

*Future of Global Non-Proliferation, Arms
Control and Disarmament Regimes:
the NPT and the TPNNW*

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Comment on the importance of the first meeting of States Parties to the TPNW in Vienna.

The first meeting of the States Parties to the Treaty took place in Vienna from June 21 to 23rd - four months after Russia, threatening to use nuclear weapons if it was interfered with, invaded Ukraine. This background brought into focus and illuminated the purpose of the Treaty - the necessity to prohibit nuclear weapons - and could, in part, be responsible for the positive mood and determination to succeed.

Non-nuclear NATO members, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway and Germany which hosts US weapons, participated as Observers, as did previously neutral NATO hopefuls Sweden and Finland. Australia was also there as an Observer.

The U.N. Meeting of the States Parties was preceded by a two-day ICAN Nuclear Ban Forum and the Austrian government- convened conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear Weapons – both of which were partially responsible for the positive energy during this time.

The Treaty and its objectives were unanimously agreed upon by all participants, with the achievement of the Vienna Declaration and a draft 50-point Action Plan – steps to realize the commitments of the Declaration *which included “universalization, the complementarity of the Treaty with the NPT; victim assistance, environmental remediation and scientific and technical advice in support of implementation”*¹ In my view, the most important of these Actions is the universalization of the Treaty which, of course, will be the most difficult to achieve.

It was a pivotal moment for nuclear disarmament because the **TPNW’s adversary is nuclear deterrence policy and practice**. Putin’s successful invasion of Ukraine was contingent upon deterring other nuclear weapons states from interfering. As Stephen Young, of the Union of Concerned Scientists, says we have entered “The Age of Predatory Nuclear-Weapon States”² - a sinister dimension of deterrence policy whereby a nuclear weapons state created a safe nuclear-free space to invade a non-nuclear weapons state– a dimension which demonstrated the danger and fallibility of the nuclear deterrence doctrine.

The outcome of Russia’s invasion, is increasing acceptance of nuclear weapons for global security and the heightened risk of nuclear use and of nuclear war, and expansion of nuclear-sharing arrangements.

Russia’s invasion confirms and bolsters the legitimate security concerns of the non-nuclear weapons states which conclude that nuclear weapons are necessary for their security; and that International Law, and treaties - including the NPT - are worthless.

Non—nuclear weapons states, Finland and Sweden, hastened to shelter under NATO’s nuclear umbrella. South Korea is now seeking US nuclear weapons based in South Korea, and is considering acquisition of its own nuclear weapons. North Korea, perhaps in response to South Korea, formally announced its status as a nuclear weapon state. Japan, because of its support for

¹ ICAN First Meeting of States Parties

² www.politico.com/news/magazine/2022/09/30/putins-nuclear-threats-towards-ukraine-00059571

Ukraine, is now threatened by Russia and is reconsidering its military policies including *nuclear* security.

With new nuclear-sharing, nuclear weapons are becoming ubiquitous. And the Nuclear Weapons States are placing greater reliance on nuclear weapons in their national security policies and, as well, are upgrading and adding to their arsenals of both nuclear and conventional weapons.

This situation - this negative environment for nuclear disarmament - backgrounded the meeting and increased the determination of many states parties to move ahead with the implementation of the Treaty.

The invasion of the Ukraine while a potential setback could be a catalytic moment to advance nuclear disarmament – a wake-up call to the fallacy of nuclear deterrence policy and practice, and could spur action on nuclear disarmament and encourage more states to join the Treaty. Or, on the other hand, it could drive nuclear escalation and nuclear proliferation which pose greater challenges to the success of the TPNW.

Time will tell.

There is no doubt that the First Meeting of the States Parties in Vienna was a success with a much strengthened Treaty and the determination to push forward all aspects of the Action Plan.

Although most NATO members skipped the TPNW MSP, some decided to attend as observers. You were directly engaged in advocacy to persuade the Canadian government to attend in this capacity, though in the end this did not happen.

Why do you think Canada remains reluctant to embrace the TPNW?

We worked very hard to encourage Canada to participate in the TPNW. First of all, The Simons Foundation partnered with the Hiroshima Day Coalition, in a Canada-wide Nanos poll on nuclear disarmament. The results showed that the majority of Canadians want nuclear weapons eliminated - and support signing the Treaty. There was no positive response to the poll– in fact no response - from the Prime Minister, or Parliament, or the Government.

With CNWC, we co-convened a conference in Ottawa on the TPNW, the outcome of which was the Ottawa Declaration calling for Canada to participate in the TPNW. CWNC followed up with a delegation to Minister Joly who was represented in our meeting by Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister. We met with Global Affairs and with members of Parliament. Again there was no positive response. We failed to have Canada at the First Meeting of the States Parties as an Observer. They cited NATO membership as the reason though several Non-nuclear Weapons NATO States participated as Observers, as did US nuclear ally, Australia.

I have thought about this a lot – The Harper government hollowed out the Department of Foreign Affairs and ended any positive actions for disarmament. The Liberal government replaced the Conservatives and little changed except the name change to Global Affairs.

