

*Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament Following the
Re-election of US President, Barack Obama*

**The Simons Foundation and
Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada
Graduate Research Awards Debates**

Ottawa, Ontario
February 22, 2013

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Good Morning,

It is a pleasure to be here, participating again, in the annual Graduate Research Awards seminar, a joint programme of the International Security Research and Outreach Programme of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, and The Simons Foundation. We believe this is a worthwhile contribution to Disarmament Education and as well, an invaluable agent for positive change in the world.

It is gratifying that, even though the government departments have undergone budget cuts, the Department of Foreign Affairs values the programme and is willing to continue to partner with us despite these cuts.

The programme is important to the work of both our organizations for it contributes to the development of a pool of specialist expertise on Canadian foreign policy, specifically related to disarmament. It furthers disarmament education in Canada and thus plays a part in building a community of disarmament scholars.

The programme also provides the students with the opportunity to contribute to Canada's foreign policy, to benefit financially, and perhaps, opens avenues for future career choices.

It is a unique programme! And in early December of last year, I was invited to brief the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs on the Prospects for Nuclear Disarmament following the U.S. Election, and I mentioned this programme and our partnership. The Chair of the meeting expressed much interest and I promised him full information which I have provided. I imagine they would like such a programme there. So Canada leads in this!

Jasmin, I want to commend you for your continuing excellent organization of these events. And though she is not present, I also commend Elaine Hynes from The Simons Foundation who, with Jasmin Cheung-Gertler develops, organizes and manages the entire process.

I would like to congratulate the recipients of this year's Awards. I am looking forward to lively debate and I wish all you debaters every success.

Three of debates are related to nuclear disarmament issues. Nuclear disarmament is the major focus of the work of The Simons Foundation, so today I would like to speak about the prospects of furthering nuclear disarmament following the re-election of President Barack Obama.

There was radical shift in the disarmament policy of the United States in 2009 with President Obama's election, and in his historic speech in Prague on April 5th, 2009, he committed to a world free of nuclear weapons. The prospects for nuclear disarmament had not looked so bright since the 2000 NPT Review Conference - and in fact were even brighter - for this was the first President of the United States to commit to the elimination of nuclear weapons.

The following September President Obama chaired a meeting of the UN Security Council. He oversaw the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1887 *committing* the Security

Council to work towards a world without nuclear weapons, and *endorsing* a broad framework of actions to reduce global nuclear dangers. This was the first action by the Security Council on this issue since the 1990s. As well, it was because of the efforts of the Obama Administration - determined that the 2010 NPT Review Conference would not fail - that the Conference was able to adopt a final document.

Yet, despite these actions and UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon's continuing endeavours, we have not seen much action in the United Nations since then. The Conference on Disarmament has still not agreed on a programme of work, so there has been no action on securing a Fissile Materials Cut-off Treaty. The IAEA has not received essential support including funding; the United States has not ratified the CTBT; the nuclear weapons states continue to upgrade the capacity of their nuclear weapons, with the British planning an upgrade of their Trident to last another 80 years.

However, the numbers of nuclear weapons *are* coming down. The United States and Russia have made progress in cutting their arsenals through the new START Treaty.

President Obama has been criticized for not undertaking more action during his first term. However, there was no possibility of achieving Congress ratification of the CTBT because the Republicans seemed determined to deny passage of any law promoted by the White House, even to point of voting against issues which they had previously endorsed.

The prospects for furthering nuclear disarmament are much greater in this second term. Because of the increased Democrat majority in the United States Senate with the addition of three new seats - though still not filibuster proof - it is very possible that the President will bring forward the CTBT for ratification.

There was not much visible action from the White House on this issue during President Obama's first term. He was, however, developing his plan for reductions of the U.S. nuclear arsenal requesting studies and recommendations, from the Pentagon and the State Department, on the minimum numbers of weapons necessary to maintain national security.

