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Towards a world free of nuclear weapons: benchmarks and timeframes

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It is now nearly three years since RECNA was established in April 2012. These three years in effect coincided with the new review cycle towards the 2015 NPT Review Conference. During the first year of RECNA's establishment the First Session of the Preparatory Committee took place, and RECNA has subsequently monitored the direction taken in this cycle by each participating state.

Following the end of the Cold War the first boom in which the keyword of "a world free of nuclear weapons" was focused upon was around the time of the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. It was in that year that Professor Joseph Rotblat and the Pugwash Conferences won the Nobel Peace Prize. During this period there were a number of critical occurrences such as the issuance by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) of its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, and here I would like to consider the debate about the road map towards 'a world free of nuclear weapons' as it continues to be relevant up until the present day.

When one attempts to realize a grand project that cannot be easily achieved through ordinary means, the first step is to draw up a road map or itinerary. The key concepts that emerge at this point are the benchmarks that are the intermediate targets and the time line or timeframe.

In August 1996, two vital road maps were suggested. The first was the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons organized by the government of Australia, and the second was the Programme of Action for the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons proposed by 28 nonaligned nations participating at the Conference on Disarmament. Both of these demanded common benchmarks such as a ban on nuclear testing, a ban on the production of fissile material for weapons use, further arms reductions by the U.S. and Russia, the establishment of a verification system and a nuclear weapons convention; however, there was one important difference between the two. This was that while the 28 nonaligned nations specified a target date of achieving "a world free of nuclear weapons" by the year 2020, after cautious consideration the Canberra Commission decided not to specify a timeframe. Although no reason for this is stated, considering the fact that the commission's composition included experts from nuclear weapon states there can be no doubt that it was thought that suggesting a meaningful timeframe was simply not feasible. They probably thought that stating a date was little more than building castles in the air.

Two years later in 1998, the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), a middle power nation group playing a leading role in nuclear disarmament was established. I have paid close attention to the movements of this international coalition ever since its advent. My understanding is that the NAC too is cautious about any discussions involving specific timeframes. The statement issued by the NAC upon its establishment in 1998 stated that in order to maintain a world free of nuclear weapons, "a universal and multilaterally negotiated legally binding instrument or a framework encompassing a mutually reinforcing set of instruments" was necessary, and thus they specified benchmarks

equivalent to a Nuclear Weapons Convention. However, they did not go as far as mentioning a timeframe for it.

The NAC changed as a result of the 2010 NPT Review Conference. At the 2012 Preparatory Committee it argued that "a legally-binding framework for the total elimination of all nuclear weapons must include clearly defined benchmarks and timelines, backed by a strong system of verification, in order to be efficient and credible." In other words, the NAC considered it necessary for discussions on timelines to be included in the new NPT review cycle. At the 2010 Review Conference, all the member nations agreed to "make special efforts to establish the necessary framework to achieve and maintain a world without nuclear weapons," so NAC's policy change was perfectly natural.

However, the NAC had set the agenda for the 2015 Review Conference from a standpoint one step back from this assertion of 2012. The recommendation that the NAC proposed in 2014 was that there should be a forum at the Review Conference where state parties would "explore ... options for elaboration of the effective measures" for nuclear disarmament. Probably because the NAC thought, when considering the series of meetings such as the Vienna Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons and the 2013 Open-ended Working Group (OEWG), it was still too early to start mentioning the issue of timeframes. This is typified by the manner in which the nuclear weapon states and states like Japan that are dependent on nuclear arms have made no effort whatsoever to move on from the "step-by-step approach."

