

## OPINION

# Canada Can't Avoid the Global Nuclear Crisis



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The new Canadian government headed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper, which came to office on a domestic agenda, is quickly finding itself immersed in international issues. The prime minister's visit to Afghanistan shows his enlarged focus. Now the issue of nuclear weapons looms because the world faces, as a United Nations high-level panel recently put it, a "cascade" of proliferation of nuclear weapons. Canada, which has long upheld the goal of a nuclear weapons-free world, cannot escape the present crisis.

When the first atomic bombs destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, it could hardly have been imagined that 60 years later more than 30,000 nuclear weapons would be in existence. The Cold War is long over, but half the world's population still lives under governments brandishing nuclear weapons.

The longstanding nuclear weapons states — the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, France and China — are making nuclear weapons permanent instruments of their military doctrines. India, Pakistan and Israel have joined the nuclear club. North Korea is trying to get into it. Iran is suspected of trying to acquire the capacity to convert nuclear fuel into nuclear weapons.

The U.S. and Russia have put new emphasis on the war-fighting role of nuclear weapons. The nuclear weapons states refuse to give up their arsenals and feign surprise that other nations, seeing that nuclear weapons have become the currency of power in the modern world, are trying to acquire them. So are terrorists. No major city in the world is safe from the threat of a nuclear attack. The risk of accident multi-

plies daily. All these are characteristics of the Second Nuclear Age.

International Atomic Energy Agency Director Mohamed ElBaradei, who won the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize, says: "If we wish to escape self-destruction, then nuclear weapons should have no place in our collective conscience and no role in our security."

### Bridging the Nuclear Divide

What should Canada now do? The new government should concentrate on helping to save the authority and integrity of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT); and it should help to build a bridge between the nuclear weapons states and the non-nuclear states so that the two sides can start talking coherently to each other.

When the NPT came into existence in 1970, a bargain was struck between the nuclear and non-nuclear states. The former agreed to negotiate in good faith the elimination of their nuclear weapons in return for the latter not acquiring nuclear weapons while still receiving access to nuclear energy for civilian purposes. In essence, the NPT, now signed by 188 states, promised a world in which nuclear weapons would be eliminated and technological cooperation for development of peaceful uses for nuclear energy would be widespread.

In 1995, the original 25-year term of the NPT was indefinitely extended. The nuclear weapons states committed themselves to "systematic and progressive efforts" toward the elimination of nuclear weapons; further, they promised a Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty by 1996, and to conclude negotiations for a treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons. The 1995 promises were augmented at the 2000 NPT Review Conference when the nuclear weapons states joined a consensus on an "unequivocal undertaking" for

the complete elimination of nuclear weapons to be carried out through 13 Practical Steps.

But all this positive work has crumbled in recent years. When it came to power in 2001, the Bush Administration renounced some of the 13 Steps and asserted in a Nuclear Posture Review that it requires nuclear weapons to "dissuade competitors" and "defeat enemies."

It is not the U.S. alone that is undermining the NPT. Russia is scheduled to deploy a mobile, multi-warhead variant of its existing silo-based missiles in 2006. China is developing a new mobile intermediate-range ICBM. The U.K. is preparing a replacement of its submarine-launched Trident missile. France is developing a missile for its submarine fleet.

With all this nuclear activity going on and with nuclear and non-nuclear states shouting at each other, it is no wonder the 2005 NPT Review Conference collapsed in disarray.

Now the Harper government is challenged to help pick up the pieces.

### Avoiding Mayhem

It will not be enough merely to re-affirm Canada's support for the NPT. Canada must fight to save it because the NPT cannot withstand another failed review conference in 2010. If the NPT goes under, nuclear mayhem will follow. It is in Canada's direct interests to help strengthen the implementation of the Treaty. The cities of Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal are just as much at risk of the physical and economic fallout of nuclear warfare as the cities of New York, Los Angeles and Chicago.

Canada cannot do much alone. But working with like-minded states, it can do a lot to bridge the gulf between the nuclear and non-nuclear states. Seven NATO states (Belgium, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Poland and Turkey) have

strongly backed the NPT 2000 commitments. Norway has gathered a group of foreign ministers to uphold the integrity of the NPT. Seven mid-level states in the New Agenda Coalition (Brazil, Egypt, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden and South Africa) have consistently pressed the nuclear weapons states to live up to their obligations. These are countries that Canada can work actively with to establish achievable goals.

U.S. security policies today are driven today by the aftermath of Sept. 11, 2001, but nuclear weapons are not a solution to terrorism. Canada's multilateral diplomatic work on the nuclear agenda in no way diminishes our sensitive inter-relationship with the U.S.'s genuine security needs. Canadian governments have long balanced the U.S. bilateral agenda and international work.