Dr. Bruce Blair, Co-Founder of Global Zero, former nuclear launch officer and pre-eminent expert on de-alerting nuclear weapons, is a member of the US Secretary of State's International Security Advisory Board. And he was tasked by the Board to write a plan to present to Secretary Hillary Clinton to cut nuclear weapons to 900 – that is 450 deployed and 450 in storage. It seems though, from what we are hearing now, the number will be around one thousand to eleven hundred.

President Obama has also built a national security team of like-minded people – Chuck Hagel, Secretary of Defence (when his position is finally confirmed!) is a Principal Signatory of Global Zero; General Cartwright, a close advisor to Obama on military affairs, is also a prominent member of Global Zero. Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff and Tom Donilon, National Security Advisor are known to be sympathetic to the issue. And eleven days after President Obama's Inauguration, Vice-President Joe Biden was at the Munich Security Conference.

And in a side meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, discussed the start of negotiations for further cuts to the US and Russia's nuclear arsenals. Last week, Rose Gottemoeller, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and Negotiator of the new START Treaty, was in Moscow and said to have proposed launching negotiations for these further reductions of the US and Russian arsenals. Her visit is followed by National Security Advisor Tom Donilon to present some proposals and to lay the groundwork for future talks.

There *are* obstacles to be overcome - Missile Defence, Conventional Forces Treaty, Russian concerns about the superiority of the US's conventional weapons, and the issue of tactical nuclear weapons on European soil, and space-based weapons.

However, the Russian Foreign Ministry used the Global Zero Moscow Conference in November – 2 days after President Obama was re-elected – to make several statements which suggest that Russia is willing to engage. Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said that Russia wants to join the United States in discussions on tactical nuclear weapons, specifically referring to the US weapons based in Europe. *What is new is this* is that Russia has traditionally demanded that the U.S. withdraw all its tactical weapons from Europe as a *precondition* to negotiations on Russian tactical weapons.

On the missile defence issue, Russia has asked for “legally-binding guarantees that [the United States] plans for a European defence system would not be directed against Russia.”¹ The United States has refused Russia's request to provide these guarantees because the guarantees require Congressional approval and it is unlikely that it would be possible to achieve. However, the President famously said to Russian Prime Minister Medvedev - before an open microphone - that he would have more flexibility on missile defence after the election. At the November Global Zero Conference, Russian officials called on Obama “to remember his statement.” And by the end of November, the Obama Administration had responded affirmatively their willingness to work on a deal on European Missile Defence.

President Obama will, no doubt, encounter difficulties and setbacks in fulfilling his commitments.

If he cannot get support from the required two-thirds of the Senate, it is thought that his Administration will negotiate a legally-binding agreement in an addendum to the 2010 START Treaty. He may also engage with Russia in this agreement for the two countries to remove nuclear weapons from high alert status.

Though he has said nuclear weapons reductions will not be unilateral he *does* have the power under the United States Constitution to make unilateral reductions. In fact, the majority of United States nuclear stockpile reductions over the past 25 years have been by unilateral decision – not by treaties.

¹ Ria Novosti, May 26/11

Contingent upon the success of the Biden, Gottemoeller and Donilon discussions with the Russians for tandem reductions of their arsenals – and it is said that the Russians are receptive – the United States and Russia then will proceed with further cuts, reducing the stockpiles to the level at which the other nuclear weapons states are willing to engage in multilateral negotiations, to continue the downward process to zero.

My view is that both countries will cooperate in continuing to cut their arsenals to the point in which the other nuclear weapons states will enter into multi-lateral negotiations. Global Zero estimates the point in which other states will join in these negotiations will be when 900 total weapons remain on both sides – an 80% reduction from current levels.