The step-by-step approach may appear to be one in which intermediate targets are raised and then cleared one by one, but this interpretation is erroneous at its very roots. Unlike the recommendations of the Canberra Commission, the step-by-step approach makes no attempt to create a road map, let alone a timeframe. The step-by-step approach does not make any attempt to draw up an overall image of how we can compose "a world free of nuclear weapons." In order for Japan, the only nation in the world to suffer war-time atomic bombings, to overcome its passivity, there is a need for hard thinking at every level including at RECNA. (March, 2015)



Dr. Umebayashi at the Workshop,
September 15 2014



A scene from the Conference,
December 8 2014

The Third International Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons was hosted by the Austrian government on December 8 and 9, 2014. The conference in Vienna follows on from the first conference held in Oslo, Norway, in March 2013 and the

second conference held in Nayarit, Mexico, in February 2014. Countries participating in the third conference numbered 158, exceeding that of both the first and second conferences. Of the five nuclear-weapon states, the United States and the United Kingdom participated for the first time. Of the other states thought to possess nuclear weapons, India and Pakistan chose to participate while Israel and North Korea were absent. The large number of participants also included representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross and various organizations of the United Nations, as well as from NGOs and academia. At the conference venue of Hofburg Palace, a heated atmosphere filled the palace's grand hall, which was packed full with participants. Those unable to get a seat in the grand hall were able to view the proceedings on a monitor set up in a separate room.

Austria's Strategic Approach

Recent focus on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons has led to a strengthening of international opinion in favor of the prohibition of nuclear weapons by law, a most logical conclusion. In Mexico, the Chair of the Nayarit Conference stated "The broad-based and comprehensive discussions on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons should lead to the commitment of States and civil society to reach new international standards and norms, through a legally binding instrument." The Chair also declared that "it is time to take action," and called for the initiation of a diplomatic process conducive to this goal. While these constructive statements by the Chair of the Nayarit Conference were welcomed by many states and members of civil society who shared the same sentiments, other states with a dislike for legal discussions were made even more wary.

In this context, the approach taken by Austria was consistently cautious and strategic. It was repeatedly stated that the conference was not an occasion for diplomatic negotiations. As conference host the Austrian government sent out a call for a wide range of participants, including those states possessing nuclear weapons, while also putting together an ambitious program that included areas not previously addressed. During the four sessions, the main points discussed at the previous two conferences such as the impact of nuclear weapons explosions and nuclear weapons testing, as well as the risks of deliberate or accidental nuclear weapon detonations were covered, and further evidence was presented regarding response capabilities in the case of use of nuclear weapons. In addition, something which had not been mentioned previously, the issue of risks inherent with nuclear deterrence measures was taken up. Furthermore, discussions were held anew on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and international norms in light of existing international laws such as international environment law and international health law. Keeping in mind that the NPT Review Conference had been scheduled to be held four months after the Vienna conference, it could be said that the discussions of legal matters in Vienna were aimed at contributing to the debate about the abolition of nuclear weapons legally, while also trying to avoid causing any further divisions in the international community. Austria's strategic approach, which shows consideration for the differing standpoints of various states, is also

manifested in the two documents – "Chair's Summary" and "Austrian Pledge," which are mentioned further down.

Proposals to Overcome Opposing Standpoints

In the General Debate, which followed on from the sessions, delegations from more than one hundred governmental and international organizations came together with participants from civil society to take the floor. Many calls, mainly from non-aligned nations, were made for negotiations towards a treaty to abolish nuclear weapons. However, nuclear-weapon states, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, and a number of so-called under the nuclear umbrella states emphasized the effectiveness of a step-by-step approach or building-block approach. The latter made a string of comments reflecting the current tendency of apprehension such as that there was no short-cut [to nuclear disarmament], that consideration should be given to security as well as the humanitarian aspect, and that strategic stability would be destroyed.

In addition, statements by various countries included many concrete proposals to overcome the long-standing structural opposition. One of those proposals came from the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), composed of Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand and South Africa, which calls for a review of the options for "effective measures" as sought in Article VI of the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons at the next Review Conference. NAC presented some options for legal frameworks such as a Nuclear Weapons Convention (a multilateral treaty to outlaw nuclear weapons) in a working document submitted to the third meeting of the 2014 NPT Review Conference Preparatory Committee. NAC also had a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in autumn 2014 which urges States parties to the treaty to explore, during the 2015 Review Conference, options for the elaboration of the effective measures envisaged in and required by article VI of the treaty. Other proposals included Sweden's call for an Open Ended Working Group under the United Nations General Assembly to discuss options to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world and a call by Cuba and others to utilize the United Nations High-Level Conference on Nuclear Disarmament, which has been already convened for not later than 2018.

