

Overcoming Obstacles to Nuclear Disarmament through Co-operation and Trust-building

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Introduction

This study considers how the five official nuclear weapon states (NWS) under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) - China; France; Russia; the UK and US - have recently approached their nuclear disarmament obligations. Of key consideration here is the challenge of co-operation and trust-building. The creation of a world without nuclear weapons will require NWS to institute far-reaching legal, political and practical measures in order to convince each other and the non-nuclear weapon states (NNWS) under the NPT that they are no-longer NWS in fact or identity. It is therefore important to assess whether NWS are behaving in ways which could build the necessary levels of co-operation and trust that will be required for the creation and maintenance of such a world. Moves towards multilateral disarmament involving NWS will, at some stage, also have to consider how the four nuclear armed states (NAS) which are not members of the NPT – India, Israel, Pakistan and North Korea – can be involved in their discussions so that a new and equitable global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime has universal participation. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine how NAS may join NWS in such talks, the argument developed below - that co-operation on nuclear disarmament could act to build trust, transforming and improving relations between NWS - is equally applicable to NAS.

Historically, the actions of nuclear weapon decision-making elites across NWS and NAS (collectively nuclear possessor states - NPS) have formed the principal barrier to meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament. Nuclear weapons development generally implies high degrees of secrecy and a lack of public accountability and transparency so that decisions are taken by very small numbers of, often unelected, bureaucrats, experts and specialists.[1] The shared assumptions and beliefs of these elites have led to nuclear weapons being highly valued despite the potentially catastrophic dangers they pose and the significant public support for a global ban on nuclear weapons across NPS and NNWS alike.[2] However, mutual co-operation and trust-building can provide a means to alleviate and even eliminate interstate nuclear rivalries and security competition.[3] This study investigates how co-operation and trust-building between NWS can assist them to re-conceptualise their national political identities as 'non-nuclear' in order for them to work together on the formal process of multilateral negotiations for the global abolition of nuclear weapons.

The need for co-operation and trust-building on nuclear disarmament

The Final Document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference (RevCon) contains an action plan on nuclear disarmament, including a NWS commitment to a series of 'concrete steps for the total elimination of nuclear weapons'.[4] This paper does not have the space to outline in detail what each of the challenging steps listed in the action plan entail and the varying degrees of progress which has been made on each of them hitherto. Instead, we may rely on the judgment of the respected Reaching Critical Will NPT Action Plan Monitoring Report, which states that implementation by NWS 'is not advancing adequately' and that 'there has been little progress in this area for a decade'. This situation is 'particularly disappointing' for many NNWS and civil society groups who felt that the disarmament plan was 'not robust enough to begin with'.[5]

In his discussion of the UK's legal status, Professor John Simpson provides some clarity on the scale of the task facing NWS if they are to disarm and become NNWS. For Simpson, the UK will remain a NWS, 'even if it has no operational or stockpiled nuclear weapons or means of delivering them, for as long as the NPT remains in existence'.[6] Altering this position, to convince the international community that such a change is 'genuine and absolute' will require the institution of 'extraordinary legal, political and practical measures'.[7] In order to create and maintain such measures, high degrees of co-operation and trust will be required. It is therefore highly desirable that NWS investigate how meaningful and lasting bonds can be developed, both with each other and with the international community, in order to create the conditions necessary to achieve the transparent, verifiable and irreversible elimination of all nuclear arsenals.[8]

Since 2009, the NWS have met four times as a group (known as 'P5' meetings) to discuss the implementation of their NPT obligations, covering subjects such as transparency, mutual confidence building, and disarmament verification.[9] Some analysts from civil society- such as Dr Rebecca Johnson - have welcomed these meetings as a constructive addition to the bilateral nuclear arms reduction negotiations between the US and Russia.[10] However, more critical voices from civil society have, justifiably, questioned the nature of the NWS's strategy, claiming that they are part of a project to secure domestic political conditions ensuring the long-range funding of nuclear weapons programmes, preserve asymmetric military dominance for NWS, and agree how to resist NNWS disarmament demands.[11]

Thus on the one hand NWS declare that they are earnestly engaged in discussions, behind closed doors, to create the conditions that will allow them to realise their disarmament obligations under Article VI of the NPT.[12] Yet, given the high salience nuclear weapons still have in security policies and the significant investments being made to modernise nuclear arsenals, it is clear that NWS are still committed to the belief that nuclear weapons are their ultimate insurance policy, despite the potentially catastrophic risks of nuclear conflict and the continuing mistrust and tension between states. It is thus not surprising that observers have noted how 'there is still very little evidence of what has been achieved' by NWS meetings in the last four years.[13]

