REFRAMING THE NARRATIVE ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

INSIGHTS & FINDINGS

NEXTGEN SHAPERS

A project of

BASIC

> Policy on nuclear weapons is all too often constrained by the legacy of past generations. This project seeks to consider how future nuclear policy can be more relevant to the concerns and security of the next generation.

Innovative thinking is needed to overcome deeply entrenched attitudes and slow progress in the shared responsibility to strengthen nuclear non-proliferation measures and achieve global security through nuclear disarmament. BASIC's aim has been to explore this by engaging new perspectives within the next generation of policy shapers, those with ideas unstructured by Cold War experiences but nevertheless motivated to take action to move beyond the legacies from past generations, focused on future decisions over global policy challenges. We focused our initial efforts in this project in the United States and United Kingdom, developing relationships and gaining insights into how some within the next generation think and feel about nuclear weapons and other geopolitical issues.

We used a variety of tools, including focus groups, systems mapping, the utilization of different frames of reference and disciplines, and hosting cross-generational roundtable discussions. We explored connections between nuclear weapons and climate change, media narratives and public conversations. We also discussed what it means to demonstrate leadership, responsibility and to take action in the 21st century and how these could be applied to the nuclear weapons debate.

This report sums up the findings from our 14 month project and we hope it serves as a point of departure in developing innovative ideas and engaging more people within the next generation of policy shapers in the interests of furthering nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We would like to thank the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for their foresight in funding this project with the expressed purpose of stimulating new ways of thinking and working in this field.

1 OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

Background

This project was born of the view that we need to think differently about the barriers to progress on global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The level of systemic change necessary to move on nuclear disarmament requires the involvement of cross-generational and cross-system perspectives. Both the nuclear decision-making process and the informed nuclear weapons debate have become insular, being handled by a small group of experts and decision makers in isolation from other concerns, rather than part of a broader conversation about the developing concept of security, current day concerns or how evolving innovations in other sectors may impact our thinking about the nuclear field. When the issue comes out in the public it rarely involves considered arguments but rather features as a shallow, symbolic proxy to label particular positions as naive or hawkish.

The NextGen Shapers project has sought to analyze the interconnections between the nuclear weapons agenda and other challenges, bring new voices into the discussion, and test out the means to inspire the next generation of policy shapers. We hope this will contribute to a more holistic, strategic and creative debate about the core issues and how to address them.

The project, which ran from September 2014 - November 2015, focused on exploring three questions:

What are the biggest influences in the cycle of nuclear weapons decision making, and where might we be able to shift the conversation?

Where and how might the nuclear debate be more closely integrated with other policy issues and movements that attract concern?

How and why might nuclear weapons issues resonate more strongly with emerging policy makers (i.e. the future "owners" of today's policy challenges), the public and media?

Our project developed two strands: we built a network of engaged future policy shapers to assist with our inquiries, while we simultaneously collected data and information through our research. The methods we used included:

1 Systems mapping of the challenges to progress on nuclear disarmament

2 Focus groups to gain insight on how the next generation of policy shapers think about, communicate, and connect with nuclear weapons and other geopolitical issues

3 Roundtable events and expert dialogues exploring nuclear weapons in the context of climate change; risk and social psychology; media and public engagement; inspiring action; and policy change, leadership and responsibility

4 Polling of European young people aged 14-30 about their attitudes towards nuclear weapons and engagement in the policy debates.

5 Digital engagement and face to face networking with members of the next generation in order to inspire engagement in our work and attract new ideas in the debate.

2 METHODS AND KEY FINDINGS

— Systems mapping: identifying challenges to progress on nuclear disarmament

A system has been described as "a configuration of interaction, interdependent parts that are connected through a web of relationships, forming a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts[1]". Systems can be characterised as being composed of multiple components of different types. Systems can include people, resources, services, relationships, values, perceptions, institutions, entities or structures[2]. They are made up of interdependent parts, have boundaries and sit inside an environment, and exhibit behaviours with causes and effects.

We conducted workshops in the United States and United Kingdom with next generation participants aimed at mapping the challenges, mechanisms for engagement, potential new dimensions in the debate and its relationship to other issues.