Here are three achievable steps for the Harper government to take:

1. Instruct the appropriate Canadian diplomats to work in a constructive way with like-minded states to uphold and implement the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

2. Emphasize the need to start international negotiations on a Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty and contribute Canadian expertise on verification.

3. Work to convince all states to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and convince the nuclear weapons states that world safety demands that all nuclear weapons be taken off high-alert status.

This program will help Prime Minister Harper to take core Canadian values into the international arena in an effective way.

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# The Twists and Turns of Kenya's Media Crackdown

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The vibrant Kenyan media, often upheld as exemplary for professional standards in East and Central Africa including the Horn of Africa, may lose its regional leadership position if apparently determined efforts by the government to silence the press succeed.

The malignant designs against the media took centre-stage in Kenyan politics two weeks ago when a dozen hooded policemen raided the newsroom and printing press of Kenya's oldest daily newspaper, *The East African Standard*, and its television station, Kenya Television Network (KTN).

It was a commando-style midnight raid. Printed copies of the newspaper ready for morning dispatch were burnt and the printing press dismantled. The police squad, code named Quick Response Unit (QRU), then switched off KTN and took away computers and accessories. Upon their arrival at the media group's premises, they ordered staff to lie down and robbed them of money and cellular phones. All those items have not been returned.

The Kenyan Minister for Internal Security, John Michuki, justified the raid on the following day with a proverb: "When you rattle a snake, the snake will bite you."

Indeed "the snake" may have been rattled

lately in that the raid came as Kenyan media exposed a high-level multi-million dollar scam in which senior government ministers were accused of successive embezzlements of public funds. The scam, which stunned the nation for the huge amounts looted, involved a fictitious company named as Anglo-Leasing Company that was awarded several government contracts and paid upfront. It is still a running story.

However, the exposures prompted public pressure against the government leading to the sacking of four government ministers. The heat is still on against Vice President Moody Awori to step aside for facilitation of investigations against him.

The raid also came few months after the government had lost by a wide margin in a referendum for a new constitution which would have given the president extensive powers. The media were blamed for the government's embarrassing defeat.

The Kenyan public, with its appetite for continued exposures of financial scandals, staged street demonstrations and held public meetings at major towns demanding freedom of the press and their right to know. Meanwhile, the diplomatic community, including the Canadian High Commission in Nairobi, condemned the raid on the *Standard* group.

Last Friday, a Parliamentary Departmental Committee on Administration of Justice and Legal Affairs summoned Mr. Michuki to explain why the government raided the *Standard* group.

He was reported to have claimed that the

raid was undertaken because the media group "runs a propaganda unit keen to publish series of stories linking key government officials with the Al-Qaeda terrorist group." He went on to allege "the *Standard* group was engaged in subversive activities." The parliamentary committee has also summoned Mr. Michuki's son-in-law—who is the Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Mutahi Kagwe—as well as senior police officers. They are expected to appear before the committee soon.

So far, a total of six Kenyan journalists have been arrested and charged in court of publishing rumours likely to cause alarm. They are two from the *Standard* group and four from a weekly newspaper, *The Citizen*.

The media fraternity is gripped with fears that it's facing a chilling period. The government has published a Media Bill due to be tabled in parliament for enactment. According to the Bill, press accreditation of those considered rebel journalists is to be withdrawn. The current self-regulated Media Council of Kenya would be transformed into a statutory media council, essentially becoming a censorship body. The Bill will also allow for the creation of a media content commission that, with a fine toothcomb, will check on content in both electronic and print media to ensure the media toe the government line. Toeing the line will also be expected of public publications published by the civil society and the faith community.

Faced with this uncertain future, the

Media Council of Kenya has called for a media stakeholders meeting to be held Friday, March 24 to launch a campaign against the Bill.

In an interview, the Kenyan-based coordinator of Africa Interfaith Media Network, Noel Okoth, commented, "it is surprising that those in power today were with us in the civil society before last general elections [in 2002]. We spoke the same language to remove the dictatorship regime [of former President Daniel arap Moi] and in many ways helped them to take over power. Now their language has changed to that of rattle snakes."

At another media forum, the editor of the largest daily newspaper the Nation Media Group, Wangethi Mwangi, complained of "hate mail swamping newsrooms from pro-government sources, some of which are anonymous." The Chairman of Media Council of Kenya Board of Trustees Dr. Absalom Mutere described the raid on the *Standard* group as "exhibition of raw power," adding "my take is we ain't seen nothing yet."

Media development in Kenya may have been exemplary in the region. But now the regional media are watching to learn from Kenya, and how its media will manage the challenges ahead. Analysts indicate that the government too, may incur some political costs.

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