

Canadian Pugwash Group and Science for Peace

Joint Seminar on "The NPT, NATO and Canada:

The Future of Nuclear Weapons"

March 18, 2000, Toronto

March 22, 2000

The Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Room 309-S, Centre Block  
House of Commons  
Ottawa

Dear Prime Minister,

The Canadian Pugwash Group joined with Science for Peace at a special seminar in Toronto March 18, 2000 to examine the future of nuclear weapons and to suggest ways to move towards their total abolition.

The seminar focused primarily on the role that Canada could play in this process. The participants were pleased to hear from a representative of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, David Viveash, and to engage in a dialogue with him. They hope their strongly held views are both heard and inspire action by leaders and policy makers in the Canadian government.

To this end, this report was prepared by the rapporteur, Dr. Walter Dorn, and was reviewed by the seminar co-chairs, Senator Douglas Roche and Prof. Mel Watkins.

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Nuclear weapons still remain with us over a decade after the end of the Cold War. Numbering in the tens of thousands, they represent a continuing threat to humanity. They are an anachronism that cannot now, if ever, be justified. With the end of the Cold War nuclear standoff, governments should now be trying with ever increasing intensity to take advantage of the tremendous opportunities that are offered in peacetime. Yet, any such initiative seems stalled, if indeed it was ever really taken. The Cold War adversaries still cling to nuclear weapons saying that they are "essential" to their security. Allies of these states are afraid to change or even challenge outright this long-standing dependency. The continued reliance on nuclear weapons and mutually assured destruction (MAD) is the ultimate "march of folly" towards insecurity and destruction.

In order to focus on the concrete actions that can be taken to reverse the current deplorable situation, the seminar participants attempted to answer the three following questions.

1. Given present tensions in the non-proliferation regime, what is the requirement for the success of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) 2000 Review?

The requirement for success is progress, or failing that, at least a commitment to future progress. With recent setbacks in the nuclear non-proliferation regime, including new proliferation in South Asia, the resistance to disarmament by some Nuclear Weapons States, the unwillingness of some states to ban nuclear tests and the threat of the illegal development of new anti-ballistic missile systems, there is a great need for a reinvigorated and innovative approach. The tensions in the NPT regime should be acknowledged and addressed. The Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) seem to "enjoy" their monopoly status as nuclear powers and have not sought to put to an end to the discriminatory two-tier approach. They have to be pressured to live up to their commitments under the NPT to disarm.

At the 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference the grand bargain reached was that the NPT would gain permanence in exchange for accountability on a list of principles and objectives. Accountability on commitments made must be demonstrated by specific, concrete measures. The Nuclear Weapons States should announce and proceed with new initiatives to prove that they intend to comply "in good faith" with the NPT. They must begin, conduct and conclude negotiations on nuclear disarmament as unanimously decided by the International Court of Justice in its 1996 Advisory Opinion. A START III process should begin without waiting for ratification of the START II treaty -- in the same way that the START II negotiations were begun before the START I was ratified -- as urged by a number of prestigious bodies of experts, including the Canberra Commission in 1996, the U.S. Academy of Sciences in 1997 and the Tokyo Conference in 1999.

The NWS should seek to rapidly reduce their arsenals to only a few hundred missiles, while concurrently considering measures to achieve total abolition. Unilateral actions would help create new momentum in this regard. The NWS should immediately institute a policy to reduce the danger of accidental, erroneous, or unauthorized use of nuclear weapons and to improve the safety and security of all states by de-alerting their nuclear weapons, including the separation of nuclear warheads from their missiles. The NWS should also adopt a "no first use" policy and acknowledge that the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons is immoral as well as illegal. They should work with other countries to develop a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Canada should continue to push the Nuclear Weapons States, particularly its nuclear neighbour, on all these measures and, above all, on measures to achieve total nuclear disarmament. To show its own deep commitment, Canada should publicly refuse to participate in all nuclear systems preparations. It should unequivocally announce that it will not participate in the envisaged ballistic national missile defence system. This will be a breath of much needed fresh air in nuclear proliferation discussions. Canada and all nations should give more diplomatic and public emphasis to the landmark opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The obligation to conclude a nuclear disarmament treaty is part of customary international law. As such, it is binding upon states and should be regarded by them as such.

Canada should continue to foster the human security approach and a worldwide culture of peace that should totally replace the current outmoded dependence on weapons of mass destruction and mass murder.

2. Given the NATO leadership's reluctance to change the present Strategic Concept, what is required of NATO in order that its members be in compliance with Article VI of the NPT?

NATO and its members are in non-compliance with the NPT, since the military alliance insists that nuclear weapons are central to alliance security and that they retain the right to use nuclear weapons to deter and respond to chemical, biological, nuclear and conventional

threats. Furthermore, NATO maintains plans and equipment for their ready use. NATO resistance to strategic policy change, led by its three nuclear weapons members, is not only threatening fulfillment of the NPT, but is undermining the nuclear non-proliferation regime. It is alarming that over a decade after the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons are still considered "essential." They have no real military value and are a burden on human progress, not only because of their great destructiveness, including to civilians and neutral states, but also because the resources spent in nuclear arsenals could buy so much more long-term security if spent on developing human security and in peacebuilding.

Canada needs to maintain a firm position against NATO nuclear weapons. It should press the organization to adopt a "no first use" policy, realizing that it is a first step to nuclear elimination. Canada should seek to find like-minded states, inside and outside NATO, to support this approach. The concerns about being labeled a "nuclear nag" and its fears of isolation are not in keeping with rational and moral action on the important problem of nuclear disarmament. Canada should become, as General Lee Butler called for in his Ottawa presentation in 1999, a moral leader on the question of nuclear disarmament.

