international parliamentary organizations and forums (such as the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Inter-Parliamentary Union, and Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament), and with government

officials at multilateral forums. Civil society can engage legislators in a number of domestic parliamentary actions to advance nuclear abolition, including resolutions and hearings on key topics such as an NWC, legislation to prohibit nuclear weapons nationally, and public events in parliaments such as film screenings, exhibitions and debates.⁴⁹ Some non-governmental organizations also play a useful role in convening informal forums for dialogue between officials of different countries and with representatives of civil society.⁵⁰

Eyes on the prize

While undertaking any initiative to advance the abolition of nuclear weapons, the prize which should frame the process is the “peak of the mountain”: a global treaty or framework of agreements to prohibit and eliminate nuclear weapons.

Ambition, such as a Nuclear Weapons Convention that will lead to the outlawing of nuclear weapons and their elimination, is the framework that will attract most public attention and passion. Small steps along the way—however necessary—will only attract the experts and minutiae-loving arms controllers that are already engaged and frankly not succeeding in moving things along.⁵¹

Positioning an NWC as the goal will generate public support, motivate policy makers to act, and shape the achievement of smaller measures into a seamless process for nuclear abolition rather than as stand-alone goals.

As Margaret Beckett, UK Foreign Secretary at the time, noted in 2007: “What we need is both vision—a scenario for a world free of nuclear weapons—and action Would [William Wilberforce] have achieved half as much ... if he had set out to ‘regulate’ or ‘reduce’ the slave trade rather than abolish it? I doubt it.”⁵²

The top of the mountain is now in sight. Civil society engaging effectively with policy makers can ensure sustained and effective action to get there.

Notes

1. UN General Assembly resolution 1(1), adopted without a vote on 24 January 1946.
2. Remarks by President Barack Obama, Hradcany Square, Prague, 5 April 2009, at <www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered>.
3. See Ken Berry et al., 2010, *Delegitimizing Nuclear Weapons: Examining the Validity of Nuclear Deterrence*, Monterey, CA, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, May, pp. 38, 39 and 41.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
5. See John Burroughs, “The Humanitarian Imperative for Nuclear Disarmament”, Briefing Paper for the Middle Powers Initiative/Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs conference “From Aspiration to Reality: Nuclear Disarmament after the NPT Review”, Geneva, 14–15 September 2010; Jakob Kellenberger, President of the ICRC, “Bringing the Era of Nuclear Weapons to an End”, Statement to the Geneva Diplomatic Corps, Geneva, 20 April 2010; Statement by H.E. Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Swiss

- Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, to the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, 3 May 2010 (available in French only).
6. Alyn Ware, "Preparatory Process for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (or Package of Agreements): Practical Measures to Build the Framework for a Nuclear-Weapons-Free World", paper prepared for the Middle Powers Initiative/Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs conference "From Aspiration to Reality: Nuclear Disarmament after the NPT Review", Geneva, 14–15 September 2010.
 7. 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Final Document*, UN document NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)*, New York, p. 20.
 8. See, for example, William Burr and Jeffrey Kimball (eds), "Nuclear Weapons, the Vietnam War, and the Nuclear Taboo", National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 195, 31 July 2006, at <www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB195/index.htm>.
 9. Civil society action was instrumental in the 1987 prohibition of nuclear weapons in New Zealand. It was also influential in the decision of Kazakhstan to remove Soviet nuclear weapons to the Russian Federation and to join the NPT as a non-nuclear-weapon state, and in Mongolia's prohibition of nuclear weapons.
 10. See Daniel Yankelovich and John Doble, 1984, "The Public Mood: Nuclear Weapons and the USSR", *Foreign Affairs*, Fall, which cites public opinion polls indicating that 85% of US citizens believe nuclear weapons are here to stay and cannot be abolished.
 11. "Publics around the World Favor International Agreement to Eliminate All Nuclear Weapons", WorldPublicOpinion.org, 9 December 2008, at <www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/articles/international_security_bt/577.php?nid=&id=&pnt=577>.
 12. George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, "Call for A World Free of Nuclear Weapons", *Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007.
 13. Statements have been made by former high-level political leaders from Australia, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, the Russian Federation and the United Kingdom.
 14. George P. Shultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger and Sam Nunn, "Toward a Nuclear-Free World", *Wall Street Journal*, 15 January 2008.
 15. Except for small numbers of weapons, retained to train teams in detecting and destroying weapons left in areas of former military operations.
 16. Of course deterrence relies on a willingness to use nuclear weapons in retaliation. However, nuclear doctrines generally hold that such use would indicate a failure of deterrence—the fundamental purpose of nuclear weapons. See, for example, United States Department of Defense, 2010, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, April, p. 15, and United States Joint Chiefs of Staff publication, *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, 15 March 2005, Chapter I-1.
 17. Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare, opened for signature 17 June 1925, entry into force in 1929.
 18. Ben Cramer, 2009, *Nuclear Weapons: At What Cost?* Geneva, International Peace Bureau.
 19. The Bangladesh parliament, for example, unanimously adopted a resolution on 5 April 2010 calling for the money spent on nuclear weapons to instead be invested in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and in climate change adaption (PNND, no date, "Parliamentary Resolutions Supporting a Nuclear Weapons Convention", at <www.gsinstiute.org/pnnd/docs/NWC_parliamentary_resolutions.pdf>). The nuclear disarmament for development issue has been raised by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his five-point plan for nuclear disarmament. It is also a part of a wider disarmament for development campaign being advanced by civil society organizations and governments such as Costa Rica.
 20. Alan Robock and Owen Brian Toon, 2010, "Local Nuclear War, Global Suffering", *Scientific American*, January, pp. 74–81. See also Steven Starr, <www.nucleardarkness.org>.
 21. International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament, 2009, *Eliminating Nuclear Threats: A Practical Agenda for Global Policymakers*, Canberra and Tokyo, Paragon, pp. 61–71.
 22. Cramer, op. cit.

23. Robert Green, 2010, *Security without Nuclear Deterrence*, Christchurch, Astron Media and Disarmament and Security Centre, New Zealand, p. 190.
24. See Rebecca Johnson, 2006, "Integrated Disarmament: A Prerequisite for Sustainable Nonproliferation", *Disarmament Diplomacy* 82, Spring.
25. See Anne Harrington de Souza, 2009, "Nuclear Weapons as the Currency of Power: Deconstructing the Fetishism of Force", *The Nonproliferation Review*, vol. 16, no. 3, November, pp. 325–345.
26. General Lee Butler USAF (Ret.), 1999, "Ending the Nuclear Madness", acceptance speech on receiving the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's 1999 Distinguished Peace Leadership Award, Waging Peace Series no. 40, p. 10.
27. International Court of Justice, Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996, paragraph 79.
28. *Ibid.*, paragraph 105.
29. 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, *Final Document*, UN document NPT/CONF.2010/50 (Vol. I)*, New York, p. 19.
30. This was done successfully in Scotland in 1999, when three anti-nuclear activists on trial for wilfully damaging equipment on a nuclear submarine base in Scotland were acquitted on the grounds that the deployment of nuclear weapons on the submarine was in violation of international law as affirmed by the ICJ. See, "Summary of Sheriff Gimblett's Ruling", Trident Ploughshares, 20 October 1999, <www.tridentploughshares.org/article729>.
31. Universal jurisdiction is where the state can prosecute anyone for a crime regardless of whether or not the persons charged are citizens or residents and regardless of where it was committed.
32. See International Criminal Court Assembly of States Parties, Report of the Bureau on the Review Conference, Addendum, document ICC-ASP/8/43/Add.1, 10 November 2009; and "Nuclear Weapons and the International Criminal Court", PNND Update 25, November 2009, at <www.gsinstitute.org/pnnd/updates/25.html#11>.
33. This proposal can be found in Burroughs, *op. cit.*, p. 8.
34. United States Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, p. ix.
35. Ware, 2010, *op. cit.*
36. See ICNND, *op. cit.*; Berry et al., *op. cit.*
37. Raymond Knops (Rapporteur), NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Sub-Committee on Future Security and Defence Capabilities, "US Non-strategic Nuclear Weapons in Europe: A Fundamental NATO Debate", draft report, NATO PA Doc 048 DSCFC 10 E, 9 April 2010.
38. United States Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review Report*, p. xiii. Note that the report includes non-military aspects in building regional security.
39. Green, *op. cit.*
40. For examples of such methods in use, see Alyn Ware, 2003, "Rule of Force or Rule of Law: Legal Responses to Nuclear Threats from Terrorism, Proliferation, and War", *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, vol. 2, no. 1.
41. For more details on existing NWFZs, see the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs pages on the topic, at <www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NWFZ.shtml>.
42. "The Priority of Peace and Disarmament for the Global Community", Joint statement by Co-Presidents of Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, Uta Zapf (Germany), Marian Hobbs (New Zealand), Abacca Anjain Maddison (Marshall Islands), Alexa McDonough (Canada) and Mikyung Lee (South Korea), released during the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Berlin, 24 May 2008, at <www.gsinstitute.org/pnnd/docs/IWD_2008.pdf>.
43. See Merav Datan et al., 2007, *Securing Our Survival: The Case for a Nuclear Weapons Convention*, Cambridge, IPPNW, IALANA, INESAP; Barry Blechman and Alex Bollfrass (eds), 2009, *Elements of a Nuclear Disarmament Treaty*, Washington, DC, Stimson Center, 2009.
44. See, for example, David Lange, 1990, *Nuclear Free: The New Zealand Way*, Auckland, Penguin Books.