"Austrian Pledge"

Following on from the "Chair's Summary," the Austrian government representative read out the "Austrian Pledge," a document which could be said to be quite unprecedented. Austria indicated its intentions that through the Vienna Conference, it had come to inescapable conclusions and therefore would make the Pledge to take them forward with interested parties in available fora, including in the context of the NPT and its upcoming 2015 Review Conference.

The most noteworthy point of the Pledge is Austria's request to all states parties to the NPT "to identify and pursue effective measures to fill the legal gap for the prohibition and elimination of nuclear weapons." In regard to exploring options for the elaboration of the effective measures required by article VI of the treaty during the 2015 Review Conference, this follows the same line as the NAC proposal and was expected to bring about progress in discussions with those countries who insisted that it was still too premature for such treaty negotiations.



Dr. Kulacki at the Lecture, November 5 2014

On November 5, 2014, Dr. Gregory Kulacki of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS; a U.S.-based NGO) and an expert on China's nuclear issues, gave a lecture during his visit to Nagasaki at the RECNA Research Seminar titled, "China's Nuclear Strategy: Dialog with the US and the Role of Japan," which was followed by an

exchange of views. Dr. Kulacki, who has lived in China for more than 20 years, is the premiere US expert on China and has many acquaintances and friends in China. Although his knowledge, sourced from his network of information and personal connections, is recognized to be extremely reliable, Dr. Kulacki's views have also been criticized as being biased in favor of China. However, his activities in the UCS have undeniably been very beneficial for nuclear policy experts, not only in the U.S. and China, but around the world for understanding Chinese nuclear policy.

In his lecture, Dr. Kulacki detailed several misunderstandings by the U.S. regarding China's policy of nuclear modernization. The current belief that has spread in the U.S. regarding China's policy is that the nation has recently begun shifting to a broader strategy than their traditional posture of minimum deterrence and pledge of no first use. He thoroughly explained that this understanding was based on incorrect translations of Chinese texts and on unreliable information sources. Specific examples that were given are the 1995 paper by Alastair Johnston published in *International Security* and the paper by Michael Chase, Andrew Erickson, and Christopher Yeaw published in the *Journal of Strategic Studies* in 2009. The point made was that because these studies were based on Chinese military reports that are not publicly available and were not publications intended for external release, the accuracy of the translations cannot be confirmed. Dr. Kulacki states that, according to the most authoritative military reports released in 2003 and 2007, China's long-standing posture of minimum deterrence and pledge of no first use remain unchanged.

Another example is the January 2011 news item that China had shifted its no-first-use policy. Dr. Kulacki indicated his negative views on this issue since there were obvious errors due to misunderstandings and mistranslations of information in all the research papers (the source of information for the news), making them unreliable. He criticized the current situation of research in the United States on China's nuclear arms policy stating that it is impossible to reach any reliable conclusion from analyses based on such dubious sources of information.

Dr. Kulacki also stated that overcoming the language barrier was critical in understanding the strategies of other nations, and that it was extremely risky to decide policy based on mistranslations and inaccurate interpretations. He also emphasized the importance of having a reliable information source inside the target nation, since the reliability of an information source cannot often be determined from outside that nation.

On the other hand, the reason for such problems lies in the utter lack of policy transparency in China. Improving their transparency would be meaningful also for the Chinese, stated Dr. Kulacki, adding that China too must endeavor to become more open. Although a U.S.-China strategic dialog is taking place even at the military level, he mentioned the fundamental reticence of China to provide any useful information, a backdrop that leads to misunderstandings and errors of the types previously mentioned.

Finally, Dr. Kulacki talked about a movement in the United States in which he is currently involved. That is de-alerting, or changing the launch-ready status of nuclear weapons. He said that Japan's role in regard to this is extremely important. The statement issued by the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative Ministerial Meeting in Hiroshima in April 2014, clearly proposes de-alerting, thus showing how this point is recognized and valued. De-alerting nuclear weapons lowers the risk of a nuclear conflict and also leads to diminishing the role of nuclear weapons. Dr. Kulacki asserted that as an ally of a nuclear-weapon state, if Japan would raise its voice to promote de-alerting, this would have a major impact.