Following the most recent P5 conference, held in April 2013 in Geneva, the UK Foreign Office stated that the meetings 'play a vital role in building the mutual understanding and trust needed to help the P5 take forward our shared NPT commitments'.[14] Assuming that the 'shared commitments' referred to here include realising 'the total elimination of nuclear weapons' as required by the NPT, how may we judge whether this statement is correct? Specifically, how can we assess whether the type of co-operation NWS are currently engaged in is the right approach to build trust between themselves and NNWS regarding their Article VI obligations to disarm? Firstly, as Ray Acheson points out, NWS have long maintained that a step-by-step approach is the 'most effective' path to nuclear disarmament, despite this approach failing to bear fruit since the 1960s.[15] At the P5 conferences, in London (2009), Paris (2011), Washington (2012) and Geneva (2013), discussions on 'confidence-building and co-operation measures' have variously included: definitions of nuclear terminology and the sharing of information about nuclear doctrines and capabilities; how to enhance strategic stability and build mutual confidence through voluntary transparency; proposals for a standard reporting form for their briefings to the 2014 NPT Preparatory Committee.[16] Acheson holds that such activities, intended to implement the 2010 NPT RevCon Action Plan, are 'extremely underwhelming' and points to the frustration of NNWS at the incrementalist agenda. Moreover NNWS have recently put forward a series of proposals based on a comprehensive approach to nuclear disarmament which have been rejected by NWS. These include the Oslo conference on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons and the open-ended working group on nuclear disarmament.[17]

It is useful to consider Acheson's criticism of NWS behavior in light of Aaron M. Hoffman's consideration on the causes of trusting relationships. Hoffman argues that while it may seem sensible for rivals to begin trying to overcome their suspicion of one another by starting with 'less important issues' before moving gradually to more important concerns, such 'graduated incremental approaches will consistently fail to produce trusting relationships'. To demonstrate trustworthiness enabling engagement on larger and more significant challenges, actors must show they are 'willing to place the things they care about most at risk'.[18] The scale of sacrifice should therefore be proportionate to the importance of the issue at hand, which, in the case of nuclear weapons is clearly very great. Instead, at present NWS ad hoc co-operation appears largely to be based on cost-benefit calculations, so that no real risks are taken or sacrifices made. Such co-operation is limited in that it only allows NWS elites to discuss 'arms control' on the understanding that it is a process of managing or limiting nuclear stockpiles, preventing wider discussions which get to the root of the insecurities and uncertainties concerning nuclear disarmament. The current common interest in arms control is,

moreover, fragile and may not last - further modernisation of nuclear weapons and advances in hi-tech warfare at a time of global political instability could make great power conflict a real possibility. What is required is a decisive reframing of NWS discussions and relations, so that, as Andrew Cottey argues, in the medium-term nuclear weapons are progressively delegitimised in doctrines and security policies and NWS reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons deployed in their arsenals. To enable this, NWS should also establish a permanent forum for dialogue and more frequent exchanges of information.[19] In the long-term, NWS must commit to the aim of concluding a verifiable global ban on nuclear weapons and begin discussing what this would entail politically, legally and technically.

If any of the NWS felt able to show leadership, take risks and make unilateral nuclear disarmament actions, this would communicate trustworthiness, by placing themselves in a position which is intentionally vulnerable, based on a belief in the good intentions and shared moral values of the other.[20] Recently, international relations scholars such as Brian C. Rathbun have drawn on findings from social psychology to explore how such trusting actions are indicative of a moralistic or 'generalised' view of trust, which may promote co-operation between political groups or states.[21] The benefits of developing generalised trust between states are manifold. According to Ken Booth and Nicholas Wheeler, when states trust one another sufficiently they can develop security communities – characterised by high levels of integration and the delegitimisation of force – to live in peace and avoid war, the European Union being an example of a 'mature security community'.[22] Generalised trusters are more responsive to cooperative than competitive messages from other participants in social dilemmas. Such trust can also begin and help sustain reciprocation in relationships. It broadens the community circle, extending trust to others.[23] These qualities are of particular benefit in solving problems of multilateral cooperation - a key challenge for global nuclear disarmament - such as the tendency of actors to free ride on the efforts of others and the difficulty of overcoming coordination problems in groups.[24] The question then is what are the conditions that might allow one or more NWS to be bold and commit to deeper nuclear arms reductions and disarmament, and how might these conditions be created?