NATO's nuclear policies on Russia are having a negative effect that spill far beyond the nuclear regime. The reluctance to endorse a "no first use" policy only heightens and is used to justify the allegations of NATO's aggressive intentions. NATO's existing nuclear weapons and policies are seen as a threat, both being aimed at undermining Russia. Such arguments are frequently used by those who seek restoration of Russian military power. Russian resentment is growing. Russia has pledged to increase its defence spending. Nuclear rearmament and modernization are likely. A new arms race is possible as Russia seeks to modernize its nuclear arsenal in order to overcome an American National Missile Defence (NMD) system. Furthermore, Russia may seek to more closely ally itself with China politically and militarily, which could have disastrous long-term consequences. Unless the US and NATO demonstrate a more active policy and actions aimed at removing its nuclear threat through peace and disarmament measures, closer military/strategic cooperation between these two large states will harm the geopolitical environment. Russia and China will seek to counterbalance the challenge from US-led alliances in Europe and Asia. The former demands of the peace movement to end the East/West arms race are now converted into demands to prevent a renewal of that arms race.

By ignoring Russia and its views on NATO nuclear policies, the organization is threatening its most basic purpose: to provide security to the Atlantic alliance. Russia may now increasingly rely on offensive nuclear weapons, with potential disastrous consequences, against the perceived NATO threat.

Russia's nuclear arsenal remains a major cause of concern. Not only the reliance on these weapons but the threat of accident loom large. The only solutions are national engagement and nuclear disarmament. In order to reverse the image of NATO in Russia, NATO could assist Russia in a range of activities, such as a nuclear materials cleanup. New and lasting bridges should be built between civil society in the East and the West. Nuclear disarmament groups in Russia need to be encouraged. The recent US threats of abrogation of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and the construction of an anti-missile shield also serves to undermine confidence in the US and the US-led alliance. The only certain thing that a nuclear defense shield would destroy is the possibility of meaningful arms control. It is likely to lead to a new arms race. The US military objectives appear to be to ensure delivery of nuclear weapons wherever it chooses and to prevent the delivery of a nuclear missile to US territory. US defence advocates use exaggerated threats of nuclear missile terrorism conducted by rogue states to provide a rationale for stronger offensive and defensive systems. This dangerous approach appears to the world as arrogant and out of sync with the reality of global interdependence.

The placement of weapons in outer space, where they have not yet reached, would be abhorrent, and totally out of place in our current world. While the utility of such a defensive shield is doubtful, their potential as offensive weapons is much more real and cause for alarm. Such weapons, which would be capable of moving as close as a hundred kilometers over any city on earth, would be a major threat to humanity conceptually, psychologically and in practice. Space-based nuclear missile defence is not only technologically unfeasible, but also politically unwise, as well as illegal under international law.

The Canadian government should provide the strongest possible opposition to current US plans on NMD. No participation should be allowed in any phase.

3. Given Canada's willingness to work with the New Agenda Coalition and to strengthen cooperation with Russia, what steps can be taken to persuade the Nuclear Weapons States (NWS) to make an unequivocal commitment to commence negotiations leading to a program to eliminate nuclear weapons?

The Nuclear Weapons States have proven untrustworthy in implementing their obligations, declarations and statements on nuclear matters. For instance, in the original draft text of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the elimination of all nuclear weapons tests was called for, but Western Nuclear Weapons States insisted on changing the word "test" to "explosion" thus permitting sub-critical nuclear tests and computer simulations for superior weapons. Even more telling, the US has been unwilling to adopt an "unequivocal" commitment to nuclear disarmament, though this has already been made in the NPT. Such actions, and the refusal of the US Senate to ratify the CTBT, further undermine global trust in US treaty commitments. The Canadian government, as well as concerned civil society organizations, should point this out clearly to the US government.

Political pressure is needed to create political will. The political will should act not only to adopt new policies but also to ensure the implementation of them. The Canadian government can provide sustained diplomatic representation to the NWS governments on nuclear disarmament policies; Canadian disarmament groups can support their US counterparts in NWS; civil society can exert also influence on the private sector by urging the adoption of moral guidelines. Transnational corporations should be increasingly pressured by both governments and civil society to act responsibly and not to contribute to the nuclear weapons nightmare that continues to haunt humanity. Also civil society can become involved in the monitoring and verification of the commitments, in the analysis of state compliance, serving as "moral watch dog" on commitments made. Canada should work at the NPT Review Conference and beyond to seek re-affirmation of the NPT Article VI commitment and to ensure that governments make new commitments to accelerate the nuclear disarmament process. In the absence of any consensus on these matters at the conference, voting should be provided for and resolutions should be adopted, especially on the steps towards nuclear disarmament. If some NWS will not reaffirm their prior commitments, the whole conference should not be held up by their lack of commitment.

Civil society should be invited to play a vigorous role in nuclear disarmament, including at the NPT Review Conference. There is a need for ever increasing publicity and public participation in nuclear questions. The seminar wishes to sound a "wake up call" for both governments and the public at large. The nuclear nightmare is not over. The weapons that remain are a threat to all.

The members of the seminar were pleased to advocate these measures for adoption by the Canadian government. They hope that their government will provide bold moral leadership at the upcoming NPT Review Conference. They are convinced that Canada can lead.

Sincerely,

Douglas Roche, O.C., Senator  
Chairman, Canadian Pugwash Group  
Mel Watkins  
President, Science for Peace

C.C.  
Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, P.C., M.P.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

Hon. Art Eggleton, P.C., M.P.,  
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Mr. Bill Graham, M.P., Chairman, SCFAIT