

“RENEWING THE PHYSICIANS’ CALL FOR NUCLEAR ABOLITION AND THE PREVENTION OF WAR”

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Introduction

Humanity was propelled into the nuclear age sixty-one years ago, when two atomic bombs obliterated Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a matter of seconds. This war crime went unpunished and it heralded a pattern of future violations of international humanitarian law. It was the absolute expression of twentieth century barbarism. Since then, the world has lived with the constant threat of nuclear war. During the Cold War, dominant military mindsets on both sides of the ideological divide enforced the doctrine of nuclear deterrence and gambled with human survival in a nuclear arms race, which generated 70,000 nuclear warheads.

The inspiring Bernard Lown and Evgueni Chazov founded IPPNW in 1980 at the height of the Cold War. They felt it was their moral duty as physicians to point out that the nuclear arms race was an unprecedented threat to global health and human civilization. If two crude atomic bombs could destroy two cities in a matter of seconds, thousands of thermonuclear warheads could exterminate humankind in an afternoon. The message was simple and clear: Abolish nuclear weapons before they abolish the human race.

Both President Gorbachev and President Reagan got the message and agreed at their first meeting in October 1985 that: “A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.” But many in the nuclear weapons establishment, particularly in the West, regarded it as a pious statement with no particular significance. History has proved they were correct in their assessment.

Nuclear dangers

The end of the Cold War failed to transform nuclear policies or set in motion the elimination of nuclear weapons. Instead, not only are Cold War nuclear doctrines

embedded in the current security policies of the nuclear weapon states, but new and perhaps more dangerous nuclear policies are emerging. The threat of an all-out nuclear war has receded, but we still run the risk of nuclear war by accident or miscalculation. Out of a residual stockpile of 27,000 nuclear warheads, 12,000 are operational and 5,000 are still on high alert.

As long as the United States and Russia retain the policy of launch on warning, they run the risk of responding to a false warning, caused by human error or a malfunctioning warning system. Once launched, a nuclear-armed intercontinental ballistic missile cannot be recalled or neutralized. Only the de-alerting of nuclear weapons will avert that risk.

New nuclear dangers stem from the deadlock in nuclear disarmament and the military and nuclear policies of the NWS. The United States is particularly explicit about its new policies, spelt out in its Nuclear Posture Review and National Security Strategy. We see continuing nuclear hypocrisy and double standards, and new threats in the militarization of diplomacy, unilateralism, pre-emption, new nuclear warheads, new nuclear missions and capabilities, nuclear threats against non-nuclear weapons states, and plans to resume nuclear testing. Nuclear deterrence is a dangerous illusion, but a far more dangerous illusion is the use of nuclear weapons on the battle-field. Only China disavows 'first use,' holds to a second-strike deterrence policy, and forswears the use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states but, like other NWS, it continues to modernize its nuclear arsenal.

The rise of international terrorism has been manipulated to rationalize and justify the threat of limited nuclear strikes to deter, pre-empt or respond to threats or attacks from so-called 'rogue states,' armed with chemical or biological weapons or aspiring to nuclear weapons.

The Blix Commission has stigmatized nuclear weapons as weapons of terror. Therefore, any state armed with or threatening to use nuclear weapons would logically qualify as a terrorist state. That makes eight or nine nuclear terrorist states, one of which is devoted to waging a 'war against terror.'

For 26 years, IPPNW has condemned the immorality, inhumanity and illegality of nuclear weapons and advocated abolition. There are practical road maps leading to zero nuclear weapons, but the NWS remain unreceptive and unrepentant. As the predominant nuclear power, the United States is the circuit-breaker and must accept heavy responsibility for this state of affairs.

But why has American leadership failed us? Where are the uplifting ideals and principles of the Founding Fathers of a once respected and great nation? Why has the American political elite still think that nuclear weapons provide security, prestige and leverage when they do not even confer protection against terrorists? Are nuclear weapons necessary to maintain the status quo of political, economic and cultural dominance, as part of the American empire project? Is it because nuclear weapons cannot be disinventured and therefore abolition cannot be verified sufficiently to prevent breakout or cheating? Why is it that there is no irresistible public pressure within the United States and the rest of the world to change American nuclear policy? Only the American people and their friends and allies are best positioned to bring about change – and we need to convince them that abolition is desirable and feasible.