Russia is especially keen for the United Kingdom and France to enter into multilateral negotiations; and both Russia and the United States want China to join. In October 30th of last year, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Sergei Ryabkov said that “The disarmament process must be multilateral [With regard to] the nuclear disarmament talks, a multilateral approach is an integral part of strengthening strategic stability”²

Of course, there are other obstacles to overcome, for example, North Korea’s nuclear test and Iran’s intransigence. However, these *need not* affect reductions of nuclear arsenals. In fact, politically, it *makes it imperative* that the nuclear weapons states continue to reduce their arsenals to an eventual zero in order to remove the double standard, because as Iran’s President Ahmadinejad said to the US: *“if you have them, we want them, if they are so good, we want them too.”*

North Korea does not have ICBM capability so it is no immediate threat to the US. However, there is the danger of *furthering proliferation*. North Korea is a threat to Japan and to South Korea and this week threatened South Korea with annihilation. North Korea’s actions may cause these states to consider acquisition of nuclear weapons - thus destabilizing North-East Asia.

North Korea has a record of selling and sharing nuclear technology and could provide Iran with valuable information on its latest test and thus make it possible for Iran to move forward with its goal for nuclear weapons (if this is its goal which is questionable) without the need to undertake a test of its own.

Furthermore, the advantages of nuclear weapons possession are reinforced by North Korea’s withdrawal from the NPT with impunity, by its continuing nuclear explosion and missile tests; and by the contrasting consequences to former nuclear weapons acquisition “rogues”, Iraq and Libya.

China can be a very important actor in constraining the North Korean regime. Though China has, in the past, supported North Korea, China has now expressed its dissatisfaction and opposition to North Korea’s actions. It is important now for Western powers and Russia to liaise with China and encourage it to apply pressure to North Korea to abide by its commitments and return to the NPT.

²www.nti.rsvpl.com/gsn/articles October 30,2012

Finally, I would like to talk about the importance of civil society in making any real headway in nuclear disarmament. Civil society – constituencies - hold the key to progress on these issues.

Leadership in democratic states comes not from the top, but rather in response to the citizens, the voters, the grassroots.

We are already seeing the beginnings of a campaign-style in President Obama's second term – reaching out to the public - in order to pass into law the policies that he presented in his State of the Union address.

So while President Obama can make this commitment to a nuclear weapon-free world, he needs the voting public behind him in the United States, and all the nuclear weapons states - in order to carry it through. He needs the support of the European Union. He needs the support of all the Non-Aligned countries and those countries protected by the US nuclear umbrella – Canada, Japan, Australia, South Korea and so on.

With politically difficult issues - like nuclear disarmament - that hinge, in the United States on the defence industry which underpins the U.S. economy - the only possible hope for resolution of the issue - for change - is for collective action of an aroused public.

The major achievements in the past were the results of mass civil society protests – predominantly in the form of marches - which took place in many parts of the world - and have been very effective in moving the nuclear disarmament agenda forward. In 1961, Women Strike for Peace, the largest national women's peace march of the century influenced President Kennedy to call for a ban on atmospheric testing. He said he saw the mass protest from his window.

In the 1980s one million marched in New York. And five million Europeans demonstrated against the planned deployment of United States intermediate range nuclear missiles on their territories.³

And President Reagan was said, by George Schultz, to be stunned by this, and decided he had to propose nuclear disarmament. Soviet President Gorbachev, influenced by both the Western peace movements and the Chernobyl disaster, and possibly for economic reasons as well, willingly joined with Reagan and the process began of reducing their nuclear arsenals.

Since the end of the Cold War and specifically since 2001, the grassroots movement has essentially disappeared. Most non-governmental organizations and their networks have lost touch with the people and the issue of nuclear disarmament has stagnated. As well, all of the large US Foundations ceased to support nuclear disarmament. Yet the dangers remain, and are in fact, heightened.

³ *Laurence Wittner*

The Simons Foundation's support for the issue has never wavered and it has become the pre-eminent foundation funding in this area. We are currently primarily focusing primarily on two differing streams of activity in our nuclear disarmament work.

The Simons Foundation's primary path to achievement of a nuclear free world is through Global Zero which has a step-by-step plan for the phased, verifiable, multilateral elimination of all nuclear weapons by 2030, accompanied by a legally binding agreement (a ban) which would be negotiated in Phase III of the plan - 2019-2023.