Obstacles to co-operation on nuclear disarmament between NWS

As well as studying the collective behaviour of NWS in relation to the rest of the international community, it is important to look within the group to consider the dynamics at play between the five states and assess obstacles and opportunities for co-operation on nuclear disarmament. The obvious place to start here is with bilateral Russia - US relations, given that despite the end of the Cold War these two nations still have over 93% of the world's estimated 17,000 nuclear weapons, with about 1,800 on high alert.[25] It is therefore clear that they will have to take the lead on reducing the size, role and political-military significance of their arsenals if a world free from nuclear weapons is to be realised. Just looking at the rough parity between the two nations in terms of the numbers of nuclear weapons they possess distracts us from the significant disparity that exists in terms of their broader strategic power. Russia feels threatened by the US's far superior conventional military capabilities, which under the auspices of NATO, now reach close to its territory. As Andrei Zagorski explains, Russia includes in its strategic calculations the US's advanced military capabilities, such as precision-guided munitions (PGMs), ballistic missile defence (BMD), long range conventionally armed weapons that can be assigned strategic goals, and the weaponisation of outer space.[26]

Elsewhere, Dmitri Trenin points out that Russia also feels vulnerable in this respect to a rising China, with which it shares a long border on its eastern flank.[27] In order to balance against these perceived threats, Russia has come to heavily rely on maintaining a massive nuclear arsenal for deterrence purposes, including substantial so-called 'tactical' nuclear forces, while it slowly modernises its outdated armed forces. Indeed, it is this fundamental inequality which both largely explains Russia's heavy reliance on maintaining huge nuclear forces and which prevents any meaningful progress being made towards nuclear disarmament. Russian leaders so keenly feel this inequality because they retain a self-image of their nation as a global power with a right to significant influence in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, so that, as Trenin

argues, 'Moscow aspires to a hegemonic role in the post-Soviet area'.[28] Russia's sense of isolation and vulnerability is a result of trying to maintain such ambitions with much-reduced and inadequate resources while seeing the US - their main rival - establish military superiority through incomparable defence spending in order to maintain its 'global role' as the 'world's most powerful actor'.[29]

The significance of the UK and France's nuclear forces (both key US NATO allies within the P5), must also be seen in the context of these two nation's identities as great powers, regionally and globally. While there are several common driving forces behind why NPS elites continue to highly value nuclear weapons (e.g. prestige, status, influence, national independence, domestic political control) France, Russia, the UK and US are unique in that decision-makers in these nations have seen nuclear weapons as a means of realising their global political ambitions. For example, Daniel Ellsberg describes how the US has, since 1945, repeatedly made 'first-use threats in external conflicts' in order to achieve national goals, while during the Cold War, according to Amy Woolf, the Soviet Union saw its nuclear weapons as 'instrumental' to its military strategy.[30] Nick Ritchie's study of the UK's identity as a NWS found that nuclear weapons today occupy a central position in the UK's self-image as a 'major pivotal power' with global responsibilities, something which has become embedded over time and is thus difficult to dislodge.[31] French political leaders, meanwhile, have recently argued that their nuclear weapons serve NATO and European security interests, provide protection against all threats and allow the nation to play a 'strong role on the world stage'.[32] Bruno Tertrais has therefore posited that France's strong nuclear identity makes it particularly resistant to calls for disarmament.[33] Overall therefore, within the P5 there resides a 'P3' NATO partnership, which has, built high levels of co-operation and trust through working together on nuclear weapons development (albeit on a bilateral rather than trilateral basis) and policy and consists of states which see nuclear weapons as symbolic of their status as major world powers.

Outside of this NATO grouping lies, as we have seen, a Russia acutely aware of its relative weakness and an increasingly powerful China. Yet, importantly, China differs from the other four NWS in not having comparable global ambitions. For example, unlike Western civilization, China has a non-expansionist culture and, according to the US Department of Defense, limited power projection capabilities.[34] For Tiejun Zhang, Chinese leaders' strategic priorities are to ensure state sovereignty, national independence, territorial integration and economic security.[35] Qin Yaqing thus describes modern China as a 'status quo' state, dedicated to 'maintaining the stability of the international society and the region where it is located' while Zheng Bijian, the originator of the 'China's peaceful rise theory', underscores how one of China's strategic priorities is to avoid the fate of the rising powers in modern history that sought hegemony and seized resources via aggression.[36] Chinese leaders have therefore sought to dismiss the 'China threat theory', pointing to the nation's weakness compared to Western powers.[37] Indeed, the Council on Foreign Relations has stated that China is 'at least two decades behind the United States in terms of military technology and capability'.[38]