Canada is not just sitting on the sidelines of the TPNW issue – that is to say, for example, abstaining in the UN votes. It is a more aggressive rejection. None of the ever-changing Foreign Ministers have expressed any interest in nuclear disarmament.

And it comes from the top – Prime Minister Trudeau trashed the TPNW. Said it was useless. “The Trudeau government voted against the adoption of a United Nations report on August 19 that recommended negotiations for a global treaty banning nuclear weapons.”³

Trudeau “refused to send a representative to the TPNW negotiating meeting” and in November 2020 at the “UN General Assembly Canada voted against 118 countries that reaffirmed their support for the TPNW”⁴ When the Treaty was adopted Canada condemned it.

I fear I have not answered your question!

What would you like to see the Canadian government do in this regard going forward?

The Canadian government would have to do a complete about-face which is unlikely to happen in the near term. There are several elements though that could change the dynamic. First of all, Russia’s threat to resort to nuclear weapons.

Canada may feel it is snugly secure under the NATO nuclear umbrella but I do not believe Canada is safe because I do not believe in the deterrence doctrine, particularly now that Russia has introduced this malevolent dimension. Canada’s two closest Arctic neighbours are the US and Russia, nuclear-armed enemies. Russia has stepped up military activity in the Arctic, first in 2017 and recently. It has been floated that Russia, in a show of nuclear strength, may detonate a nuclear weapon at its Novya Zemla test site in the Arctic and Canada would certainly suffer from fall out. Second: If Russia succeeds in Ukraine would Russia and China follow suit and attempt to colonize the Arctic High North?

The failure of the 2022 NPT Review Conference, though blamed on Russia, was actually because the NWS refused to support any movement on Article VI and noted only acknowledgement of the TPNW, its entry into. Force and the First Meetings of the States Parties.

In reality, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is not a Disarmament Treaty. The NWS are determined that Article VI remain a Potemkin Village - a “construction built solely to deceive others into thinking that a situation is better than it really is.” It is an instrument of the nuclear weapons states - a vehicle to manage and control proliferation of nuclear weapons as the name tells us.

So Canada’s rationale that it supports the traditional step-by-step approach to disarmament and the Stockholm Step-by-step approach has no venue – no ground for action.

If the TPNW is treated as a stand-only treaty and not complementing the NPT and not fulfilling the Article VI agenda, at some point Canada may rethink its rejection of the TPNW.

³ Brent Pattison, TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT VOTES AGAINST UN NEGOTIATIONS ON A NUCLEAR WEAPONS BAN
The Council of Canadians August 30th 2016

⁴ Yves Engler, *Trudeau government position on nuclear ban is hypocritical*, The Standard 13-04-2021

So, first of all, I would like to see the Liberal Party Caucus to reflect on *why the Liberals' long standing history of "opposing nuclear weapons" - going back to the 1970's with Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's "disarmament activism" - has been rejected by the Justin Trudeau Liberals.*

Secondly, because it is a political decision, we have to find a way to reach the Parliament and this approach may be best through the NDP. I am not in close touch with Global Affairs personnel – but you are, Cesar –and I imagine that given the policy to go ahead they would forge ahead to play a leading role in nuclear disarmament initiatives – become active again in disarmament diplomacy.

The timing may not be right at the moment to expect Canada too sign the TPNW . But for first steps, I would like to see Canada join with the NATO non-nuclear states , including Finland and Sweden- plus Australia – all Observers at the TPNW First meeting - to posit themselves as go-betweens – midwives - and begin a dialogue within NATO and within the UN to highlight the new and dangerous dimension of deterrence as illuminated by Putin's malevolent use of the doctrine and how it opens the door to other Nuclear Weapons States to do likewise – China invading Taiwan, controlling the South China Sea, colonizing the Pacific Islands etc., Russia and China to colonizing the Arctic North. I would like to see Canada encourage alternatives to nuclear deterrence ideology to fulfil NATO's promise of a world without nuclear weapons.

Do you think the crisis in Ukraine will impact attitudes towards the NPT and/or the TPNW?

I believe I have dealt with this question in my earlier responses. I do think that the Ukraine crisis positively impacted attitudes to the NPT. There was surprising consensus on an exceedingly weak document in which NNWS states working to implement Article VI achieved nothing of note, yet were prepared to accept the document. This seems like a demonstration of strong support for the NPT and for the U.N. process. It was Russia which brought it down.

With regard to the TPNW: If Russia detonated a nuclear weapon I think that attitudes would change to the TPNW and there would be strong support. As well, if Russia wins the war there will be strong support for the TPNW. Russia's malevolent utilization of deterrence policy and practice may cause the NWS to rethink deterrence doctrine for reason that all their allies are at risk.

But who knows!!

Russia's war on Ukraine which demonstrated that nuclear deterrence is not as most imagined it to be, Young says, "should stimulate a shift in thinking about the value of nuclear weapons,"⁵ and mean more support for the TPNW.

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⁵ Politico – ibid -