45. Informal conversations between the author and representatives of UN Member States prior to elections for the UN Security Council seat and ICJ judges.
46. Green, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–246.
47. See Hallgeir Langeland and Keith Locke, “Nuclear Divestment”, PNND Notes 2008, pp. 10–12, at <www.gs institute.org/pnnd/pubs/PNNDNotesEng.pdf>.
48. Sergio Duarte, “Disarmament and Political Will”, presentation to the Parliamentarians for Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament Assembly, Pugwash, July 2008, at <www.gs institute.org/pnnd/events/Pugwash2008/pres_Duarte.pdf>; UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Letter to all parliaments calling for action on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament, 24 February 2010, at <www.gs institute.org/pnnd/docs/UNSG_Eng.pdf>.
49. See Alyn Ware and Devon Chaffee, 2003, “Arenas in which parliamentarians can exert influence or become engaged”, in *Parliamentarians and Nuclear Weapons: A Briefing Book*, Wellington, PNND.
50. The Middle Powers Initiative convenes a number of such forums, particularly in relation to implementing Article VI of the NPT.
51. Berry et al., p. 44.
52. Margaret Beckett, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons?” Keynote Address to the Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference, 25 June 2007.

Now we can: civil society and governments moving toward a ban on nuclear weapons

Dimity Hawkins

With the passing in 2010 of the 65th anniversary since nuclear weapons were first invented and used, there is a growing impatience within the international community to bring this threat to humanity to an end once and for all.

This impatience arises from an all too apparent lack of progress toward abolition, despite millions of citizens having campaigned for disarmament over the years, the existence of a number of binding legal obligations, and the proliferation of rhetoric about creating a world free of nuclear weapons.

Civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have maintained the vision of nuclear disarmament, pushing for elimination since the inception of these weapons. We have seen massive surges of public sentiment and activism, and even a number of leaps forward. But disarmament diplomacy has stalled too often, and inconsistent government action has made the fundamental goal of complete elimination seem at times unreachable. In order for governments to find sufficient impetus to fulfill the promise of a world free from nuclear weapons, a new and dynamic partnership of government, civil society, and technical, legal and scientific experts is required, based fundamentally on a common belief that we can now achieve this goal. The failure to do so is not an option for those of us who envisage a more peaceful and secure future for humanity.

A Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) has captured the imaginations of many leading players in the disarmament community, initially among NGOs but increasingly within government and diplomatic circles. In recent years, the arguments in support of an NWC as the most tangible and achievable pathway to zero have grown exponentially, as has the range of actors making those arguments.

Today, civil society is recognized as a key player and a vital partner to enable successful implementation of new treaties and conventions. This article explores the imperative for NGOs and governments to work together to prepare for the negotiation of a Nuclear Weapons Convention, and explores both the history of this vital dialogue and some of the current challenges we face.

Dimity Hawkins has worked with the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) since its inception, and has worked closely with the Reaching Critical Will project, the Medical Association for Prevention of War in Australia and many other NGOs. She is based in Melbourne, Australia.

The early development of the model Nuclear Weapons Convention

For there is no secret and there is no defense; there is no possibility of control except through the aroused understanding and insistence of the peoples of the world.

Albert Einstein¹

In 1997, in response to an ongoing dialogue about the need to enhance existing disarmament mechanisms, a model Nuclear Weapons Convention, written by a consortium of international experts and thinkers convened by the International Association of Lawyers against Nuclear Arms (IALANA), the International Network of Engineers and Scientists against Proliferation (INESAP) and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), was launched.

This first model NWC was presented as a blue-print for negotiations and action toward total abolition. Strongly modelled on the Chemical Weapons Convention, it is designed to prohibit the production of fissile material for nuclear-weapon use and the development, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use and threat of use of nuclear weapons.

In the model NWC, parties are required first to declare all nuclear weapons, material, facilities and delivery vehicles. They are then required to abolish their nuclear arsenals in a series of phases, beginning with taking the weapons off high alert, removing them from deployment, removing the warheads from their delivery vehicles, disabling the warheads, and placing all fissile material under international control. The process described in the model would complement rather than undermine existing nuclear weapons treaties.

The model NWC was submitted by Costa Rica to the United Nations Secretary-General and was accepted as a discussion document for the United Nations. In 1999, IALANA, INESAP and IPPNW released a slightly revised version of the model in the document *Security and Survival: The Case for a Nuclear Weapons Convention*,² which provided commentary to the model, reflecting both early governmental and non-governmental feedback on the original text. Responses to and feedback on the model NWC continued to be refined and addressed through a series of papers produced by IPPNW (in consultation with the Lawyer's Committee on Nuclear Policy), the *Nuclear Weapons Convention Monitor*.³

In 2007, a decade after the first model appeared, the newly established International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)⁴ worked with the original authors to launch a further revision of the model, including updated commentary reflecting the changing security and political environment and the considerable feedback received since the first edition. This updated publication was again submitted to the United Nations by Costa Rica and Malaysia and accepted as a discussion document.

The main drafters always envisaged the model NWC as exactly that, a *model* to stimulate discussion. It was never intended to be pulled off the shelf and simply brought into force, but rather to provide a resource for discussion and further development. Having drafted this

model and having worked to legitimize the concept for over a decade, many NGOs are now at pains to emphasize that the model NWC is simply a stepping-off point. As Associate Professor Tilman Ruff, Chair of ICAN, states:

We do not see merit in being too prescriptive or rigid about exactly how a global ban on nuclear weapons should be developed. What we want to do is put heat under decision makers to encourage and compel them to act. We want to encourage and work closely with those governments that will take the lead.⁵

With this firmly in mind, the NGO community has exerted considerable energy to encourage governments to engage seriously with the concept of developing a convention or treaty that provides a roadmap to complete abolition of nuclear weapons. The challenge to governments is to examine and expand on what works in the model and in other, existing, weapons ban treaties, identify what doesn't, and to make a concerted effort at finding the common ground on a way forward to bring about a ban on nuclear weapons.

Technical, legal and diplomatic as well as policy experts who have taken the time to examine the concept of a treaty to ban nuclear weapons all agree that this civil society initiative expressed through the model NWC is an exceptional start. As UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated in 2008, when he introduced his five-point plan for a nuclear-weapon-free world and discussed ways to coalesce government and diplomatic action on nuclear disarmament:

They could pursue this goal by agreement on a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments. Or they could consider negotiating a nuclear-weapons convention, backed by a strong system of verification, as has long been proposed at the United Nations. ... I have circulated to all UN member states a draft of such a convention, which offers a good point of departure.⁶

There is growing recognition that verifiable and complete nuclear disarmament must happen through a comprehensive framework, and cannot be achieved by incremental steps alone. These weapons are uniquely destructive, indiscriminate and inhumane and need an all-inclusive approach for total elimination to become possible. To focus only on reductions or single steps could legitimize possession by a few, playing yet again into the arguments around "nuclear apartheid" that have plagued negotiations and helped feed the dysfunction and periods of deadlock in disarmament and non-proliferation politics for decades.

Ideally a treaty or convention, as observed by Nobel laureate Jody Williams⁷ and others, would bring together many instruments and steps. Such a treaty or convention may add to the functions and activities of existing regimes and arrangements and, for aspects not yet addressed, it would establish new, complementary arrangements. Where necessary, it could work in parallel to inform, stimulate and hurry along the implementation of other measures

long in discussion and negotiation. It would not *rule out* any other measure, but would *rule in* a context and framework for the real goal of zero.

As noted by the Co-Chair of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament (ICNND) Gareth Evans, in his evidence to an Australian parliamentary inquiry hearing on this issue in 2009:

... [an NWC] would have within its scope the whole content of the NPT, plus the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, plus the fissile material treaty, plus some additional verification strategies It would be a great global catch-all, and we could start from the beginning.⁸

The promises of the Non-Proliferation Treaty

In 2009, United States President Barack Obama made a landmark speech on the responsibility of the United States to help rid the world of nuclear weapons, famously declaring the United States' commitment "to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."⁹ Even with his qualifying remarks on the need for patience and persistence, characterized by the less than ambitious statement that the goal may not be reached within his lifetime, the intent expressed in this speech brought about a sweeping change in sentiment immediately observable in subsequent multilateral forums and meetings.