Global Zero activities combine policy development and direct dialogue with governments - with public outreach, including media, online and grassroots initiatives to make the elimination of nuclear weapons an urgent global imperative.

Global Zero has produced an acclaimed documentary film, *Countdown to Zero* and is building an international student movement, and to date, has more than 150 campus chapters in twenty countries. Plans are underway for a Global Zero National Canadian Conference to be held this at York University.

Global Zero has been extremely successful to date. Its name has become shorthand for the elimination of nuclear weapons. It has received extraordinary media coverage and as I mentioned earlier, the government of Russia used the recent Global Zero Moscow conference as the forum to presents its several messages to the United States.

The Simons Foundation's second path is through research, education and dissemination of knowledge on the humanitarian aspects of nuclear weapons – or better said their inhumane nature.

The International Red Cross presented a ground-breaking statement to the UN on this issue. The International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War with the ICAN Campaign are actively educating the public on the dangers to human health, human life and the environment. And The Simons Foundation/IALANA Vancouver Declaration, *Law's Imperative for the Urgent Achievement of a Nuclear-Weapon-Free World*, have all played a strong role in bringing humanitarian aspects of nuclear dangers to the forefront. Civil society is now coalescing around this issue, and early next month (March 4-5th) the Government of Norway is hosting an international conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons.

The Government of Mexico has entered a proposed Amendment to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court to criminalize the use of nuclear weapons in the context of armed conflict as a war crime. If accepted, individuals at all levels who are responsible for the use of a nuclear weapon will be prosecuted for committing a crime against humanity. That is if anyone has survived!

This is an important and essential step. However, The Simons Foundation's aim in furthering research and discussion in this area is to take the issue away from war law - International Humanitarian Law – and focus on nuclear dangers in times of peace – possession of nuclear weapons. For reason that use of a nuclear weapon is actually already illegal under war law - International Humanitarian Law because of the indiscriminate

nature of the weapon and because its “blast, heat and radiation effects are uncontrollable in space and time.”⁴ To use a nuclear weapon would constitute a crime against humanity. However, *possession* is not illegal. The Simons Foundation goal is to have International Law prohibit possession of nuclear weapons.

Possession of nuclear weapons in peace-time, poses great dangers. There is the danger of accidental or malicious launch because the weapons are targeted and on high-alert status. Moreover, there is the danger of a cyber attack. Hackers – on a regular basis - attempt to penetrate the Pentagon and the nuclear weapons command and control systems –a very frightening prospect - because the command and control system is highly automated. There is the danger of nuclear accidents during production, storage and transport. And as well, there is the potential for acquisition by terrorists.

It is time now to move forcefully on the Nuclear Weapons Convention prohibiting the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfers and threat of use of nuclear weapons and for their complete elimination – to zero.

I do hope that the Government of Canada returns to its previous more forward-looking and active stance on nuclear *disarmament; moves from its abstention to support* for this Convention and undertakes action to bring about its entry into force. Support for a Convention banning nuclear weapons is not inconsistent with NATO Nuclear policy – to quote - *NATO is committed to the goal of creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons. As long as nuclear weapons exist, NATO will remain a nuclear alliance.*

This does not prohibit any NATO state from supporting a resolution in the United Nations to ban nuclear weapons. This action is a necessary step in *creating the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons.*

In summary: with President Obama leading on this issue, the time is ripe for support from all states because of the recognition that nuclear weapons have no utility as war-fighting weapons, they are inhumane, and, in fact, create more insecurity for states than security. It is past time for a mass public education programme on nuclear weapons and their dangers. It is time for a renewal of action by governments and the collective action on the part of civil society, last seen in 1980s.

Thank you very much, and I am looking forward to the debates.
END

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February 22, 2013

⁴ *Vancouver Declaration, 2011, Annex: The Law of Nuclear Weapons*