Obstacles to abolition

Nuclear abolitionists face two main challenges. The first is to make everyone aware of the enormity and gravity of the nuclear threat. The second is to persuade governments and the public that nuclear abolition is possible, as it was with the abolition of slavery and apartheid. Ignorance is bad enough, but more challenging are inertia and the lack of political will, induced by despair, denial or a sense of impotence.

Progressive disarmament, leading to abolition is an urgent matter. The road to abolition is littered with psychological barriers, political obstacles, and broken promises. Impervious military mindsets are still mired in outdated concepts of national security. Nuclear policy-makers do not seem to understand the central logical argument against nuclear deterrence, which is that deterrence can only succeed in an error-free and rational world and therefore will ultimately fail in the real world. They have forgotten the lessons of the Cuban missile crisis.

The failed NPT process

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is the only legally binding international agreement on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. In it, non-nuclear weapon states renounced nuclear weapons and were promised access to peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and in return nuclear weapon states would give up their nuclear arsenals. So, why has the NPT failed? The nuclear weapon states have reneged on their disarmament obligations and this has stimulated nuclear proliferation, which has become one of the most serious threats to human security. The nuclear club has now grown to eight, possibly nine. The larger the membership, the greater the danger of nuclear war and nuclear terrorism. We have a choice: nuclear abolition or nuclear proliferation?

Another stimulus to nuclear proliferation is the availability of nuclear weapons technology on the black-market and weapons-grade fissile material from nuclear power plants. To stop access to fissile material, the long negotiated Fissile Materials Cut-off

Treaty (FMCT) must be concluded promptly and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) must stop promoting nuclear energy. Nuclear energy is not the solution to global warming and climate change. Every nuclear reactor is a potential bomb factory and there is no method of safely disposing of radioactive nuclear waste, which lasts for thousands of years. In the long term, nuclear energy must be phased out for security and environmental reasons.

The 36-year NPT process has become a predictable diplomatic charade. The history of NPT negotiations reeks with examples of narrow national interests trumping wider global responsibilities. It is nuclear gamesmanship at its best, deserving of a world cup, no less. The NPT is in a state of self-induced paralysis and is drowning in a sea of bad faith.

There have been NPT Review Conferences every five years since 1970. The landmark 1995 Review and Extension Conference secured the indefinite extension of the NPT on a renewed undertaking by the nuclear weapon states to comply with Article VI. The 2000 Review Conference ended with an agreement by all States parties to implement thirteen practical steps for systematic and progressive nuclear

disarmament, including “an unequivocal undertaking by the nuclear weapon states to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.”

At the seventh Review Conference in 2005, the Bush administration made no attempt to engage in constructive negotiations and almost single-handedly wrecked the conference by refusing to accept the commitments made at the 1995 and 2000 Conferences. It was an incredible display of arrogance and naked power. Of all the nuclear weapon states, the government of the United States is the greatest obstacle to a nuclear weapons-free world.

IPPNW's affiliate in the United States, Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), has a singular responsibility to engage with the people of America, build a groundswell of public opinion, and turn nuclear abolition into an election issue.

International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)

The failure of the 2005 Review Conference clearly exposed the underlying obstacles and the harsh political realities of the nuclear disarmament process. The governments of the NWS will not comply with their disarmament obligations, unless they are forced to do so by their constituencies. Much time and energy have been invested in the NPT process, but it's now time to think outside the NPT box and explore other avenues to abolition.

One avenue would be to adopt an approach parallel to but outside the failed NPT process, along the lines of the 'Ottawa Process' on landmines, which showed that a partnership, between civil society, like-minded governments of small and medium-sized countries, international agencies and the United Nations, had the power to redress the global problem of anti-personnel landmines and secure a Landmine Ban Treaty.

IPPNW is therefore launching an International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), which will be a multi-faceted, global, grassroots campaign for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The aim is that, by garnering the support of individuals, citizen groups, parliamentarians, mayors, and other civic leaders, ICAN will generate a global outcry and global outrage, which will create a nuclear taboo around nuclear weapons and an irresistible mass movement that will compel the nuclear weapon

states to commit unequivocally to progressive disarmament and the abolition of nuclear weapons through a Nuclear Weapons Convention by the year 2020.