But in 2010, at the Eighth Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), there was little to show on comprehensive disarmament from the five recognized nuclear-weapon states. All five states expended considerable energy justifying the maintenance of their nuclear weapons, while again impressing upon the rest of the world the imperative that others do not acquire them. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asserted in her speech to the Review Conference that the position of herself and the President on the issue of rights and responsibilities was not just a slogan, but a guiding principle. However, in the same speech she clearly states that "... the United States can retain a nuclear deterrent for as long as nuclear weapons exist, one that will protect our country and our allies."¹⁰ China stated that its nuclear weapons pose no threat to other countries, and that it is "firmly committed to a nuclear strategy of self-defense."¹¹ France too emphasized that its doctrine is "strictly defensive", noting that the world's nuclear powers should aim to "restrict the role of nuclear weapons solely to extreme circumstances of self-defence where their vital interests are under threat, with arsenals scaled down to the level of strict sufficiency in relation to the international strategic context."¹² Dialogue at the conference was, at best, tediously redolent of the past 40 years. At worst, it was dangerous in its attempts to legitimize the status of possessors of nuclear weapons.

It is a requirement of Article VI in the NPT for states parties to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament". This has been a global obligation for over four decades now.

Measurable progress has been made but civil society and governments have significant steps still to take to secure a ban on nuclear weapons. Of the three “pillars” of the NPT (disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy), disarmament is the one looking most decidedly shaky after 40 years of unfulfilled promises.

Some civil society campaigners have observed that expecting the nuclear-weapon states to lead on disarmament is like expecting tobacco companies to lead the health-driven quit smoking campaigns.¹³ Indeed, Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Switzerland, recently expanded on the analogy, asking:

If you continue to smoke, seem to enjoy it and show no sign of quitting, how can you expect others not to start smoking?¹⁴

Nonetheless, the final outcome document from the Review Conference twice noted a Nuclear Weapons Convention in the context of the UN Secretary-General’s five-point plan on nuclear disarmament. Although the final text did not call on states to negotiate such a convention, it is widely hailed as a step forward on this issue.

Building political will

Perhaps today progress on disarmament turns not on the question of political will, which exists in potential form, as much as on the question of the energy to inspire and exercise this will. Popular energy needs to drive political will.

*Merav Datan*¹⁵

The case for eliminating nuclear weapons has been made, time and again; it is now imperative to attain the essential political will to outlaw these weapons. Civil society interest and political will for nuclear abolition are clearly increasing, some suggest for the first time since the end of the Cold War. The numbers alone would signify a substantial shift in global dialogue. At the 2010 NPT Review Conference, more than 17 million signatures on petitions from around the world were presented to conference president Ambassador Libran Cabactulan of the Philippines and UN High Representative for Disarmament Sergio Duarte.¹⁶

Increasing numbers of NGOs have made the connection between nuclear weapons and other global issues, including environmental damage, public health and economic development. In 2010 Jakob Kellenberger, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), indicated that the movement is now giving priority to making the humanitarian case against nuclear weapons.¹⁷ This renewed focus of the ICRC on the humanitarian implications of nuclear weapons signals a change in momentum for calls for an abolition treaty.

NGOs have not only worked to stimulate government action through lobbying. They are involved in public education and awareness exercises, the development of reporting mechanisms for government as well as, of course, modelling conventions and discussion

documents. Civil society is contributing significantly to building and embedding norms of behaviour in relation to nuclear weapons.¹⁸ Detailed and expert NGO analysis has enhanced the transparency of government and United Nations processes and served to build up momentum and consideration of a global abolition treaty.¹⁹ For example, analysis first published in August 2010 from ICAN shows government positions on a Nuclear Weapons Convention, ranking them in four categories, from “very supportive” to “skeptical”.²⁰ In the document, 140 states are listed as either “very supportive” or “supportive” of a Nuclear Weapons Convention. Notable in this list is the (albeit heavily qualified) support of several nuclear-armed nations: China, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, India and Pakistan.

With public mobilization across the world, and compelling arguments for change, civil society is driving the momentum needed for meaningful action toward zero nuclear weapons. As observed by Austria’s Foreign Minister Michael Spindelegger in May 2010:

The contribution of civil society in disarmament matters is vital. Many projects—such as the Mine Ban Treaty or the Convention on Cluster Munitions—would not have turned out as successful had it not been for the work of dedicated NGOs. It is my firm belief that strengthening of the monitoring role of civil society can further our goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.²¹

Reaching the NWC tipping point

Some experts now assert that we are approaching the tipping point that will see a global abolition treaty or convention finally get off the ground and enter into preparatory negotiations. But the way is far from clear.

The power to act rests primarily in the hands of governments: states have the responsibility and the mandate to make treaties, they determine whether a debate occurs and the content of treaties. But they do not work alone. Thanks to the efforts of civil society, states have accepted the concept of a treaty for abolition and many are looking at the model NWC as a basis for negotiation. At this critical juncture, NGOs and governments can produce the best result by working closely together to amplify each other’s efforts to bring about a ban on nuclear weapons. Civil society must make sure it remains engaged with states: states must not attempt to close the doors on civil society, or decide that nuclear disarmament is not a topic for non-governmental involvement.

As discussions on measures to take disarmament forward build in coming years, and should the drafting of a detailed, comprehensive and expert model legal document provide the breakthrough civil society hopes for on nuclear disarmament, NGOs will face a number of challenges. Maintaining the integrity of the vision of a world truly free from the nuclear menace of the last 65 years while remaining flexible and responsive to developments and proposals from states negotiating such measures will be key. By

continuing to analyse and model how to go about nuclear disarmament, and by making their expectations of governments clear, civil society will continue to provoke and stimulate government deliberations.

NGOs will go on meeting with their governments informally to discuss the merits of a convention, offering expertise and analysis. States that do not possess nuclear weapons will be challenged to pick up and take forward the convention. Building on the concept of the international norm of non-possession of nuclear weapons will be key. After all, the possession of and continued reliance on nuclear weapons is an anomaly. The non-nuclear-weapon states are crucial; these are the states that will have to take a lead in finding ways to build support and gain working agreement from the nuclear-weapon states and possessor states. Again, NGOs can help to enliven, excite and agitate for progress.

Expanding efforts to provide linkages with issues such as environmental integrity, international humanitarian law and human rights, redressing military expenditures in favour of global aid efforts and much more will sustain the relevance of NGOs to nuclear disarmament as negotiations progress.

Other campaigns to ban weapons of mass destruction hold valuable lessons for nuclear disarmament efforts. To make sure we learn all we can from the processes that resulted in the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Mine Ban Treaty and the Convention on Cluster Weapons, among others, there will need to be considerable exploration, discussion and analysis of security, economic, humanitarian and legal aspects of these treaties and their negotiation processes.

NGOs will continue to work creatively within civil society to generate the groundswell of popular opinion that provides the momentum for political will to achieve change. With the growth of independent online media, social networking and multimedia technologies come opportunities to reach communities and constituencies as never before.²² The potential to coalesce voices and action across nations through emerging information technologies is an exciting challenge, and breaks NGOs free of the constraints of pseudo-diplomacy. NGOs can now worry less about insinuating themselves into negotiations and instead focus on building an agenda for negotiation from the grassroots, through raised public expectations, that thanks to information technology can reach negotiators at the table directly. Disarmament education can and is a global undertaking, and strong initiatives on this from a range of NGOs and the United Nations are already under way.

Perhaps most important, NGOs and civil society will continue to provide the impetus for change, expressing through new and creative means, as well as through more established methods, the sense of urgency. Without it there seems little likelihood of a world free from nuclear weapons.

Conclusion

A world free from nuclear weapons is possible. It is not just some lofty ideal. It is within living memory that these weapons were created and first used. Before this memory fades, it is imperative that we evolve beyond such destructive power and instead develop real human security. NGOs do not underestimate the challenges in developing consensus on disarmament. We have borne witness and been party to the decades of hope and despair that have marked this journey, and the road ahead is neither straight nor smooth. There will be many political, technical, verification and implementation challenges along the way.

NGOs will strive to maintain a dynamic role as the world's governments move toward a total ban on nuclear weapons. We will bring to the table not only expertise, energy and progressive ideas but a sincere willingness to make it work. As such we will be vital partners in building a Nuclear Weapons Convention.

Without doubt the challenges of this next phase in the development of a ban on the ultimate weapons of mass destruction will be enormous, the road to zero will be rough at times, but we will get there. It is the promise of states, the desire of the vast majority of citizens, and essential for our future.

