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Refurbishing Analysis and Debate on Nuclear Affairs

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The contents of this paper contain the views of the author and are not intended in any way to represent the position, policy or performance of any other individual or organization. It is a preliminary record of thoughts that are helping inform research on the connections and relationships among civil military relations and nuclear affairs in the post “9/11” world.

Comments are welcomed.

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Introduction

The title of this conference is “Bridging a Divided World Through International Cooperation and Disarmament.”

The expression is a useful one if – and possibly only if – its words are perceived, individually and in the variety of their collectivities, in ways that accurately reflect the world’s realities and what it is possible to do in the face of them.

The world is “divided”, of course. But those divisions have many forms and many reasons. And, divisions that viscerally concern or affect some people and places do not at all affect others, or do so at different times and in differing intensities. As well, one of the silver linings of change is that even long-term divisions ebb and flow. They grow and narrow with time and circumstance and attention. Some disappear altogether.

Therefore, “bridging” demands bridges of many sizes and many types. Some – a small minority – may have to be all but permanent, such as a tangible commitment to a minimum level of international support for disarmament complied with by a large majority of states and state groups. However, most bridges should be mobile and, or, modifiable, to reflect the dynamics of the changing context for each of the builders, the needers, and the users of bridges. As well, even mobile, modifiable bridges will be of minimal use if their erection and modification or removal are not responsive – in time, quantity and quality – to the divisions they address.

The term “international” has traditionally meant “of states”, defined in terms of the sovereign state. However, since the end of the Cold War, self-determination and freedom – freedom of markets, from fear, and of person, place and family – have become the global standards. Since there are only about 200 states, but more than 2400 significant nations, these standards are almost certain to cater for more nations achieving their goal of self-determination; of statehood. More states can only mean “international” affairs will be more complex, more competitive and more costly in time and effort, not least for the management of collective peace and security.

“Cooperation” must be acknowledged in the setting of the standard of self-determination. Therefore, cooperation should, nay must, now be understood to include not only, as always, a declared intention and, or, a demonstrated capacity and, or, a specific action taken with others, but also – because self-determination includes freedom of choice - the abstaining from or stopping such engagement, as long as such action is, at its worst, “neutral” for the ongoing cooperation among others. IN other words, cooperation now includes abstention from or stopping activity with others when such action neither stops nor seriously harms that cooperation.

Unlike, again in the Cold War when failure to support one’s own side was conventionally interpreted as at least implicit disagreement if not support for the other side, cooperation on today’s and the future’s issues can not be clear, predictable or permanent. Never again will the world experience four decades like those following WW II when not a single state of impact or importance changed its allegiance on the major issues of the day.

Lastly, from our conference title; “disarmament”. Custom, culture and/or commitment have seen to it that mankind has always been armed. And so it will always be, and ever more so because of technology. The technology imperative – the storm of pushes and pulls that invent, identify and field new and different

processes and things – guarantees that ever more low and old and high and new technologies will be available for the development of arms; offensive, defensive and non-lethal.

We may indeed have become too focused on the wonders of modern science – of new things. Too little acknowledged today is the fact that the most effective “weapon of mass disruption” since the early 1990s is one as old as the history of metal – the machete. But the machete is addressed by no international law or treaty. It can be made by the poor and underdeveloped in great numbers, or bought by the dozen in hardware or sporting goods stores in cities of every advanced state. A machete’s cost, training requirements and maintenance are minimal. Anyone can use it in a threatening or dangerous or deadly way – the young or old, the weak or strong, male or female.

Global Setting

Perhaps the only axiom more valid today than ever it was is: “You can’t do everything”. For bridge-building in a divided world, the quantity of needs and demands in combination with the quality of what would be needed to do them all well – of funding, intelligence, continuity, connections (linkages and cooperation) and multi-disciplinarity - overwhelms the ways, the means and the will of humankind.

Every “bridge” that is needed or wanted cannot be built. Every “international” word or deed that is needed or wanted cannot be written or done. All “cooperation” that is needed and wanted cannot happen. And every weapon that is a threat to mankind cannot be removed or avoided by “disarmament”.