[1] See: http://www.thinknpc.org/publications/systems-change/?utm_source=New+Philanthropy+Capital&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=6014408_NPC+Newsletter+July+2015&dm_i=UL9,3KWQW,J9GM8L,CUR4C,1

[2] Ibid.

Some of our findings from this engagement were:

▶ Nuclear weapons are not seen as strongly relevant to the (US/UK) next generation, except in terms of an uncertain future caused by the leakage of nuclear weapons to revisionist states and non-state actors. Not only are they out of sight and mind, divorced from human-interest stories, difficult to relate to every-day experience, but also they are not seen as particularly influential even in the military and political spheres. When previous generations would have attached great utility and fear to these weapons, establishing elaborate deterrence relationships based upon fear, the next generation sees them as largely irrelevant to outcomes. This lack of connection to the weapons and the learning associated with their management leads to a less constrained relationship to them, opening up possibilities for reducing the salience of nuclear weapons and more active disarmament, or for attaching more reckless utility to them.

▶ There are a number of barriers to entry into the informed debate on nuclear weapons. It is seen as the preserve of experts able to navigate esoteric deterrence theory, technical aspects of weapons design, battle plans, and verification challenges. Complexity can lead to confusion and disengagement unless there are mitigating factors. Language and jargon serves to reinforce this. The public debate can feel simplistic and is rarely seen as influencing decisions actually taken on nuclear deployment.

> *Fear may be a powerful motivator in support of hawkish policies, but fear of massive destruction does not appear a strong motivator for action to disarm.*

Issues of impact are deeply demoralizing to involvement, and present a catch 22- it is not at all clear how people can influence these decisions even when they gather together in collectives. Some people even question whether the public should have any influence over strategic issues, that democracy lies in the election process when leaders seek the confidence and trust of the electorate to then make decisions on their behalf, and that the strength of active democracy between elections lies more in domestic issues.

There is also a certain 'threat-fatigue', with a greater emphasis on terrorism, cyber-threats and climate change, for which nuclear weapons are seen as irrelevant. Fear may be a powerful motivator in support of hawkish policies, but fear of massive destruction does not appear a strong motivator for action to disarm. Rather, it can be overwhelming and emphasize the powerlessness of the individual of social group. People connect to positive stories, and a sense of opportunity for hope and change.

▶ Media treatment of the issues has a major impact on awareness and engagement for the next generation, not least because there is minimal social involvement and awareness otherwise in the current context. The news media all too often encourage simplistic, populist and emotional responses, following a fear-based or securitized agenda, motivated by their own commercial interests. often the more significant impact is in the longer TV dramas or the online sophisticated games people chose to play. The relationship with technology is clearly heavily influential in attitudes, and facilitating action.

3 FOCUS GROUPS

The main objective of the focus groups in the early months of the project was to determine the baseline perspectives of the next generation of policy shapers regarding,

1 What they cared about or are interested in and why,

2 Where they got their information and perspectives,

3 How they communicated with peers, and

4 Their existing knowledge of or relationship with the nuclear weapons debate.

Full insights and outcomes were published in an earlier _report._

Our main findings from these focus groups included:

1

Early and personal experience is important when shaping interests: Personal experience and academic learning from early childhood to university is highly influential in shaping opinions and developing sense of the wider world around them beyond their direct experience.

2

Personal stories make an impact: First hand experience and knowing someone directly involved or impacted by an issue highly influences interest. Participants tended to seek out issues perceived to have direct impact on them, people they are about, or who they trust.

3

Clearly defined goals inspired active engagement: Participants preferred to know how their personal contributions will make an impact and how substantive change is created.

4

Balance matters in issue analysis: There was a strong preference for balanced analysis of issues, presenting all sides of an argument, which allows people to come to their own informed conclusion. Many participants expressed a suspicion of overt activism and advocacy, which were largely perceived to be representative of only one side of a debate.

5 ***Convenience is important when it comes to information:*** Participants were more likely to inform themselves about, or actively engage on an issue if the information or actions required are convenient.

6 ***Respected leaders influence thinking; celebrities don't:*** Celebrities from entertainment industries were emphatically not influential in shaping opinions on world issues. Leaders in their fields such as writers, journalists, policy experts, or former government officials were found to be more influential.

7 ***Motivations to action are driven by a sense of concern and/or morality:*** Participants were motivated by issues that inspired concern for others, that appealed to their sense of right and wrong or civic duty, or that sparked a sense of injustice or frustration.