Notes

1. Albert Einstein, fundraising letter on behalf of the Emergency Committee of Atomic Scientists, 22 January 1947.
2. Merav Datan et al., 1999, *Security and Survival: The Case for a Nuclear Weapons Convention*, Cambridge, MA, IPPNW, IALANA, INESAP.
3. IPPNW *Nuclear Weapons Convention Monitor* 2000, 2001 and 2002 can be downloaded from <ippnw.org/Resources/BooksandPublications.html#NWC1>.
4. For more on the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, go to <www.icanw.org>.
5. Tilman Ruff, Final plenary remarks to the 19th IPPNW World Congress, Basel, 25–30 August 2010, at <ippnw2010.org/index.php?id=247>.
6. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, "The United Nations and Security in a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World", address to the East-West Institute, New York, 24 October 2008.
7. Jody Williams, "A Nuclear Weapons Convention: The Path to Abolition", speech made at an ICAN event held at the United Nations, New York during the 2010 NPT Review Conference, 7 May 2010.
8. Gareth Evans, Evidence presented to the Australian Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Treaties Inquiry Hearings into Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, 26 February 2009.
9. Remarks by President Barack Obama, Hradcany Square, Prague, 5 April 2009, at <www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-By-President-Barack-Obama-In-Prague-As-Delivered>.
10. United States, Statement by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to the 2010 Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 3 May 2010.
11. Statement by H.E. Ambassador Li Baodong, Head of the Chinese delegation at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 4 May 2010.
12. Statement by H.E. Ambassador Eric Danon, Permanent Representative of France to the Conference on Disarmament, at the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (unofficial translation), 4 May 2010.

13. Note the ICAN advertising during the NPT Review Conference in 2010, which included a “Quit Nukes” campaign, for example in Reaching Critical Will’s *NPT News in Review* no. 4, 6 May 2010, at <www.reachingcriticalwill.org>.
14. Address by Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, “The Future of Nuclear Disarmament: A Swiss Perspective”, 19th IPPNW World Congress, Basel, 27 August 2010.
15. Merav Datan, “The Irresistible Logic of a Nuclear Weapons Convention”, *NPT News in Review* no. 4, Reaching Critical Will, 6 May 2010, p. 3.
16. Jacqueline Cabasso, “Global Civil Society Says, ‘It’s Simple: Start Abolition Negotiations Now!’”, *NPT News in Review* no. 20, Reaching Critical Will, 28 May 2010.
17. Jakob Kellenberger, President of the ICRC, “Bringing the Era of Nuclear Weapons to an End”, Statement to the Geneva Diplomatic Corps, Geneva, 20 April 2010.
18. For more details see Rebecca Johnson, 2009, *Unfinished Business: The Negotiation of the CTBT and the End of Nuclear Testing*, Geneva, UNIDIR.
19. Examples of organizations carrying out such work include the Acronym Institute, the Reaching Critical Will project, the Arms Control Association, the Pugwash conferences, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, the Nuclear Weapons Inheritance Project and the Ban All Nukes generation.
20. The document collects and recounts voting patterns and information from official statements to the UN General Assembly, NPT and other publicly available documents to demonstrate how clearly (or otherwise) governments articulate their positions on the NWC. It invites feedback, clarification and updates from governments and NGOs, recognizing that states’ voting patterns are sometimes determined by loyalties rather than reflecting a real level of support or commitment. See ICAN, 2010, Government Positions on a Nuclear Weapons Convention, at <icanw.org/the-solution>.
21. Statement by H.E. Michael Spindelegger, Foreign Minister of Austria, to the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, New York, 3 May 2010.
22. See the article by Nina Eisenhardt and Tim Wright in this issue of *Disarmament Forum* for more on how the nuclear disarmament movement is embracing modern technology.

Nuclear disarmament, civil society and democracy

Andrew Lichterman

Discussions of civil society in international contexts usually focus, naturally enough, on global civil society. As an American writing about civil society and nuclear disarmament, however, and as lack of disarmament progress by the United States is a central obstacle to nuclear disarmament, despite recent rounds of pro-disarmament rhetoric coming from US political elites, I believe that it is more appropriate to focus mainly on US civil society, and on the implications for civil society of the European and American disarmament movements that once captured its attention. To the casual US observer, the world of arms control and disarmament presents a confusing prospect. We hear positive rhetoric about disarmament from prominent statesmen and even from leaders of nuclear-weapon states, and yet the elimination of nuclear arsenals seems as far off as ever. President Obama epitomized this contradiction in his oft-invoked Prague declaration that nuclear disarmament must be achieved—but likely this will not be in his lifetime.

The first concrete manifestation of this supposed new commitment to disarmament by the leading nuclear-weapon states is a renewed Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). That treaty, however, would accomplish only small reductions over many years, leaving civilization-destroying arsenals in place for the foreseeable future. In the United States, the treaty must be ransomed from the military-industrial complex by commitments to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on measures designed to assure that disarmament will remain a distant dream: the maintenance and modernization of nuclear weapons systems and the laboratories and factories where they are designed and built.¹

Finally, in a world beset by overlapping economic, ecological and resource crises that could give rise to conflict among great powers for reasons both novel and familiar, those claiming to be most expert about armaments seldom mention the possibility of wars between the most powerful nuclear-armed states. Instead, public discussion of non-proliferation and disarmament is dominated by the purported nuclear dangers posed by small states and even by small armed bands that have no nuclear weapons at all.

Twenty-five years ago there were vigorous and diverse disarmament movements in the United States and elsewhere. In the United States today, those movements are largely gone. What remains is the “arms control and disarmament community”, an insular subculture of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focuses most of its resources on policy debates and proposals in national capitals and international negotiating forums. These groups mainly

Andrew Lichterman lives in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, United States, and has worked on disarmament issues in a variety of settings for most of the last three decades. He is a member of the boards of the Western States Legal Foundation and the Los Alamos Study Group. The opinions expressed here are his own.

deploy the standard repertory of interest group political pressure techniques, with expert policy analysis and top-down publicity and public opinion mobilization used to muster support for proposals initiated by segments of governing elites that can be portrayed as moving toward disarmament.

The disappearance of the movements and the gradual transformation of most of the institutions left behind into professionalized single-issue pressure groups, I believe, are less the result of choices by the particular people and organizations than manifestations of deeper trends affecting not only disarmament work but other efforts for a more fair, democratic and ecologically sustainable way of life. These broader transformations have left us with less voice in the decisions that affect all of our lives than we had two or three decades ago. If we want to have an effect on something as central to the order of things as the ultimate weapons in a system underwritten by overwhelming violence, we must at the same time address the fragile state of what little democracy we have.

In 1985, E.P. Thompson, a leading voice in European Nuclear Disarmament (END) and one of the great social historians of his time, published a collection of his disarmament writings, *The Heavy Dancers*. Thompson did not choose to begin with a recitation of the terrible dangers posed by Cold War arsenals, or with the latest proposals for treaties or conventions or negotiating paths for their control. Instead, he opened with a meditation on two related themes: the working of cause and effect in making social change, and where new political ideas and the energies to realize them come from.

How do ideas and opinions change? How can opinions actually have an *effect*—upon politics, upon power?

The innovative area of culture—the area in which opinions change, new ideas and values arise—this is the most sensitive, most delicate, the most significant area of all our public life.

...

I'm going to argue that this delicate innovative area of our culture is in some ways more manipulated—more marginalized—and more threatened than for a long time. New ideas still do arise, but they are either co-opted into a manipulated 'consensus' or they're pushed out into a margin of public life, where people still march around with banners in their hands—but their hands will never be permitted to touch the levers of power.²

Thompson was not alone in asking these questions. Indeed, they were central to the everyday debates, structure and political project of many parts of the multifaceted upwelling of resistance to the nuclear-armed Cold War confrontation of which disarmament movements were a part. In the intervening years, these themes have been relegated not only to the margins of public life, but to the margins of discourse among those who advocate disarmament.

Thompson was talking about what generally is referred to as “civil society”, a concept for which many have offered definitions shaped to fit one or another purpose. Here I will refer to civil society as the realm of organizations, movements and ideas that exist outside the institutions of both the state and the private economy. A strong civil society allows “the creation of a genuinely self-governing, democratic society in which the state is the servant of society and economic power is democratically controlled as well.”³ A civil society that can play a useful role in sustaining and expanding anything more than the formal appearance of democracy must be “capable of preserving its autonomy and forms of solidarity in face of the modern *economy* as well as the state” [emphasis in the original].⁴

Despite much lip service paid to the importance of “civil society”, few devote much attention to what is needed to sustain a civil society that can generate movements and institutions capable of doing more than lining up behind one or another wealthy or powerful faction. This is so despite the fact that civil society in many places is significantly weaker than when Thompson wrote at the height of the 1980s peace and disarmament movements.