Effective bridges constructed from international effort; from cooperation, say on disarmament, may appear if sufficient time, effort and resources are provided. Sufficient quantity of *quality* efforts and resources will appear only if a reasonable – a limited - number of issues and efforts are agreed upon for attention. Agreement will depend on describing and “marketing” issues and efforts in ways that promote understanding both of why they deserve attention, and, why they deserve that attention before others. Only then are enough actors likely to decide to act and to act together; to cooperate. Reinforcing this web of requirements is the technology imperative referred to above, and globalization’s intensifying interconnectedness of issues and efforts from the individual level to the global.

Wise and effective focus will depend on enlightened decisions. Each decision will consist of a pair of choices; which issue(s) (of all the important ones) and what effort(s) (from among all that is available and doable)? Good decisions flow from honest and timely analysis of all meaningful factors and their relationships. Timely analysis is that which is brought to closure before the decision (that might even be the best decision) comes too late to be useful or effective. Good analysis has become much more challenging because of the increase in pace and in variety of changes to the factors and the relationships that characterize all important issues and dictate what substantive efforts are possible to deal with them.

Nuclear affairs

Analysis in support of disarmament – specifically nuclear disarmament – needs refurbishing to honestly and fully deal with the post-Cold War, post-“9/11”, post-2003 Iraq invasion and pre-US\$ 50 oil. In the context of a war-on terrorism that is coloured by potentially immense, unschedulable threats from the likes of “nuclear rogues” – states and individuals - international peace and security certainly demands the best analysis humanly possible.

But much of today’s analysis of nuclear disarmament issues and efforts is being done – this writer claims – focusing inward (in details) and rearward (in time). Technical “nuclear” factors are most emphasized and the loudest debate is a competition about weaknesses in or failures of existing agreements and efforts completed or underway. When debaters find the competition getting tough, the reaction often - not surprisingly now, and not totally unwisely – is to fall back on a “conventional” argument; the WMD connection to the War on Terrorism (WoT) and their combined threat to one’s state’s sovereignty.

The refurbishment of nuclear disarmament analysis and improvement of debate on disarmament will depend on eschewing narrow focus and adopting an “allwards” perspective.

Lists of tangible and intangible factors related to and affecting nuclear disarmament can be updated. All the connections among them can be expressed in real-world terms that more potential “cooperators” will understand and find attractive. This probably requires the identification of all the impacts of plausible changes in listed factors, individually and collectively. Such a foresight exercise in scenario-development is now both practical and affordable because of computer power. Only with all this “ammunition” will it be possible to make the choices that lead to wise decisions, both on issues that deserve attention most and efforts that are available, because decision-makers will have greater confidence in their assessments of which issues are a clear and present danger today and which are a plausible serious threat in the future.

Lists of Nuclear Factors

The number of factors related to and affecting commitment to and effort on nuclear disarmament, not surprisingly if unfortunately, is rising, is much larger than most realize, and has far outstripped existing analysis; the analysis that is inward and rearward, publicly available and considered a credible basis for strategy and policy.

The lists that follow reflect very preliminary thinking. The writer admits that the lists are probably incomplete, and include items or issues that are invalid as less than really important, or, have been placed in a less than most appropriate group. Also, the very division of items and issues into “primarily nuclear” and “primarily economic”, etc., is simplistic.

However, the writer is adamant that the exercise of making the lists is vital to a better and broader understanding and discussion of the state and future of nuclear affairs – particularly nuclear disarmament. As well, the lists offered below demonstrate how broad is the scope of nuclear affairs, and why looking at them with an “allwards” perspective is vital.

The primarily nuclear

- human nature
 - development of sites
 - mining and fabrication of fissionable material
 - nuclear processes
 - goods and services for (nuclear) technology
 - specialist control
 - knowledge from experience (vice education)
- Total - seven

The primarily political

- sovereignty and X-lateralisms¹
 - democracy
 - siting of nuclear facilities
 - weapons
 - waste and waste storage siting
 - national energy policy
 - national industrial policy
 - records
 - transparency
 - intelligence
 - protectionism
 - policy/position on treaties and treaty relationships
- Total - twelve

¹ X- lateralisms: unilateralism, bi-lateralism, multilateralism

The primarily security

- the Revolution in Security Affairs² (RSA)
 - global map of conflict (violence), and indicators
 - global map of crises (e.g., HIV AIDS, drought), and indicators
 - myths, false and incomplete histories
 - crime
 - terrorism
 - proliferation
- Total - seven