M. Taylor Fravel and Evan S. Medeiros emphasise that, despite its relative nuclear and conventional inferiority, China has never developed 'nuclear war-fighting concepts' as Russia and the US did during the Cold War. China's nuclear strategy and force structure continues to be based on Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping's view that nuclear weapons were principally 'tools for deterring nuclear aggression and countering coercion', to break the superpower monopoly, rather than as 'weapons to be used in combat to accomplish discrete military objectives'.[39] China's nuclear weapons strategy is thus officially characterised as 'self-defensive', based on a 'no-first use' policy and an arsenal of minimum size which can achieve the object of 'assured retaliation', according to Fravel and Medeiros.[40] The evolution of the international security environment will thus be decisive in whether China feels able to take action to disarm its nuclear arsenal. If it judges that Russia and the US do not pose a threat and are committed to nuclear disarmament, reciprocal Chinese action could follow. Equally, China could, if it felt that its relative security was deteriorating, seek to enhance its nuclear and conventional defences.

Moreover, for China to transition to a non-nuclear identity as a NNWS, its leaders will need to make strides in delegitimising nuclear weapons as a source of national self-esteem. This is because nuclear weapons compensate somewhat for its strategic military imbalance with Western powers by providing a sense of pride in the nation's technological prowess.[41] An alternative to this mentality can be seen in the South Africa's experience of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Having taken a decision to join the NPT as a NNWS, South Africa cemented its non-nuclear identity by passing the Non-Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction Act, taking part in negotiation for the African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone and by joining the New Agenda Coalition – an eight nation group demanding 'the speedy, final and total elimination' of nuclear weapons.[42] These measures enabled South African leaders to take pride in the nation's role as a champion of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. A similar transition is conceivable for China given the long-standing diplomatic support it has given to nuclear disarmament and a global ban on nuclear weapons.[43]

A new approach to NWS co-operation and trust-building

The current tension and mistrust between Russia and the US, with the huge stakes of nuclear war if deterrence fails, seems especially tragic given the end of the Cold War and the potential for co-operation, whether the expansion of trade and investment ties or engagement on culture, tourism, technology and science.[44] In the long-term, therefore, it is essential for the US, Russia, France and the UK to realign their relations to embed trust. Russia's integration into a new security community covering the Euro-Atlantic area would bring immediate political and economic benefits (not least in terms of potential reductions in military spending) to all sides. A fundamental and long-term challenge here is how a model of co-operation which creates a new, collective identity for participating states while allowing each state to retain a distinct national identity, may be designed.

How can the requisite trust be developed to enable such a project? Professor Nicholas Wheeler argues that we may gain some valuable insights from studying past examples of co-operation on nuclear arms control and non-proliferation, including the negotiations between the USSR and US at the end of the Cold War and the easing of the once hostile nuclear rivalry between Argentina and Brazil during the 1980s and 1990s. Wheeler argues that the 'positive interpersonal dynamics' that developed both between Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev and US President Ronald Reagan and between Argentinean President Raul Alfonsin and Brazilian President Jose Sarney were key in facilitating trust-building. This is because forms of communication between decision-makers based on constructing empathy 'can lead actors to take a decision to trust by making themselves vulnerable'.[45] Aaron M. Hoffman also makes the case for leaders building interpersonal trust before attempting to create the necessary institutions – norms, principles and rules – that can 'transform...distrustful relations into trusting ones'.[46]

Having made a decision to trust, both Gorbachev and Reagan and Alfonsin and Sarney were able to secure important agreements on nuclear issues. For example, the 1987 INF treaty was the first ever treaty to eliminate a whole class of nuclear weapons and, unlike earlier Cold War arms control agreements, the US and USSR accepted stringent verification procedures, including on-site inspections, to check nuclear weapons were being eliminated. This breakthrough removed a long-standing barrier to arms control efforts between the two superpowers, with ten years of subsequent on-site inspections helping to provide reassurance of both side's continuing compliance.[47] Gorbachev and Bush's 1989 Malta summit (where the two leaders announced the end of the Cold War) built on the success of the INF and a series of other arms-reduction treaties between the two superpowers.[48]