The result has been a politics increasingly limited to debates among options predetermined by the entrenched government bureaucracies and the immense corporations that dominate the global economy. Both traditional institutions such as churches and communities linked to small-scale agriculture and the organizations that those without wealth and power have built for themselves as a counterweight to private capital and the state, such as labour unions or the alternative institutions built by such “new social movements” as the Cold War peace movements, disappear or are co-opted. The political system and then civil society have become hollowed out, reduced to a shell of procedure and appearance.⁵ In the void that remains, wealthy institutions create synthetic civil society institutions, from think tanks to faux grassroots organizations funded by industry associations and billionaires, while foundations (also conduits for concentrated wealth) provide incentives to channel what dissent remains into activities that leave the distribution of wealth and power untouched, and largely unquestioned.⁶

The predominant response in disarmament circles, however, has not been renewed reflection on the requirements of a healthy civil society and the role that social movements might play. Instead, many people and organizations seem to see these developments as inevitable, adapting to rather than struggling against an increasingly impoverished civil society and public sphere. Disarmament discourse and organizational practices largely recapitulate other forms of single-issue interest group politics. Arms control and disarmament efforts focus on promoting treaties and other arms control measures in international forums, on campaigns for modest cuts in armament budgets, and on assembling expressions of support for these campaigns. Professionals working in NGOs deploy expert argument and conventional bargaining and lobbying techniques in centres of power, while disseminating the latest in advertising and propaganda (e.g. “messaging”, “branding” and “framing”) via electronic and “social media” in an effort to mobilize a passive, atomized public opinion.

Ritualized demonstrations and occasional, equally ritualized civil disobedience remain as vestigial markers of what once was a social movement, but they now largely have been reduced to image-generating publicity techniques at the same time that they have been restricted, normalized and assimilated by modern policing techniques. Large demonstrations also more often than not are organized from above, with cheap electronic communications and inexpensive long-distance transportation allowing the distillation of momentary crowds out of ever larger and more dispersed populations. Both demonstrations and civil disobedience largely have become removed from the solidarity-creating, skill-building, democracy-practising contexts in which they once were rooted, and which they helped to build and sustain. We may still march around with banners in our hands, but we are further than ever from the levers of power.

The prevalence in disarmament work today of conventional advocacy and campaigning techniques suggests a set of assumptions about how social change happens, and about how much social change is needed to make meaningful disarmament progress. These techniques are compatible with goals that have near-consensus social support and that can be achieved via technical adjustment by experts, or that while desired only by a segment of the population can be satisfied by bargaining and compromise among groups with conflicting, but acceptably reconcilable, interests. Devoting most attention and resources to expert advocacy and pressure group-style lobbying in centres of power implies a belief that significantly reducing the risk of nuclear weapons use and eventually eliminating nuclear weapons does not require change of other well-entrenched social structures.

For the most part, advocacy for arms control and for the elimination of nuclear weapons proceeds as if the existence of nuclear weapons two decades after the Cold War is an aberration, and the abolition of nuclear weapons is a goal shared by ordinary people and most elites. Those who profit directly from the existence of nuclear arsenals are assumed to have some power, but ultimately it is assumed that nuclear weapons have little in the way of organizational constituencies in either the state or the economy beyond the nuclear weapons industries. It is taken as given that elites worldwide have come to see nuclear weapons as unusable, that interest in nuclear weapons technologies in the relevant science and technology communities is declining, and that there is little danger that states currently possessing nuclear arsenals will use them before they are eliminated.⁷

Within this context, disarmament NGOs put considerable resources into monitoring international arms control negotiations, the forums where they are conducted and the occasional treaty that emerges from their endless rounds. Any new arms control treaty is treated more or less automatically as a good thing, and becomes the object of NGO expert advocacy, lobbying and campaigning. The concessions extracted by national nuclear weapons establishments as conditions for their agreement to additional "arms control" are treated as the inevitable outcome of interest-group bargaining, and the best that one can reasonably expect. More treaties and smaller numbers of weapons are equated to disarmament

progress, even while nuclear arsenals are expected to exist in civilization-destroying numbers for decades to come.

At the time of writing, two campaigns dominate the messages flowing into my inbox from US arms control and disarmament groups. The first is a campaign to support the new United States–Russian Federation START. This is a treaty that will have only a modest impact on nuclear weapons deployments, and even that is to be phased in over a number of years.⁸ The Obama Administration has attempted to pre-empt opposition by proposing sustained increases in nuclear weapons spending for a decade. Having chosen surrender to the anticipated demands of its political adversaries as its opening gambit, the administration has been subjected to escalating demands for commitments not only for nuclear weapons and delivery systems but for missile defenses and a new class of highly accurate, powerful conventional “global strike” weapons with intercontinental range.⁹

The appeals from arms control and disarmament groups to support START ratification come in two varieties. The most common approach asks that I tell my Senator to vote for START approval, without bothering to tell me about the bargain being offered to obtain it (apparently these organizations feel comfortable making the decision for me that the deal is acceptable). This approach constitutes the mustering of isolated, passive members of the public behind policies pre-chosen by those in power. The other tactic tells me to ask my Senator to support a START without conditions—without addressing the fact that Senate approval is virtually impossible under anything like current political circumstances absent the massive buy-off of the military–industrial complex that the conditions represent. This approach resembles a kind of branding designed to appeal to a particular segment of a peace demographic, while failing to make a commitment to any intelligible strategy for change.

Aside from a few voices on the margin, there has been little debate within the arms control and disarmament community about whether the exchange of significant political and financial commitments to the nuclear and strategic weapons wing of the military–industrial complex for an extremely modest arms control treaty adds up to disarmament progress. The absence of this debate is striking in light of the failure of a similar strategy for ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the 1990s. Then, too, the most influential arms control and disarmament NGOs acceded to funding commitments to the nuclear weapons establishment in exchange for a treaty.¹⁰ We ended up a decade later with no CTBT, but with billions of dollars worth of new weapons facilities at the US nuclear weapons laboratories.

The second campaign, designed to raise awareness of nuclear weapons issues and supposedly to promote disarmament, centres on a film called *Countdown to Zero*. The campaign had considerable money behind it from foundations and others. The film, combined with media appearances by some of the experts who it features, emphasizes the dangers that either Iran or “terrorists”—entities that have no nuclear weapons—might acquire them. The possibility of an accidental nuclear exchange between nuclear powers also gets some attention, as does

the possession of nuclear weapons by Pakistan (like Iran, a country with a majority Muslim population). The possibility that such nuclear-armed states as China, France, India, Israel, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom or the United States might launch a war in which nuclear weapons might be used remains largely outside the frame. This approach essentially mirrors the official position of the US government, and arguably even helps to position it politically for further military action justified on "counterproliferation" grounds (as was the war in Iraq). The possibility that the campaign's portrayal of states and Islamic "terrorists" that have no nuclear weapons as posing the greatest danger of nuclear catastrophe might be incorrect, or that this portrayal might amidst a general climate of anti-Muslim hysteria stoke support for foreign wars, militarism and even for nuclear weapons spending, apparently was not considered.

These campaigns, and the broader forms of social action they typify, reflect a weak civil society, the horizons of its political imagination limited to choosing among or reacting to the initiatives of the concentrated powers of the private economy and the state. These forms of campaigning and advocacy are not social movements, and are not the kinds of activities that build social movements. They are unlikely to be capable of accomplishing goals requiring substantial redistribution of wealth or political power. If meaningful disarmament progress requires that kind of change, the deeper and broader kind of political mobilization we think of as social movements will be necessary.

What do we need to do to eliminate nuclear weapons, and to prevent their use in the meantime? What is necessary to expand and sustain a democratic civil society? Many participants in the last wave of disarmament movements that reached their peak in the 1980s saw the latter as a precondition for the former, and also as the path to making change in other areas of social life that they thought important. The 1980s disarmament movements had significant strands that connected disarmament to other issues and placed all explicitly within a broader project of societal democratization.¹¹ Adherents of this approach aimed to build a democratic and democratizing civil society out from under the frozen, authoritarian politics of both Cold War blocs. This entailed a vision that addressed the causes, as well as the symptoms, of nuclear-armed militarism:

Peace is more than the absence of war. A lasting peace can only be obtained by overcoming the various political, economic and social causes of aggression and violence in international relations as well as in the internal affairs of states. A comprehensive democratization of states and societies would create conditions favorable to this aim. Such democratization includes the existence of a critical public which has the capacity to exercise effective control over all aspects of military and security policy ... The economic systems in East and West urgently need democratization. Social needs such as housing or work in safe and human conditions have to become more important in defining economic priorities.