The primarily economic

- price³ of confirmed-availability oil
 - storage facilities
 - outsourcing
 - privatization (of peace and war)⁴
 - states' position on status of the environment
 - climate change
- Total - six

The primarily technological

- education
 - productivity
 - quality control
- Total - three

The primarily environmental

- energy-history perceptions
 - water
 - geography (land, sea and space)
 - human security
 - Kyoto Accord
 - natural disasters
- Total - five

Grand total - forty

Connections

If the lists above represent the scope, or quantity, of nuclear issues, then the depth, or the *quality* of nuclear affairs – in terms of their influence and complexity – can be illustrated, but by no means calculated, by making the connections among the elements of the lists. As well, identifying connections redresses the artificiality of the disaggregated picture that lists present of a globalized world that is all about connections. Indeed, many of the worst security surprises and unintended consequences have been due to actions or omissions based on analysis that did not address enough of the right connections.

² The RSA is the dynamic combination of processes and outcomes flowing from the release, with the end of the Cold War, of security from its narrow statist and territorial characterization to include all security sectors, or drivers. Food security, human security, water security are among the sectors. International crime, drought, natural disasters are among the drivers.

³ Price is a multi-part term. Price to oil company, price to consumer, price to conservation, price to offset fear of interruption of supply (terrorism premium), etc.,

⁴ The number of private sector armed forces and security organizations now almost certainly outnumbers public ones (state-sponsored formal armed forces and organizations). As well, a large number of nominally state-sponsored armed forces obtain a significant part of their capital and operating funds from engaging in business; manufacturing, provision of services and money management.

If, only for the convenience of this paper, it is assumed that the lists above are complete, then there are in theory 40 factorial combinations of connections within them (40 X 39 X 38 X 37...X 3 X 2 X 1) – a huge number. Many of these connections will be of such small or insignificant impact as to never constitute a situation calling for priority or emergency action. But this is little comfort in the face of the enormous number of connections that are important, not to mention the fact that many of the individual elements of the lists impose great and continuing demands on their own.

In addition, every individual element of the lists and every connection is dynamic on its own; sensitive to change over time and to context – to the environment and who the actors are. It is a case of $F\{f(t)\}$ where “F” is context and “f” the individual element or connection.

To very briefly and basically illustrate connections, the following are suggested. They are in threes – which, once again, greatly oversimplifies reality. But even only threes offer up scenarios of vastly more *real quality* than do almost all individual elements on their own. As well, the selections presented reflect other important realities:

- each actor – an analyst, a decision-maker, or a user of the outcome of a decision – can read different characteristics into, and different outcomes from, each “three”,
- every element will contribute differently to each different “three” it is part of, and
- “language” may challenge broad agreement. The order of the elements of the “three” and the tongue used to express/translate them (i.e., English or Han Chinese or Russian) can generate different perceptions of the connection and its impacts for different actors.

Some Connections briefly discussed.

Proliferation – war-on-terrorism – protectionism.

This topical, contemporary mix of themes grows in influence with each new bombing, hostage taking, assassination and week of post Saddam Iraq. The combination of human nature, private wealth, technical knowledge and the fruits of technology allow just one person, or a small group, to build, transport and use a weapon of mass destruction – or mass disruption; the threat of destruction sometimes being as effective as the event.

But protecting oneself, by oneself, is virtually impossible. It takes a quantity of quality resources that only a state can muster. “Protectionism” until very recently was a matter of trade and, less so, state politics. “Offensive protectionism”, or sanctions, were sometimes partly a security matter, but were implemented “from a distance”.

Today, “protectionism” has become a huge element of “homeland security”, which includes trade issues but is mostly and primarily about national security. And “offensive protectionism”, or offensive homeland security now includes preventive and preemptive military operations abroad as demonstrated by the US and forewarned by Russia’s President after the hostage tragedy at the school in Beslan.

Nuclear affairs – among them disarmament – are inseparably and unavoidably part and parcel of this connection.

Multilateralism – bilateralism – unilateralism

For decades much was made, politically, militarily and economically, of differences among a state’s positions – its memberships, agreements and treaties – depending whether they were multi-, bi-, or unilateral in word and, or, in deed.