8 ***Key actions include learning, building awareness and passing information on:*** Participants were more likely to share well-structured and easy to read articles, short videos, new or influential information, something controversial, or something involving a high profile individual.

9 ***Broadly low knowledge of or interest in nuclear weapons issues:*** Participants broadly felt that their knowledge of or interest in nuclear weapons as a stand-alone issue was low, largely because they couldn't relate to these intangible weapons that no longer seem relevant. The face of warfare is changing and the risk of nuclear crisis seems low. Participants didn't feel they could do much to change the status quo in regards to nuclear weapons, but worried about the unpredictability of the weapons, proliferation threats, and other nuclear players. There was a sense of false security, frustration, and questions about the impacts of nuclear weapons on other geopolitical issues.

4 EXPERT DIALOGUES AND ROUNDTABLE EVENTS

The following section summarizes collective discussions had as part of the project and does not necessarily reflect attitudes of any specific person or organization, including BASIC.

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We ran a series of virtual and in-person discussions with experts and next generation network members on key issue areas that have connections with the nuclear weapons debate to find new ways of framing and discussing nuclear weapons policy.

a Climate change

Climate change and nuclear weapons present twin existential risks that have solutions grounded in international cooperation, but where competitive national policies and deeply embedded systemic obstacles play a powerful role in preventing effective action. Some of the key challenges for both the climate and nuclear debates are around similar issues of responsibility, power dynamics and governance.

They also present divergent challenges to communication in a public context. Public discourse on nuclear weapons is embedded in a security context, with a focus on threat, in which credible contributions have to address the perceived

> *When people individually face a situation of simple risk they have a chance of assessing probabilities and impacts and respond accordingly. When facing such risks as a group the ideas put forward tend to be less ambitious,*

potential future threats to national security driving the acquisition or possession of nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons also remain abstract symbols of power. In contrast, while the effects of climate change are divorced in time and space from their causes, there are specific tangible actions that individuals can do to help reduce their personal contribution to its effects. Campaigners have successfully made the issue personal.

On the other hand, the global nuclear weapons issue has established and near-universal governmental involvement in international structures set up to manage and further develop international action. They are widely perceived to sit at the heart of the distribution of power within the international system, relevant to the top end of state-to-state interaction and as

far from the everyday concerns of the public as it is possible to be. Interestingly enough, whilst those involved in the nuclear debates might wish for greater public involvement, some involved in climate change issues look upon the top level governmental attention directed at nuclear weapons issues with envy. Such feelings, however, may be different after the successful multilateral agreement reached at COP21, the 2015 Paris Climate Conference.

Experts in both issue areas expressed some skepticism over the policy impact of the public debates beyond maintaining the ambition within our international cooperation to make some general but unspecified progress. High level government-to-government

processes on both issues are notoriously difficult and slow moving; significant cooperation challenges continue to exist with both issues.

When people individually face a situation of simple risk they have a chance of assessing probabilities and impacts and respond accordingly. When facing such risks as a group the ideas put forward tend to be less ambitious, partly in order to better achieve agreement. After deliberation, the pledges the group agrees to collectively demonstrate an even lower level of ambition. And then there are problems of collective enforcement and legitimacy. This is even more pronounced when financial pledges are involved.

There is an element of free riding in this behavior, but it is also driven by a psychology of collective action: feelings of shame and incompetence that stem from a fear of being ridiculed, exploited or being seen as naive. Individuals worry that if they or their country acts alone, no one will follow.

The The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) contains discriminatory clauses that leave nuclear disarmament largely unenforced, whilst nuclear non-proliferation is far tighter and backed up by a set of inspection and enforcement mechanisms. At its core the Treaty is influenced predominantly by realist power distribution and trust.

Climate change asymmetries are just as stark, given legacy emissions by industrialized states, and agreements made have attempted to take these into account.

One option for breakthrough is to focus less on legal targets and requirements, and more on pledges, global commitments and awareness - the approach of the nuclear security agenda initiated by President Obama. This does not address some of the incentives to renege on collective action agreements unless states care about reputational issues. It may be necessary to think more deeply about soft power as a means to establish and develop reputation.