In the West a primary task is to ensure that people are no longer marginalized by massive unemployment. In the East, decentralization of the economy is an essential task in order to make the economy more efficient and responsive to the needs of the people ...¹²

The 1980s disarmament movements drew much of their power from the way such themes were brought together in local contexts, often crystallizing around campaigns of direct resistance to nuclear weapons development, manufacture and deployment. From the places where nuclear weapons were deployed to the laboratories and test sites where they were developed, strands of movements old and new entwined to dramatize and resist the nuclear arms race and the unaccountable economic and political powers it was understood to manifest. In the tents housing over a thousand people jailed after a protest at the US nuclear design laboratory in Livermore, California, for example, one could find people who first became engaged in politics in the labour movements of the 1930s, in various civil rights movements of the 1950s and 1960s, in the anti-war, environmental and feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and others as well. Lessons from past movements were vigorously debated, old forms of self-organization and repertoires of action were retrieved and revised, and new ones invented, with seeds planted for relationships, organizations and later waves of movement organizing over the years and decades.¹³

Only a few years later the movements and nascent alternative organizations that had coalesced around Livermore brought together a broader coalition that included disarmament groups, organizations opposing US intervention in Central America, local chapters of environmental groups like the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club, and elements of organized labour in a successful campaign to resist the berthing of a flotilla of nuclear-armed US Navy ships in San Francisco Bay. The campaign linked disarmament, anti-intervention, jobs and development choices and environmental issues while sparking discussion of emerging new themes like the environmental impacts of the military and environmental justice. The participants developed new political ties, becoming part of the long interlocking chain of campaigns and movements that have built the network of organizations and relationships that make the San Francisco Bay Area one of the US regions where there is relatively more resistance to arms racing, militarism and war.

There were many views and a great deal of debate during those times about how one builds social movements, what social structures require change, and about the relationship to other issues or movements. The existence of this kind of discussion, and of diverse settings that make opportunities to experiment with and practise democracy widely accessible, arguably is essential to sustaining a healthy civil society. When a modern society largely lacks social movements, it loses more than mobilized and enthusiastic support for one or another issue. To a large degree the absence of visible social movements signals the absence of democracy itself.

In the parts of the world dominated by the modernist metropole—which also are the social and geographical locations that produce and sustain nuclear weapons—accomplishing significant structural change likely requires waves of social movements, constantly renewed. Democracy itself arguably requires such movements. We cannot all be mobilized all the time, but participation in social movements likely must always be in the living memory of many if we are to have anything more than a shell of democracy. Widely shared experience of first expanding the horizons of the political imagination, and then through hard work and shared risk forging the power and solidarity to work for a vision of a better world against determined opposition, instills the belief—both in the population as a whole and in those who seek unaccountable, undemocratic and unjustifiable power—that such movements can arise again. Ultimately, it is this potential for a mobilized, determined, self-conscious and self-organized population that is the only defence of “civil society” and democracy against the unlimited accretion of power to the large organizations of the modern economy and the modern state.¹⁴

“The Cold War stands upon two legs: a permanent war economy and a permanent enemy hypothesis. Of the two, it is the ideological leg which is the more brittle; and the one which the peace movement, as a movement of ideas and popular energies is best equipped to overthrow.”¹⁵

Thompson’s estimate proved correct, but peace movement strategies that may have contributed to the collapse of the Cold War confrontation proved inadequate to accomplish more nuclear disarmament than eliminating the baroque excesses of the Cold War arsenals. The “permanent enemy” ideology of the Cold War was indeed overthrown, and with it the particular kind of nuclear danger it helped to create was ended. This is also the extent to which strategies like the Freeze in the United States, which had only an ambiguous impact on the arms race itself, might be considered a success. The themes of strengthening civil society in the West that were significant elements in the 1980s disarmament movements were swept away by various triumphalisms, all of which provided rationales for treating the Cold War as a closed book. The idea of building a civil society capable of further democratizing the economy as well as the state was overwhelmed by a torrent of neoliberal ideology and top-down activism by the powerful. In the East, the organizations of Western capital combined with old bureaucratic elites to create new constellations of concentrated economic and state power that stunted the growth of a more democratic civil society. At the same time, the erosion of civil society and democracy was accelerating in the West.

These triumphalisms largely effaced critical reflection on how the Cold War had ended without catastrophe, and why. This was as true within the subcultures and discourses of nuclear weapons and disarmament as in society at large. Advocates of nuclear deterrence claimed that it had worked, and advocates of endless pursuit of military dominance argued that spending on overkill itself had played a significant role in bringing the Soviet system down. Disarmament

advocates asserted that while luck had played a part in saving the planet, their movements had played a significant role in restraining nuclear-armed elites.

The permanent war economy remained, and with it nuclear arsenals still large enough to destroy civilization several times over. The economic power and political inertia of the nuclear weapons establishments may have been sufficient to carry them through the ideological interregnum of the immediate post-Cold War period, stretching into the middle 1990s. By the turn of the new century, the inhabitants and beneficiaries of the various national security state apparatuses had created images of new permanent enemies.

Modernization of nuclear weapons continues, albeit at a slower pace. Innovations in other areas, however, from computing and remote sensing to space technologies and guidance systems, have brought the potential for complex new kinds of strategic confrontation and arms racing. Nuclear establishments may have been preserved only by some combination of inertia, relatively localized economic interest and anachronistic ideologies. They also may persist because they serve a broader array of elites with deeply rooted interests. If one is trying to formulate disarmament strategies this difference matters, but the requisite analysis remains largely unwritten. What is undeniable, however, is that large nuclear arsenals persist, and still could destroy human civilization in a day.

Various images of the Cold War and its arms races—as unchangeable as the Cold War itself once seemed—still dominate thought about the origins and purposes of large nuclear arsenals. The possibility that total war between the nuclear-armed adversaries would have been unlikely during the period of the Cold War in the *absence* of nuclear weapons receives little examination, as do the reasons that world-destroying arsenals persisted for years, and then for decades, after the end of the conflict that was their supposed *raison d'être*. Across the spectrum of expert arms control and disarmament opinion few seem to take seriously the possibility that there ever again can be war between most of the major powers that possess nuclear weapons. The exception to this is India and Pakistan, but their nuclear arsenals may be seen as posing distinct problems more because they are new than because they are different.

Yet we find ourselves today in a world that bears unsettling resemblances to that which brought the great power wars of the last century. Ascendant economic powers are challenging those that have been dominant for a century, competing with them for resources and for pre-eminence in profitable products and technologies. The magnitude and pace of development of these new powers is unprecedented, and is occurring in the context of equally unprecedented effects flowing from limits to key resources and to the carrying capacity of planetary ecosystems. These factors combine to generate extreme polarization of wealth and the widespread breakdown of traditional social structures. All of this is occurring within an economic framework dominated by immense capitalist firms that have gained sufficient power in much of the world to write their own rules, which in turn has brought back another feature of the time that brought us world wars: intractable economic crisis, with the actions

essential to break the impasse thwarted by the extreme accumulation of wealth and power by elites determined to keep things as they are.

When one looks at the countries that have nuclear weapons, there is ample cause for alarm. Most harbour the ingredients for near-term instability, and for the emergence of governments that could see increased militarism and an aggressive, risk-taking foreign policy as providing fixes for problems both foreign and domestic. For those who nonetheless take comfort in deterrence, it is worth recalling former British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's observation that "We thought of air warfare in 1938 rather as people think of nuclear war today."¹⁶

It is time for the ordinary people of the planet to take away the power of the wealthy and powerful to play dice with our lives. "Instead of highlighting the horror of nuclear destruction, the 'killing state' should take center stage. The object of opposition is not the bomb but its owner: the state that endangers the lives of its citizens."¹⁷ But the task of building a democratic civil society out from under *all* those who hold power that sustains and is sustained by a world of nuclear-armed states barely has been envisioned, much less begun.

Civil society at the international level poses a distinct set of problems, and hence can only be touched upon briefly here. It is evident that wealthier strata both within and among states are overrepresented in the civil society elements visible in national forums and debates. This is another reason that democratization of international civil society is inextricably intertwined with the democratization of civil society everywhere from the bottom up. Efforts to formulate a coherent vision of international civil society and of a concomitant global "public sphere" also encounter the disjuncture between the logic of civil societies and movements that mainly have developed to make demands on various forms of states, and an international disorder where rule structures are weak, concentrations of economic and political power even less constrained, and where military force remains the final arbiter of conflict.¹⁸ The problem of states as mutually reinforcing "protection rackets" is particularly salient in disarmament matters, with the existence of nuclear arsenals providing both a means and a rationale for the domination of the many by the few in a starkly two-tier world.¹⁹ In a time when most states are converging toward one or another version of oligarchic corporate capitalism, overcoming ideologies that justify the narrow interests of particular elites, including claims that nuclear arsenals and high-tech militarism serve one or another national general welfare, requires a viewpoint sharply counterposed to the top-down perspective of national security state discourses.

With the alliances of large, powerful organizations that support an unsustainable and inequitable status quo extending across borders as well as across the boundaries between state and economy, there is a need for discussion and action that extends across borders as well. These efforts, however, should be firmly grounded in the places where we experience the effects of decisions made at a great social and geographic distance, not in the halls outside the offices and meeting rooms of unresponsive decision makers. When we focus our efforts

prematurely at the apex of power, we are likely to fall prey to the way the powerful and their hired experts and professionals define the issues. There is little chance that disarmament NGOs acting in international forums can affect the core military policies of the most powerful states when civil society in those states is weak.