Can, or should, the same be said today, given that every state and all the nations that aspire to be one are “right” - given the standard of self-determination - to choose multi-, bi-, or unilateralism as they see fit, issue by issue, and, of more concern, to change their levels of commitment, or even their choices, as they see fit.

Choice often means trying to get something others have and you want. Nuclear power; whether a matter of education, energy, security, military power, or prestige is available, and none of the X-lateralisms are likely ever to be the setting for its control; i.e., for disarmament.

Energy (condition/need) – waste (security and certainty) – storage (geography and cost)

Countries as rich and lucky and respected as Canada are, and seem destined to remain, on the horns of the energy dilemma. As long as countries that have the means and ways to choose nuclear energy to solve their “development” problems, what ways and means are “right” and “good” to criticize other countries less rich, less lucky and less developed who want to “go nuclear” ?

One country’s “waste” is another country’s potential for economic gain and, or, weapon development.

Where is the boundary between a country’s choice to develop a nuclear “capability” and other countries’ choice to criticize, sanction, inspect, or invade that country on the grounds its capability represents a substantive threat to peace and security?

Statism – nationalism – nuclearism

In the eyes of the international community, identity and “belonging” are most related to and dependent on a person’s state. Even the “international civil servants” of UN organizations who travel on UN passports are known by, and in part appointed for, their home state.

Most states want their citizens to be proud of what they are and have, and want other states and state groups to think well of them and to respect their sovereignty. Some states have very complex and expensive ways and means to attract everyone to identify with and support the state. For example, Canada, where by far the majority of citizens are now hyphenated Canadians, has legislation that calls on the government to help them financially to maintain their original culture. Others have complex and expensive ways and to assimilate everyone into the state. For example, in Singapore, every citizen of whatever background is a Singaporean; no ifs and or buts, and no hyphens.

Nuclear technology is a “high-technology” field. Knowledge and skills in nuclear matters are a sign that the state has a developed education system. Where is the boundary between education in nuclear subjects that is right and good and education that is wrong and bad? Is there such a distinction?

Knowledge – quality control - technology

For nuclear systems to work properly and safely, full knowledge, appropriate technology and quality control have to exist in harmony and be maintained. As recent history has shown, even the most advanced and richest states can and do fail the demands of harmony and balance.

No state is perfect. Every nuclear state has lost people to nuclear accidents not related in any way to conflict. Most have also had accidents, or failures, in project management that cost billions of dollars and mortgaged energy futures. States embarking on nuclear goods or services are criticized by nuclear states, and those against nuclear energy at any level, charging them, variously, with not enough knowledge, not enough technology, or not enough quality of work and government. Is a new nuclear state any more likely to have an accident than an experienced nuclear state?

Is not the knowledge, technology and level of quality called for by nuclear goods and services valuable not only in their own right, but also in terms of providing a state with experience and processes necessary for important non-nuclear development, education, industry, etc.?

History – myth – treaties

In the past, history was written and approved by and, or, for the victors. Recently – and mostly since the end of the Cold War – those histories have been proven to be incomplete or inaccurate. More and more countries are writing new and re-writing old histories. Some of these are as self-serving as were those they replaced, but at least they are in the public domain and fair game for improvement in the future.

Treaties in the past were set up by the victors and imposed on the defeated or weak. This too is changing. Self-determination, democratization, the growing number of new states, the RSA are all forcing treaty creation and management to be much more in everyone's interests, and for everyone's involvement.

Old treaties are less and less respected, and complied with.

New histories and new treaties and the disproving of myths will make agreement on nuclear issues more demanding of fairness throughout the process, for all the many, different shareholders and stakeholders.

Commerce – crime – proliferation

Nuclear crime is big commerce that may be the main source of nuclear proliferation.

Traditional methods of combating crime, or proliferation, in which goods and services are bought, sold, or bartered, no longer seem remotely adequate. Indeed they may not even be providing for a reasonable indication of how much crime and proliferation is supported or promoted by business.

Where are the laws against criminal proliferation business?

Implications

As interesting as exploring connections and building scenarios can be, little is gained until there are results than can be used to make tangible progress on nuclear affairs.

The progress – the bridges – made through international cooperation among different actors takes many forms. The context for the bridge-building is so dynamic and diverse it makes little sense to speculate briefly on what those forms may be. Every actor's priorities are different and those differences are determined by diversity in the pace, power and irregularity of the actor's political, economic, social, security, spiritual drivers. However, there does seem to be more than purely intellectual value in suggesting themes for debate, or research, or option development, for the sorts (of sets) of connections presented above.