There are a number of specific links that can be drawn between the nuclear weapons and climate change policy debates that would be worth exploring further:

■ *Assessing the risk of nuclear war:* does the potential instability brought about by climate change alter the likelihood of nuclear war?

■ *Financial opportunity cost:* money spent on strategic weapon systems reduces available budgets to tackle climate change.

■ *Impact on cooperation:* as states maintain the threat of mutually assured destruction, does this impact on negotiations on climate change and other global challenges demanding collaborative action and acknowledgement of the common good?

■ *Global impact:* both climate change and nuclear war would both result in planetary changes with profound effects.

■ *Nuclear energy:* many nuclear technologies are dual-use, requiring stronger regulation to provide assurance of non-proliferation; on the other hand nuclear energy is widely seen as a low carbon energy source.

b

Psychology of risk
and behaviours of decision making at state and individual levels

The following section summarizes collective discussions had as part of the project and does not necessarily reflect attitudes of any specific person or organization, including BASIC.

There are particular psychological qualities attached to the threat of nuclear weapons that explain the attachment they attract. They are viewed as a tool to counter a military or political threat, one that is simply far more effective than other protection by virtue of the terror associated with them.

The magnitude of the nuclear threat is intangible: no units exist with which we can measure it. So, the issue becomes an emotive, subjective one, making it all but impossible to scale a rational response. So, while people may see nuclear weapons as carrying risks, they see other (more immediate and measurable) choices that they perceive to be more relevant and possible to relate to direct experiences.

In contrast, cyber threats as an example, can be imagined in relation to the frustration everyone with a computer experiences on a regular basis when things do not quite go according to plan.

Politicians focus on their own political survival, which means they fall into the **status quo bias.** Pressing for nuclear disarmament or reductions

Risks around nuclear crises are heavily discounted because they are seen to sit far into the future.

could lead to perceptions of weakness and mean domestic political annihilation. At the moment, governments in nuclear weapon states are going to great lengths to promote "business as usual", and the sense that systems and relationships are safe and sustainable. Risks around nuclear crises are heavily discounted because they are seen to sit far into the future.

Arguments around the need for global collaboration are overshadowed by domestic political concerns. This conservatism can reverse when there is a change of leadership and there is a perceived need to stamp a new identity and leadership onto a situation - the honeymoon period.

Some behaviors and thought psychologies to frame nuclear weapons within include:

- *choice bracketing,* the tendency to group choices together into sets, and individual decisions as symbols of those bigger functions, such as: strong on defense, waste in defense procurement, standing up to Russia;
- *the sunk cost effect,* the tendency to continue an endeavor once an investment in institutions, money, effort or time has been made, even when it may still be rational to abandon the project;
- *the anchoring effect,* when specific reference points are chosen to frame something as either a gain or a loss; in reference to the Cold War and advances, it has huge impact when we choose 1985, 1990 or 1995;
- *the disjunction effect,* that essentially paralyses action when there are high levels of uncertainty, tending to obstruct positive action;
- *short term induction,* where an individual's latest experience determines their judgment on what is likely or possible. Because there have been no nuclear standoffs in recent years, people's judgements will be framed around stability; and
- *ethical trade-offs,* when nuclear weapons are framed as a shield (ultimate defensive insurance policy), and are connected with the notion of patriotism / nationalism it becomes seen as weak to priortize disarmament.

> " _Highlighting the actual costs of maintaining the status quo could gain traction, or exploring ways in which identity resonates strongly with positive futures and strength associated with international collaboration rather than fear._ "

During the Cold War people were encouraged to think they would rather be dead than red, justifying the mutual vulnerability relationship. Is there a modern-day equivalent? What could be worse than existing under a nuclear threat? Some have attempted to link this with the possibility of great power war returning.

What can be done to overcome human behaviors that obstruct rational decision-making? This is the wrong question, rather we need to ask how these cognitive biases can be neutralized by deploying other biases and thereby reach a point closer to rational and cooperative decision-making. This requires us to explore how and why particular arguments resonate with people. For example, highlighting the actual costs of maintaining the status quo could gain traction, or exploring ways in which identity resonates strongly with positive futures and strength associated with international collaboration rather than fear. Seemingly entrenched attitudes can change, and have done so, for example, a ban on smoking in public places.

Our research with next generation audiences suggested that some hope of achieving future impact on the debate has a strong influence on whether an individual will take action or participate.