When our programme and priorities begin where we live, work and experience together the effects of decisions made in far-off centres of power, we are more likely to discover, and remember, the causes of risk and exploitation imposed on us without our consent. By staying closely connected to these roots, we can hope to create a positive spiral, making space for independent analysis and debate, identifying allies, creating places where people practise and learn the skills of democracy, and eventually building a civil society and a politics capable of building an economy and a state that work for us. In the long run, this is also the path to disarmament, and in the short run our best defence against authoritarianism, militarism and war.

Notes

1. See Darwin Bond-Graham, "New START: A Brief Analysis of the Treaty Ratification Process, Campaign Finance, and Lobbying Activities", 24 September 2010, at <darwinbondgraham.blogspot.com/2010/09/new-start-brief-analysis-of-treaty.html>.
2. E.P. Thompson, 1985, *The Heavy Dancers: Writings on War, Past and Future*, New York, Pantheon Books, p. 3.
3. Arthur Lipow, 1996, *Political Parties and Democracy: Explorations in History and Theory*, London, Pluto Press, pp. 162–163.
4. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, 1992, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, p. 30.
5. See Peter Mair, 2006, "Ruling the Void? The Hollowing of Western Democracy", *New Left Review* 42 pp. 25 and 46. Interestingly, a leading Chinese intellectual historian has made similar points, and posited a parallel dynamic within China's governance structure and the Communist Party. See Wang Hui, 2006, "Depoliticized Politics, from East to West", *New Left Review* 41, p. 29.
6. For more on corporate control of grassroots organizations see Jane Mayer, "Covert Operations: The Billionaire Brothers Who Are Waging a War against Obama", *The New Yorker*, 30 August 2010; and Frank Rich, "The Very Useful Idiocy of Christine O'Donnell", *The New York Times*, 2 October 2010. Regarding the role of foundations in channelling dissent see, for example, Joan Roelofs, 2003, *Foundations and Public Policy: The Mask of Pluralism*, Albany, NY, State University of New York Press; and Incite! Women of Color against Violence (eds), 2007, *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*, Cambridge, MA, South End Press.
7. A recent, well-reasoned version of this view can be found in Zia Mian, 2010, "Charting a Path toward Eliminating Nuclear Weapons", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 27 September 2010.
8. See Ivan Oelrich and Hans Kristensen, "New START Treaty Reduces Limit for Strategic Warheads but not Number", *Public Interest Report*, Federation of American Scientists, 22 June 2010.
9. See, for example, Elaine M. Grossman, "As 'New START' Goes to Senate Floor, Panel Strikes Compromise on Missile Defense", *Global Security Newswire*, 17 September 2010.
10. See Jacqueline Cabasso, 2007, "Nuclear Weapons Research and Development", in Michael Spies and John Burroughs (eds), *Nuclear Disorder or Cooperative Security? US Weapons of Terror, the Global Proliferation Crisis, and Paths to Peace*, New York, Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, Western States Legal Foundation and Reaching Critical Will, pp. 93 et seq.

11. In the United States this has tended to be obscured by mainstream characterizations of the 1980s “anti-nuclear movement” that give disproportionate weight to the “Freeze”, a particular campaign that chose limited, single-issue tactics. Although a full examination of the Freeze is beyond the scope of this paper, a few observations are in order. The Freeze approach was not uncontroversial within the broader movement at the time, and attracted more support and attention within the movement in some regions than in others. It originated and was particularly prominent in the US North-east, a region whose concentration of media and political power generally has tended to allow its segments of social movements within a large, complex, diverse country to leave a disproportionate documentary trace.
12. European Network for East–West Dialogue, *Giving Real Life to the Helsinki Accords*, November 1986, quoted in Lipow, op. cit., p. 160.
13. Similar strands were woven differently in places like the long women’s encampment confronting nuclear cruise missile deployment at Greenham Common, United Kingdom, with symbolic roots as deep as centuries-old protests against enclosure and connections as recent as British environmental, feminist and urban squatters movements. See, for example, Sasha Roseneil, 2001, “The Global, the Local, and the Personal: The Dynamics of a Social Movement in Postmodernity”, in Pierre Hamel et al. (eds), *Globalization and Social Movements*, New York, Palgrave MacMillan, p. 89.
14. For an expanded version of a similar argument see Cohen and Arato, op. cit., Chapter 10 and p. 562. For a related viewpoint in a different social setting, see Jayaprakash Narayan’s concept of non-violent movements with goals that require profound social change within the framework of a society that one seeks to democratize, at <www.mkgandhi.org/jpnarayan/total_revolution.htm>, citing “Notes on Bihar Movement”, 1975, in Ajit Bhattacharjea, 2002, *Transforming the Polity: Centenary Readings from Jayaprakash Narayan*, Rupa and Co.
15. Thompson, op. cit., p. 353.
16. Harold MacMillan, 1966, *Winds of Change, 1914–1939*, London, p. 575; quoted in Michael Sherry, 1987, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, p. 74.
17. Srirupa Roy, 2009, “The Politics of Death: the Antinuclear Imaginary in India”, in Itty Abraham (ed.), *South Asian Cultures of the Bomb: Atomic Publics and the State in India and Pakistan*, Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, p. 128.
18. On this point see, for example, Nancy Fraser, 2005, “Transnationalizing the Public Sphere”, at <www.republicart.net/disc/publicum/fraser01_en.pdf>.
19. See Charles Tilly, 1985, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime”, in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp. 169 and 171.

Open forum: Close encounter with nuclear deterrence

Robert Green

More than 20 years after the end of the Cold War, civilization is still held hostage by over 20,000 nuclear weapons held by the five recognized nuclear-weapon states as well as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), India, Israel and Pakistan. Underlying and driving this global security crisis is the doctrine of nuclear deterrence, cited by the United States, the United Kingdom and France as the indispensable justification for maintaining their nuclear arsenals. Nuclear deterrence must therefore be challenged and alternatives offered if there is to be any serious prospect of eliminating nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons have no military use. Their uniquely indiscriminate, long-term health effects, including genetic damage, on top of almost unimaginable explosive violence, make them the most unacceptable terror devices yet invented—far worse than chemical or even biological weapons.

Yet nuclear deterrence has become an accepted and entrenched doctrine of national security. For British and French leaders, the 1956 Suez fiasco and their crumbling empires drove them to clutch at nuclear deterrence to sustain their great power status and influence. The French chose to develop, at massive cost, their own nuclear weapons and delivery systems. The British decided they could not afford this, so opted for dependence on the United States in a bargain sealed between Macmillan and Kennedy in 1962. The price for Polaris and its successors has proved exorbitant in terms of the damage done to the United Kingdom's independence, reputation and true security interests. Meanwhile, the Manhattan Project created a secret nuclear, scientific and military complex in the United States, whose engine and justification was the unopposed dogma of nuclear deterrence.

When the Berlin Wall came down, and Soviet President Gorbachev was briefly able to break the grip of Cold War security thinking, a window of opportunity opened to end the nuclear nightmare. However, the threat of communism was soon replaced by the threat of "Islamic fundamentalism" and conflict in the Middle East, despite one major source of this conflict being Israel's secret acquisition of nuclear weapons.

I was broken out of my pro-nuclear indoctrination by the 1991 Gulf War, and the fear that attacks from Iraqi Scud missiles armed with chemical warheads might provoke Israel to

Robert Green, Commander, Royal Navy (Retired), served in the British Royal Navy from 1962–1982 and flew in Buccaneer nuclear strike aircraft as well as anti-submarine helicopters equipped with nuclear depth bombs. He is now Co-Director of the Peace Foundation's Disarmament and Security Centre, Christchurch, New Zealand. This article is based on his recent book *Security without Nuclear Deterrence* (Christchurch, Astron Media and Disarmament and Security Centre, 2010).

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respond with a nuclear strike on Baghdad. A de facto nuclear state was being directly attacked by a non-nuclear state, and exactly the kind of attack that Israel's nuclear status was supposed to deter had occurred. Meanwhile, the Irish Republican Army had just missed wiping out the entire British War Cabinet with a mortar-bomb attack from a van in Whitehall. Nuclear deterrence had failed in cases that proved to be a foretaste of the primary security threats facing the world today.

For the United States—supported by France and the United Kingdom—however, the 1991 Gulf War and Gorbachev's fall from power simply prompted a drive for a new justification for nuclear weapons: countering the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Paradoxically, the 11 September 2001 terror attacks on the United States led to a growing acceptance that nuclear deterrence will not work against "rogue regimes" and other extremists armed with WMD—now the primary threat to global security. This body blow to nuclear deterrence was admitted in the 2002 US National Security Strategy, but it was replaced by a policy of pre-emptive strikes, using nuclear weapons if necessary.¹ The unverifiable claim by nuclear-weapon states that nuclear deterrence averts war was thereby cynically stood on its head. A more potent prescription for inciting WMD proliferation could barely be imagined—quite apart from its assault on morality and international humanitarian law.