The difference between abolition and disarmament is that while disarmament is primarily a technical process of dismantling and destroying nuclear weapons, abolition is a normative process that not only embraces disarmament but also prohibits the development, acquisition, transfer, use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. In other words, nuclear abolition combines both the obligation of non-proliferation with the technical aspects of disarmament.

Considerable conceptual work has already been done on a Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, which will form the core of the campaign. The Model Nuclear Weapons Convention, which was submitted to the United Nations in 1997, clarifies the legal, technical and political requirements for achieving and maintaining a nuclear weapons-free world, made feasible by advances in verification technology and compliance procedures. Although it may not answer all questions which may be raised in a discourse on nuclear abolition, the Model Nuclear Weapons Convention does show that abolition is a practical, achievable goal and that such questions can be answered when negotiations are under way.

Elements of ICAN will include:

- Returning to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for a second advisory opinion on whether the NWS are complying with their legal obligations to pursue nuclear disarmament in good faith.
- Building and nurturing interdependent, local and global political constituencies for a Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC) among mayors, parliamentarians and other levels of elected officials.
- Examining the practicalities of using existing Nuclear Weapons-Free Zones as a foundation for a Nuclear Weapons Convention.
- Working with the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI), the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), and disaffected States parties of the NPT to build a bridge between a civil society campaign and 'official' disarmament frameworks.
- Identifying and lobbying at least one nuclear weapon state to overcome its nuclear addiction and make an early, unconditional commitment to the abolition process.

- Working with European affiliates of IPPNW, particularly those in NATO countries, to campaign for a change in NATO nuclear policy and the withdrawal of US tactical nuclear weapons from Europe.
- Working with Medact and other disarmament groups on the issue of Britain's option to replace its Trident submarine force with a new strategic nuclear weapon system.

The challenge has always been holding the NWS accountable to international law and treaty obligations. The 2007 NPT PrepCom will be an opportunity to launch an updated draft Nuclear Weapons Convention and to push for de-alerting, a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty (FMCT).

ICAN must overcome public apathy and sensitise local and global public opinion. Most of all, changing public opinion in the nuclear weapon states will be absolutely crucial to the success of the campaign. ICAN must focus on the younger generations in schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions. The world must be aroused, before it sleep-walks into a nuclear catastrophe.

Conclusion

We live in a world of unequal nation states, where some have claimed a monopoly in the use of force to protect and secure national interests. Security is defined in military terms and dilemmas often arise from the unpredictability of a state's intentions. As a result, hegemonies emerge and military alliances are formed to achieve security in a nuclear or non-nuclear environment.

Militarism is rampant and this is reflected in world military spending, which is rising to Cold War levels. The top five squanderers are the United States, Britain, France, Japan and China. Massive US spending on its global 'war on terror' has pushed global military expenditure above \$1 trillion, according to SIPRI. US military spending amounts to half the global figure and more than the combined total of the 32 next most powerful nations.

As the 'war on terror' unfolds and the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq become a recruitment exercise for Islamist terrorists, it is clear that global

security can no longer be maintained by military force alone and that the fate of Iraq has persuaded some non-nuclear weapon states to reconsider their nuclear options.

The dominant force in an environmentally constrained world today is an energy-dependent, industrialized, capitalistic, materialistic Western elite society, intent on maintaining the inequitable status quo, through political, economic and cultural dominance, backed up by military power. Nuclear weapons are just one facet of this questionable paradigm. I think this partly explains why attempts to abolish nuclear weapons in isolation have failed.

Bernard Lown's diagnosis of global morbidity points to the North-South divide as "the basic dynamic" behind militarism and nuclearism. By understanding the social inequalities and structural violence behind unjust economic globalization and global institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund, IPPNW will have a clearer understanding of the root causes of militarism and war.

Restructuring the global economy and making it ecologically sustainable, redefining global security in terms of sustainable human security, establishing equity, justice and the rule of law, and resolving conflict without violence are all necessary human endeavors, if the world is to abolish nuclear weapons and war, and if humankind is to survive...

It is time we learned to forge a common future from the mistakes of the past. The greatest moral challenge of our times is the unthinkable possibility of self-destruction on a global scale. The greatest priority is to ensure that there will be a future.

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