Media & public:
engagement and perceptions

The following section summarizes collective discussions had as part of the project and does not necessarily reflect attitudes of any specific person or organization, including BASIC.

Media portrayals of nuclear weapons frequently center around specific angles of the issue, such as the Iran nuclear deal, and potential disruptive threats to the status quo.

It was reflected that generally, many people feel powerless to affect decisions regarding nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the debate around these weapons can trigger emotional responses and calls to elected officials to take hard proactive stances. It is rare for the media to report positive opportunities around, for example, nuclear disarmament, and even when there are talks in play the reporting often features on the disagreement over whether they actually are opportunities.

Nuclear weapons are frequently framed in terms of threat, and this reduces levels of public interest and engagement.

Nuclear weapons are also frequently represented in pop culture, film, TV and gaming through narratives focused on their destructive power and their role in responding to security threats. During the Cold War they incited

fear and awe. Since then, the impact of nuclear weapons tend to be more limited and tied to themes about insurgency, national threats and national security. Such storylines often depict nuclear weapons as a tool for survival, or as a means for the "good guys" to prevail over the bad. Other contemporary storylines are fantastical, and hard to relate to, such as using nuclear weapons to save the planet from aliens. Such narratives desensitize public audiences to the real and current threat arising from nuclear weapons.

There are several challenges to overcome in order to inspire more responsible media and public engagement, including:

1

Competing interests:
There are thousands of issues and organizations competing for the same headline space and trending on social media. This is complicated further by the speed of coverage to move from one issue to another, with very short public attention spans.

2

Information vs. entertainment:
While the media will continue to publicize a particular topic if it will sell or entertain, drier information (as often developed by civil society organizations) does not necessarily inspire engagement. Tools are needed to bridge the gap between informing and stimulating engagement, which is something that NGOs and other civil society actors need to consider.
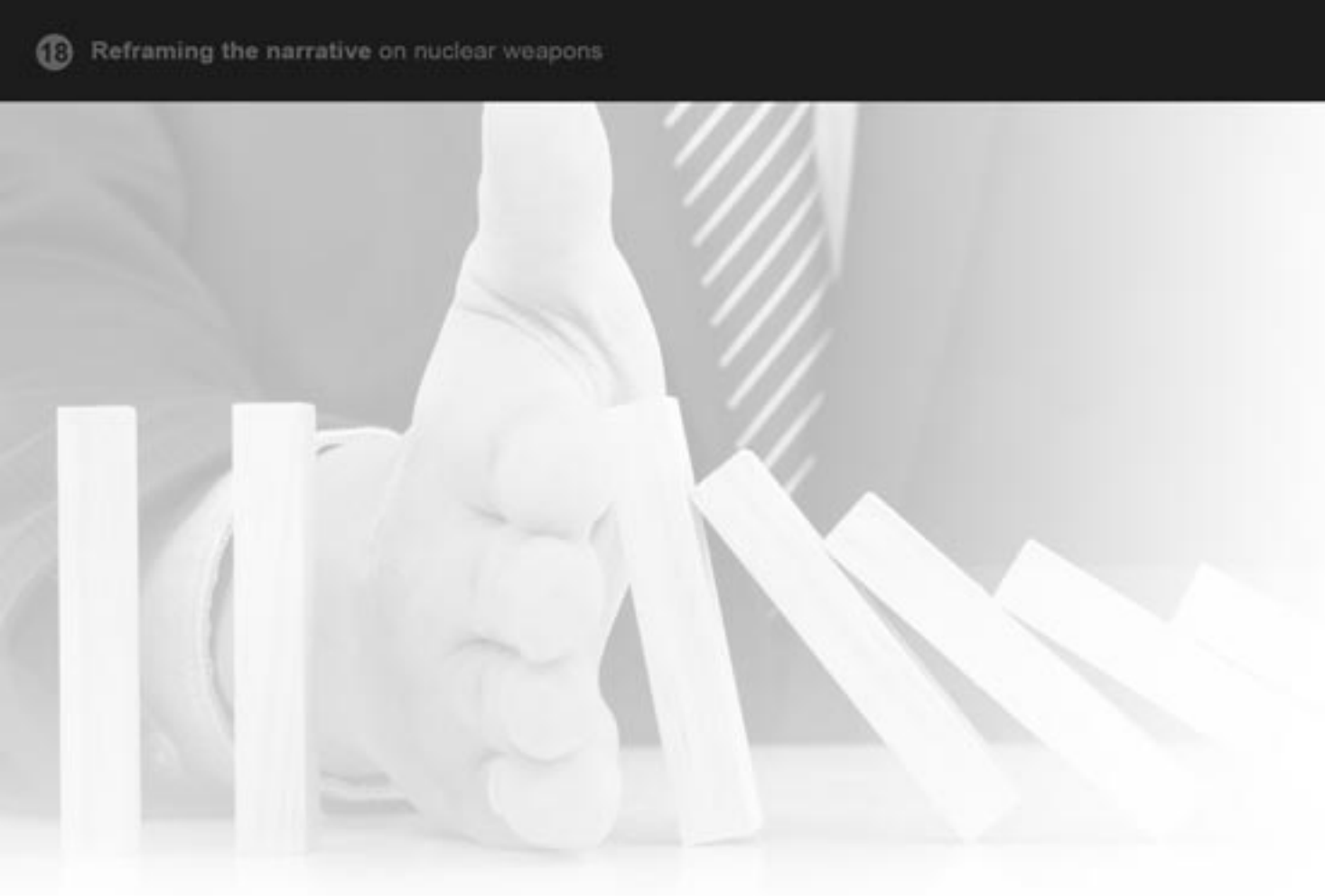
3