There is a fundamental, insoluble credibility problem at the heart of nuclear deterrence. It has been demonstrated to devastating effect that the possession of nuclear weapons does not deter conventional weapon attacks from states or from non-state actors. Indeed, nuclear deterrence even undercuts the political stability its proponents claim it creates: the opportunity to abandon the doctrine of mutual assured destruction at the 1986 Reagan–Gorbachev summit in Iceland was defeated by the vested interests of the US military–industrial complex and the desire of the US to extend nuclear deterrence to its allies. Nuclear deterrence provokes arms races, confrontational rhetoric and reckless posturing (all of which it is purportedly designed to prevent), which leads not to increased security but to some of the world's most intractable security problems (witness the DPRK and Iran).

Nuclear deterrence can be seen as a stimulus for spreading nuclear weapons. Israel's success in convincing France and then the United States to acquiesce in its drive for a uniquely opaque variant of nuclear deterrence provided a clear pretext and incitement for Iraq, and then Iran, to acquire their own arsenals. Meanwhile, South Asian rivals India and Pakistan each naively attempted to apply nuclear deterrence dogma to their security policies. The United States' nuclear technology deal with India and China's determination to mirror this deal with Pakistan threaten the non-proliferation regime with collapse under the weight of double standards and discriminatory rules. All three cases of states pursuing nuclear ambitions outside the international non-proliferation regime have intensified and encouraged regional insecurities and arms races.

In 1996 the International Court of Justice confirmed that the threat (let alone the use) of nuclear weapons would generally be illegal.² There is a deep moral deception underlying nuclear deterrence. Thankfully, citizens are continuing to campaign for the abolition of nuclear weapons, and for a Nuclear Weapons Convention to underpin their abolition.

The delegitimization of nuclear deterrence serves as a springboard to seek safer, more effective alternatives for our security.³ The key is to see nuclear disarmament as a security-building process, in which nuclear weapons are an unusable liability. A top priority is therefore to persuade the Russian Federation and the United States to stand down a combined total of over 4,000 strategic nuclear weapons, which are currently ready to be launched within minutes.⁴ When Russia and the United States profess to have ended the Cold War and are collaborating in the so-called war on terror, this anachronistic arrangement is driven by the overriding imperative to sustain nuclear deterrence dogma, even at the expense of risking catastrophic damage to all humanity and the planet itself. Standing down Russian and US nuclear forces would reduce the chance of an accidental or unauthorized launch of a nuclear weapon.

In light of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) huge conventional military advantage over Russia, there is a pressing need to provide Russia with incentives to become less dependent on its nuclear arsenal for its security. Western Europe has little to fear from nuclear blackmail on the part of the Russian Federation, therefore it is in NATO's security interest to encourage a major shift to a non-nuclear NATO defence strategy.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom has struggled to find an international role since losing its empire. As the first medium-sized power to decide that it had to have nuclear weapons, it was the role model for France, Israel, India and Pakistan. The UK nuclear arsenal is now the smallest of the P5, and is deployed in only one system, Trident, on relaxed alert of several days' notice for use. In my recent study, I predict the consequences if the British government, struggling with an urgent need for massive defence cuts, decided to reject nuclear deterrence:

The first anti-nuclear 'breakout' by one of the P5 would be sensational, and would transform the nuclear disarmament debate overnight. In NATO, the UK would wield unprecedented influence in leading the drive for a non-nuclear strategy—which must happen if NATO is to sustain its cohesion. It would create new openings for shifting the mindset particularly in the US and France, and heavily influencing India, Israel, Pakistan and others intent on obtaining nuclear weapons. Moreover, it would open the way for a major reassessment by Russia and China of their nuclear strategies, for all nuclear forces to be de-alerted, and for multilateral negotiations to start on a Nuclear Weapons Convention.⁵

Finding our way back from the nuclear abyss, on the edge of which nuclear deterrence has held us hypnotized and terrorized for sixty years, will not be easy. As with all major advances

in human rights and justice, the engine for shifting the mindset has to come from civil society. I conclude:

As with nuclear deterrence, three of the leading proponents of slavery were the establishments of the US, the UK and France, who tried to sustain their immoral and unlawful assertion that slavery was a 'necessary evil' for which there was 'no alternative'. They failed, because courageous ordinary British, American and French citizens mobilised unstoppable public and political support for their campaign to replace slavery with more humane, lawful and effective ways to create wealth. The analogy holds for nuclear deterrence, which can and must be discarded for more humane, lawful and safer security strategies if civilisation and the Earth's ecosystems are to survive.⁶

Notes

1. The scenarios for potential pre-emptive nuclear strikes were outlined in the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff publication, *Doctrine for Joint Nuclear Operations*, 15 March 2005.
2. See International Court of Justice, *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*, Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996.
3. The legal arguments are well documented in the World Court Project (see the Lawyer's Committee on Nuclear Policy website, at <lcnp.org/wcourt>), and there are numerous examples of citizen campaigns for the abolition of nuclear weapons and a Nuclear Weapons Convention, an enforceable treaty to underpin it.
4. Bruce G. Blair, Harold A. Feiveson and Frank von Hippel, 1997, "Taking Nuclear Weapons off Hair-Trigger Alert", *Scientific American*, November.
5. Robert Green, 2010, *Security without Nuclear Deterrence*, Christchurch, Astron Media and Disarmament and Security Centre, p. 245.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

UNIDIR project

The Security Needs Assessment Protocol project

The Security Needs Assessment Protocol (SNAP) was an innovation initiative of the UNIDIR that ran from 2006 to 2010. Its purpose was twofold: to research and develop new techniques and systems for generating local knowledge at the community level, and to explore and build new mechanisms for turning that knowledge into a strategic asset in the design of local-level interventions concerning peace and security.

The approach prototyped by the project for conducting security needs assessments shows a new capacity for revealing a range of security needs in a given community, identifying and describing community practices around security, and interpreting and explaining local understandings of security that are central to ameliorating problems in a cooperative manner with community members.

Integral to this approach is the recognition of a gap between “best practices” and actual field-level realities. The SNAP is premised on the idea of “best process approaches” to local-level programme design. That best process begins with the operating assumption that effective programming for local communities starts with local knowledge, and that local knowledge is best applied through an innovative process of service design.

The SNAP team presented material at over 50 conferences and events to academics, practitioners and the diplomatic communities. It resulted in agenda-setting research in the areas of applied cultural research on peace and security, cooperative ethics, situated theory and strategic design.

The SNAP initiative culminated in a conference on “Strategic Design and Public Policy” that was co-hosted by the Center for Local Strategies Research at the University of Washington and the Saïd Business School of the University of Oxford. The three-day conference, held in New York, brought together professionals from the fields of cultural research, design (particularly service design), and international public policy (particularly international peace and security).

The work of the conference provides an organizing platform divided into four main themes: 1) supporting cooperation across fields of practice and research to develop new methods, tools and practice together; 2) developing resources to enable cooperative action; 3) promoting awareness of strategic design among practitioners and policy makers; and 4) pursuing solutions for social betterment through action on the ground.

UNIDIR is now advancing the strategic design agenda generally, while continuing to advance the work of SNAP in particular. New projects and partnerships are now in development to take these ideas forward as the research and innovation phases for SNAP itself conclude.

For more information, contact:

Dr Derek B. Miller

Senior Fellow, UNIDIR

E-mail: dmiller@unog.ch

Lisa Rudnick

Senior Researcher, UNIDIR

E-mail: lrudnick@unog.ch

New publication

Disarmament Machinery: A Fresh Approach

Tim Caughley, September 2010, free of charge

Current multilateral disarmament fora—collectively known as the “disarmament machinery”—are struggling to address the challenges of today’s security environment. The perspective of most states on security has fundamentally shifted since the end of the Cold War, but this change has not been reflected in the international community’s disarmament machinery. For example, the concept of “disarmament as humanitarian action”—which has driven successful processes dealing with weapons such as anti-personnel landmines and cluster munitions—has not yet taken root in relation to nuclear issues. These are at the centre of much debate in formal multilateral disarmament processes, but since the mid-1990s there has been little discernable progress. In addition, the disarmament machinery seems poorly equipped to approach cross-cutting relationships, such as between armed violence and development. Initiatives outside of the traditional disarmament fora are increasingly making tangible progress in promoting disarmament and security whereas, in terms of results, there are serious questions about the effectiveness of the international community’s current disarmament machinery. Reform of the machinery to make it more efficient would be an important contribution to promoting increased security and development.

UNIDIR’s “Fixing the Disarmament Machinery” project’s most recent publication proposes starting from a clean slate. It considers the successful disarmament processes of the last two decades: the processes that led to the Mine Ban Treaty, the Programme of Action on Small Arms, and the Convention on Cluster Munitions. What mechanisms did these processes use to achieve agreement? And can they be used on more than an ad hoc basis? The paper’s analysis concludes with hope that with pressure from willing states, a thoroughly different process may lead to a more effective disarmament machinery.