Moreover, Wheeler describes how Argentina and Brazil's leaders took successive reciprocal confidence-building steps that promoted trust, leading each side to 'take bolder initiatives in the expectation of reciprocation', providing opportunities for wider co-operation on security and economic integration.[49] Sara Kutchesfahani explains how Argentina and Brazil thus stepped back from a potential nuclear arms race, by establishing a bi-national system of mutual inspections and verification of indigenous non-safeguarded nuclear installations. This process led to the creation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC). Kutchesfahani also emphasises the role played in the cooperation by the two nation's 'non-proliferation epistemic community' – a group of experts knowledgeable in nuclear research issues.[50] The process of establishing co-operation and trust between Argentina and Brazil during the 1980s and 1990s is cited by Andrew Hurrell as a central factor in their development of a 'loosely coupled security community' whereby disputes are settled without the resort to force.[51]

To build co-operation and trust between the US and Russia on nuclear disarmament, US decision-makers will thus have to understand and develop empathy with the predicament of their Russian counterparts in order to act in ways which reassure and build confidence. Meanwhile, the self-image Russian leaders have of their nation as a global power with a right to significant influence in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, will have to be rethought in line with their reduced resources. Above all, both parties will eventually have to accept that all nuclear weapon systems (including so-called tactical or non-strategic weapons) and BMD, are unnecessary and illegitimate in order to provide certainty over each other's intentions and meet their NPT obligations. While the deployment of a functioning BMD system is by no means certain, Chinese and Russian analysts state that their governments would regard such a system as a first strike threat.[52] Furthermore, US intelligence officials and military personnel have warned that BMD deployments would potentially cause China and Russia to strengthen their nuclear forces and foment a cascade of proliferation amongst other states- such as India and Pakistan.[53] Clear and straightforward signalling away from destabilising nuclear arms build-ups is therefore a pre-requisite for the realisation of nuclear disarmament, which could help create the conditions for a new security settlement- based on the delegitimisation of military force- between Russia and the US.

The process of bringing Russian and US nuclear forces down to low numbers on the road to elimination, would, according to Major General Pan Zhenqiang, enable China to join in nuclear disarmament efforts if accompanied by a more benign security environment where China did not feel threatened militarily.[54] Bruno Tertrais points out that in the event that China joined a US - Russia initiative to begin negotiations for a treaty to eliminate nuclear weapons 'it would be difficult for Paris to stay away' given the likely pressures on France from within the European Union – in which France is determined to remain a key actor.[55] London's participation would also be likely, principally because of its identification with Washington but also considering its stated support for negotiations on multilateral nuclear disarmament.[56] Given the importance NWS elites assign to nuclear weapons as symbols of their global rank and status, NWS, individually, or ideally in groups or as a whole, could therefore begin to conduct investigations into what adopting a NNWS identity would mean for their nations. This would present an opportunity to prepare for a transition to a world without nuclear weapons.

A recent study by Maria Rost Rublee attempts to explain the record of nuclear non-proliferation amongst NNWS who had both the security motivation for and the capability to create a nuclear weapons capacity, considering several case studies, including Japan, Germany and Sweden. The lessons drawn from these countries' experiences of how and why they chose to remain NNWS, and what it was like living without the bomb, are useful in helping us to consider NWS's nuclear options from a fresh perspective. While such comparisons have limits, given that NWS shares several aspects of identity- whether political, economic or cultural- with Japan, Germany (both G8 members) and Sweden and the fact that these three countries have, at one time, all seriously considered acquiring a nuclear force, it is possible to draw important lessons. Nuclear forbearance occurred in these countries because of the interaction of the international social

environment i.e., the nuclear non-proliferation regime, with other variables. Rublee outlines how strong domestic anti-nuclear forces sharply raised the political costs for states to go nuclear. Elites in each country thus felt that the political cost of acquiring nuclear weapons was too high. Their decision to embrace non-nuclear status was also enabled in part because their security concerns were alleviated by the security assurances provided by the US.[57]

The attitudes of political elites towards nuclear weapons in all three countries thus changed over time 'to reflect a transformed view of security, one in which nuclear weapons were devalued rather than valued.' Japan redefined its definition of security, to focus on economic rather than military strength, Sweden concluded that nuclear weapons were incompatible with its identity as a 'neutral peacemaker', and Germany chose to focus on 'integration and economic development.' Overall, each nation's decision to rethink their approach to international affairs, was, to different degrees, a result of understanding how conflict and great power politics had failed their peoples in the past and that a new, cooperative, approach - which did not require nuclear weapons - was necessary. It is highly unlikely these three states will choose to pursue the nuclear option in the future, because the diplomatic and social costs internationally would be too high. Furthermore, all three nations are actively engaged in different capacities with the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament regime.[58]