Technical terminology:
A dry defense and security narrative can be offputting to a non-expert audience. In order to simplify technical terminology, sometimes the debate gets boiled down to a polarizing position of "for" or "against", which is simplistic and divorced from decision-making. Feedback from next generation audiences in this project encouraged dialogue and debate that goes beyond binary and polarizing perspectives.

4

Education:
Engaging with children and students while they are young and still in school, informing them about the history of nuclear weapons and the potential humanitarian consequences is effective and sparks creativity.

Defining action

The following section summarizes collective discussions had as part of the project and does not necessarily reflect attitudes of any specific person or organization, including BASIC.

Talking about "individual action" may be a misnomer: change in this area happens by individuals connecting together in groups and mobilizing structures, such as non-profit organizations and "repertoires of contention" - tools and tactics to lodge a protest about an issue.

Gene Sharp (former professor, founder of the Albert Einstein Institution and one of the foremost experts on non-violent revolution) wrote about the "198 methods of non-violent action"[3] in The Politics of Non-Violent Action, in 1973. Action has developed since, with much of it taking place online.

[3] see: http://www.aeinstein.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/198-Methods.pdf for more information"

> **One of the biggest challenges to creating debate around nuclear weapons is the belief that disarmament undermines state power, and the power of the global north.**

Impact is complex. Traditional approaches may focus on legislation and treaties, but others are just as important today, such as encouraging businesses to change their behavior. The nuclear debate still focuses on quite a traditional, government focus for obvious reasons. But a change in culture, ideology and how people talk about security problems could shift that - one example being the recent Pax campaign[4] targeting private institutions that invest in nuclear weapons.

There are different ways for networks or a group of individuals to attempt to change behavior and culture.

The example of marriage equality in the US, combining a cultural shift with the actions of individuals taking their case to the Supreme Court, changed attitudes and the laws over a very short space of time. Actions deemed criminal were first decriminalized, then socially and legally integrated. And many of those who would naturally be opposed were shamed into silence.

One of the biggest challenges to creating debate around nuclear weapons is the belief that disarmament undermines state power, and the power of the global north. So while people may be able to connect to nuclear weapons,

many ultimately feel that they provide security, stability and the safety of what we know. Support for nuclear weapons comes from those who believe it realistic and responsible to posses them in the face of external threat; unfortunately there is no social shame associated with supporting nuclear weapons. A long term cultural shift involving nuclear weapons may rely less on persuading people to become active in the movement so much as working through cultural institutions and activities that lead cultural transformation, identity and emotion.

Policy change, leadership and responsibility

The following section summarizes collective discussions had as part of the project and does not necessarily reflect attitudes of any specific person or organization, including BASIC.

There appears to be a new politics emerging in Europe and North America, evidenced by the popularity amongst the next generation of figures like Justin Tredeau in Canada, Jeremy Corbyn in the UK and Bernie Sanders in the US.