First, some Caveats

The foundation of progress and of solving a problem includes identifying and acknowledging obstacles, and, properly stating the whole problem.

Progress and solutions in nuclear disarmament are richly challenged. And the challenges are sometimes reinforced simply by not being put on the table, included in the debate. There are any number of implicit and explicit obstacles and problems.

WHO Decides?

Since the end of the Cold War, everywhere except in the most heinously governed states and nations, it seems no one is in a decision to make a decision stick, and, at the same time, everyone feels they have a right to decide for themselves.

- Who decides on the big nuclear issues, and then, how is compliance monitored and encouraged, and then, if necessary, how is non-compliance handled and are nuclear crimes punished, if at all?

HOW to Manage X-lateralism

Nuclear affairs are increasingly global in reach and concern, and therefore it is logical to expect responses will need to be at least multilateral; both in design and their doing. However, post- 9/11, protectionism has joined homeland security – or vice versa – and the trend is clearly to bi-lateral agreements, and sometimes even unilateral ones that engender little cooperation.

How can harmony be best-designed, developed and maintained among multilateral needs and bilateral actions?

WHERE will resources come from?

As the “quality” rises of an ever-greater “quantity” of nuclear issues, it is almost certain that action – for progress or on solutions – will come only at continuously rising cost; monetary, mental, material *and* political.

Where will sustained funds and manpower come from? Since it is certain no one source will provide them all, where are they all and who coordinates the “bank”?

WHICH organizations lead?

The context for nuclear affairs – disarmament – is not only increasingly multi-dimensional and multi-disciplinary (across sectors and intellectual fields) but also intensely inter-dimensional and inter-disciplinary (top to bottom within individual sectors and fields).

In some security settings the corporal at the front is on equal footing; importance and influence-wise, with the general back at the headquarters. In some social settings a brilliant uneducated field-experienced young manual labourer in the jungle may be as important and influential to the continued operation of a huge commercial operation as the experienced, highly educated middle-aged CEO at head office.

Which institution, language and practices will be used for discussion and analysis? Does a suitable, capable institution and body of practice exist? If new ones are built, will they work in English?

Suggestions

This final section of the think piece is a conclusion only in the sense of its location in the paper. In fact, its contents are probably more an introduction to what the above may provoke than a conclusion of the brainstorming it attempts to express.

Closest to a conclusion is the belief – of the writer – that unless debate and analysis of nuclear affairs are done better; i.e., differently, there is very little hope for progress on old nuclear problems and next to none on challenges and problems that a rising quantity of states and other actors will impose on ever higher *quality* nuclear affairs.

The suggestions are, briefly:

The focus should be on a stepped, flexible response, in the following *desired*⁵ order of priority

- rewards for right and good nuclear affairs
- energy security as aid for states/parts of states which for a reason beyond their control have no choice but to nuclearize against development reversals or threatened aggression.
- amnesties for wrong and not excessively bad nuclear affairs that the state has tried to remedy or that circumstances beyond its control make it incapable of stopping or fixing.
- containment, by the politically cheapest and militarily least destructive means, of a nuclear affair at its center of gravity.
- just wars when the perpetrator of a wrong and excessively bad nuclear affair refuses not only to stop or fix it, but continues to raise its seriousness and threat potential.
- “treaties” that reflect successful responses.

The responders should be constituted in the following order

- individuals and officials from the region with the center of gravity of the nuclear affair in question
- nuclear and related specialists from the region
- nuclear and related specialists from outside the region
- individuals and officials from outside the region
- the UN.

Fundamental actions, in no particular order, might include

- a global nuclear research programme that builds on the ideas of lists and connections to produce, for global public diplomacy and education, a set of scenarios for nuclear affairs, starting perhaps with nuclear disarmament.

⁵ Circumstances plus personalities plus commitment often trump the *desire* of the common good.

- the ending once and for all of the use of “dollar a day” threshold as a poverty line. This is a problematic and virtually meaningless term that only the West uses. It ignores the fact that there is at least one nuclear state that is below the threshold.
- a global internet chat room for nuclear issues equipped with a system that sorts contributions, identifies trends and archives deductions.

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