Handing Down the Atomic Bombing Experience – Continuing to Speak about the Tragedy

Chie Shijo (RECNA Visiting Researcher)

When I ask acquaintances and families of atomic bomb survivors I have not seen for a while about news of them I am increasingly told "Unfortunately...." They have died, or even though they live they are unable to talk.... I have also learned of the passing away of someone who was very kind to me by seeing his or her obituary in the newspaper. I poignantly feel the ageing of the atomic bomb survivors. Now, while we can still directly hear the experiences of those who lived through the war is the last opportunity we will have to observe and examine their tales and the accompanying problem of handing down those tales face to face with them.

The atomic bomb survivors have been retelling their experiences for many a long year. One form of this retelling is giving testimony. The dictionary defines "testimony" as "Proving a certain fact using words. Speaking the truth as a witness, or those words." The word was originally used in legal settings, but it has become used for describing wartime experiences. The subject of testimony varies widely from the written to the spoken word, and includes the "atomic bombing experience lectures"* that the survivors address directly to the public. In 2013, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum was visited by

643,000 people, of which 173,000 (mainly students on school trips) listened to the atomic bombing experience lectures of survivors affiliated to the Nagasaki Foundation for the Promotion of Peace. Similar lectures are systematically conducted in Hiroshima by the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and several other organizations. Hitherto many people have come into direct contact with the tales of the atomic bombing survivors through school trips and peace studies. The atomic bombing experience lectures conducted as a part of school education have become the main forum for handing down the telling of survivor's experiences, probably surpassing even that of asking immediate family members about their experiences.

Without a doubt the atomic bombing experience lectures have provided a precious opportunity for a great many people who have no wartime experience to listen directly to the tales of the survivors. However, while these lectures have indeed provided a valuable chance for many to listen to those involved in the calamitous events, this system in which a single person addresses many people within a limited space of time in a lecture format and enables them to carefully listen to their important experiences, has also led to a uniform and

conventionalized way of speaking. The survivors who wrench their hearts trying to explain their experiences in an easily understood manner suffer mentally from the worry that their words “are not reaching people’s hearts.” Taking the rostrum and telling hundreds of members of the public about your personal experiences is not like chatting about the war with family or friends; it is a highly specialized way of talking about wartime experiences. It is not possible for students to discuss things with each other during lectures, as this is a part of school tuition. If someone hears a word they are not sure of it is far from easy to interrupt the lecture and ask questions. It is hard for the individual to take one’s time and listen to the survivor’s tales within a limited timeframe. Within the hushed auditorium the experiences of the survivors have to be listened to with sober attention.

In the course of pursuing the research theme of the damage caused by the atomic bombings I have personally had the chance to listen to the tales of many survivors. Nearly all of these stories are bleak, sad tales — the lack of sufficient food during the war, the state when the atomic bomb was dropped, how their beloved family members passed away, and with what sorts of scars they have had to live out their lives with. Nonetheless, amid all this tragedy there lies a panorama of the past about which they talk positively with a sense of fun or nostalgia. “You probably won’t know this but there used to be this building here...,” “The kids used to play in the river here all the time...,” “It was a bit naughty, but I used to sneak into the cinema and

watch a film...” and so on. Sometimes when I’m listening to the account of a survivor who relates their experiences with a gentle expression on their face a vista of old Nagasaki before the bombing seems to appear before my eyes. This was the true pleasure of listening to survivors’ experiences, and at the same time my way of learning about the damage of the bombing.

I wonder if there is a way that a forum can be created outside of the atomic bombing experience lectures system in which speakers and listeners can talk with ease to each other and beyond generational gaps. I hope that I will be able to help by playing a part in creating a new place where atomic bombing experiences can continue to be related at RECNA, which is the very place that can assemble supporters to think about nuclear issues, and in Nagasaki, the very site of the atomic bombing.

* Also known as “survivor testimonies,” “peace studies,” and “school excursion lectures.”

Appointed

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