Some, such as the Canberra Commission in its 1996 report on the elimination of nuclear weapons, have argued that US extended deterrence has acted to 'dampen incentives' in Germany and Japan to become NWS themselves.[59] While Germany currently has an estimated 10-20 B-61 US/NATO nuclear bombs stationed at the Buchel Air Base, in 2009 the new German government announced that it wanted to enter talks with its NATO allies about the withdrawal of these US nuclear weapons from its soil.[60] German Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Werner Hoyer made a strong call for the inclusion of NATO nuclear weapons in disarmament processes, noting that 'NPT states already agreed to this in principle in 2000'. Hoyer went on to state that these weapons 'no longer serve a military purpose and do not create security' before further elaborating the German government's 'intention to bring about, in agreement with our allies, the withdrawal of the tactical weapons still stationed in Germany'.[61]

Japan, according to Nick Ritchie, arguably has a 'latent form' of nuclear deterrence that 'could produce a basic deliverable nuclear weapons within 6 - 12 months in a crash programme'.[62] Yet, as former US National Security Advisors William Perry and Brent Scowcroft point out, Japan is another US ally which is strongly in favour of 'reducing the salience of nuclear weapons'.[63] Japanese security policy has, for many years, been based on the three non-nuclear principles of not possessing, not producing and not permitting the introduction of nuclear weapons, in line with Japan's Peace Constitution. [64] Meanwhile, Sweden, according to its defence minister, Karen Enstrom, does not need to join the NATO military alliance and be covered by its nuclear deterrent, partly because the EU treaty contains its own security guarantee.[65] Overall, these examples should make decision-makers in NPS consider how they can move away from security based on the mutual fear of nuclear deterrence, towards security based on mutual co-operation and trust.

Conclusion

Recent co-operation by NWS on their NPT disarmament commitments has failed to convince NNWS that they are serious about taking the necessary steps to create a nuclear weapons free world. NWS actions instead appear to be driven by a shared fear of moving away from familiar rivalries and suspicions and a need to agree how to contain repeated calls for nuclear disarmament from NNWS. The current atmosphere between the NATO allies, Russia and China, characterised as it is by the continued threat of nuclear conflict and uncertainty over future conventional military build-ups, is not propitious for the realisation of a world free from nuclear weapons. Moreover such a set-up cannot adequately deal with the urgent nuclear and non-nuclear challenges and instabilities facing the world, such as climate change, resource competition and socio-economic marginalisation, which require high levels of co-operation and trust based on mutual,

interdependent conceptions of security.

Russia and the US - the major nuclear rivals - could move beyond the current impasse by pledging to co-operate on a series of short, medium and long term steps that would reduce the salience and scale of their nuclear arsenals on the road to zero. Steps should also be taken to integrate Russia, over time, into a wider security community covering the Euro-Atlantic area. Such a broader security settlement would facilitate the participation of the three other NWS into negotiations over global nuclear disarmament and their gradual transition to NNWS status. Examples of past co-operation on arms control, nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament provide evidence that such transformations are both realisable and desirable, given the significant economic, social and political benefits countries engaged in such processes have enjoyed.

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UK PONI was established in 2010 as a cross-generational forum dedicated to fostering dialogue and building expertise amongst emerging nuclear scholars.

The issues surrounding nuclear weapons and nuclear energy are complex and multifaceted, requiring a broad understanding of everything from technical intricacies to developments in International security. Changes to the shape, size and function of the world's nuclear arsenals, have the potential to profoundly affect global dynamics. Developments in civilian nuclear energy will similarly influence the form and direction of international non-proliferation efforts. These trends will ensure that nuclear issues continue to be at the top of the defence and security policy agenda. Yet despite the continuing importance of nuclear issues, there is little evidence that sufficient expertise is being grown to sustain those with expertise in the field.

Aiming to redress this, UK PONI was established as a cross-generational forum allowing young nuclear scholars to engage with established experts on a wide variety of contemporary issues. As part of the US PONI network founded by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) nine years ago, UK PONI aims to promote the study of nuclear issues with a European focus. Accordingly, UK PONI holds an annual conference, as well as small events throughout the year. It also sponsors young delegates to attend conferences elsewhere, and aims to facilitate a global network of emerging nuclear specialists.

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