This suggests an attraction to those with radical liberal democratic approaches and an emphasis on speaking one's truth rather than subtle complexity.

Effective leadership on policy change in the 21st century involves a number of relevant factors ▶

- **Future focused** (preparing for the shape of tomorrow's challenges, not just reacting to today's);

- **Disruptive** (creates new frames to address problems);

- **Diverse**

- **Innovative**

- **Passionate and authentic**

- **Able to punch above your weight**

> " Senior political elites want to retain their power and influence, but beyond this they can be expected to have strong commitment to the status quo and barriers to progress, "

Effective leadership is heavily influenced by external factors, including:

- **The existence or emergence of an existential threat**
- **An active and progressive public, that operates ahead of the political elite**
- **Catalysts for change in the private sector (such as technology firms), with a business model of change different from the traditional approach**
- **Data is important to accountability**
- **Global institutions can inject leadership and innovation**

When seeking to inject innovation or disruption into traditional political structures it is critical to understand the role of power and its distribution within existing systems, as well as how this is rapidly evolving. Resistance to change within existing systems is inevitably strong - a signal of their resilience. Senior political elites want to retain their power and influence, but beyond this they can be expected to have strong commitment to the status quo and barriers to progress, particularly in complex political systems where future directions are uncertain.

One participant suggested that leadership in the 21st century needed to focus more on the concept of "systems stewardship": that is, leaders who are good at the process, and are prepared to bring people together to discuss problems and seek out solutions. This concept of leadership centers around transformation, which is different (and perhaps requires leaders to make themselves more personally vulnerable) from the traditional understanding of leadership as the ability to project a vision and bring others along as followers.

There has been a mixed record of leadership on nuclear disarmament. Perhaps it has simply not been very creative. It seems clear that there is a direct choice between leadership today that seeks collaborative solutions, or an increasingly competitive, conflictual world characterized by greater strains from climate change, resource scarcity and nuclear proliferation. The latter could require autocratic states to dictate the division of resources, and will provide less space for nudging and dialogue. On a more positive note, there are clear signs of moves away from traditional competition in other areas.

The effective altruist movement, for example, seeks to bring innovation into the policy space. We may yet find ways to innovate within the international arena in ways that reflect encouraging developments domestically.

In the context of deteriorating relationships between the nuclear armed states, we also asked whether there was scope to trigger an inclusive, international debate over the responsibilities of nuclear armed states in the 21st century in terms of policy decisions, leadership and behavior. This could help frame dialogue where currently there is little sign of understanding between protagonists.

Nuclear armed state responsibility might entail:

- **Upholding global norms, maintaining balance and a high threshold of non-use**

- **Avoiding reckless behavior, exercising restraint and aiming for de-escalation, particularly in crisis situations**

- **Policies that assign purely defensive roles to nuclear weapons, that assume no first use, a force structure of a minimum nuclear deterrent, actions aimed at limiting the risks of accidental use or detonation of nuclear weapons**

- **Commitment to high nuclear security and safety standards, including personnel, export controls, safeguards, etc.**

- **Recognizing the humanitarian and political risks of deploying nuclear weapons**

- **Supporting arms control and strengthening the non-proliferation regime, recommitting to a world free of nuclear weapons and to continuous robust and transparent steps down the nuclear ladder towards zero.**

5 POLLING

We commissioned two questions in a larger poll organized by Dr. Benoit Pelopidas at Bristol University entitled "Thoughts on Nuclear Weapons" that surveyed 10,000 young people between the ages of 14-30 in the 28 EU member states.

Our questions asked:

1 What three things hold you back most from engaging more in the debate over the future of nuclear weapons?

2 What global issues do you think will affect your life most in the coming half century that might motivate you to take action?

The feedback from the first question indicated that 72% of respondents felt that they cannot affect the outcome of the nuclear weapons debate so they do not engage on the issue. This was followed by a response rate of 56% for the answer: "I'm too busy on things that more directly affect my life". These responses were in line with the findings from our focus groups.

What three things hold you back most from engaging more in the debate over the future of nuclear weapons?

72.38%
55.82%
45.67%
44.33%
23.45%
24.11%
34.23%

A   B   C   D   E   F   G
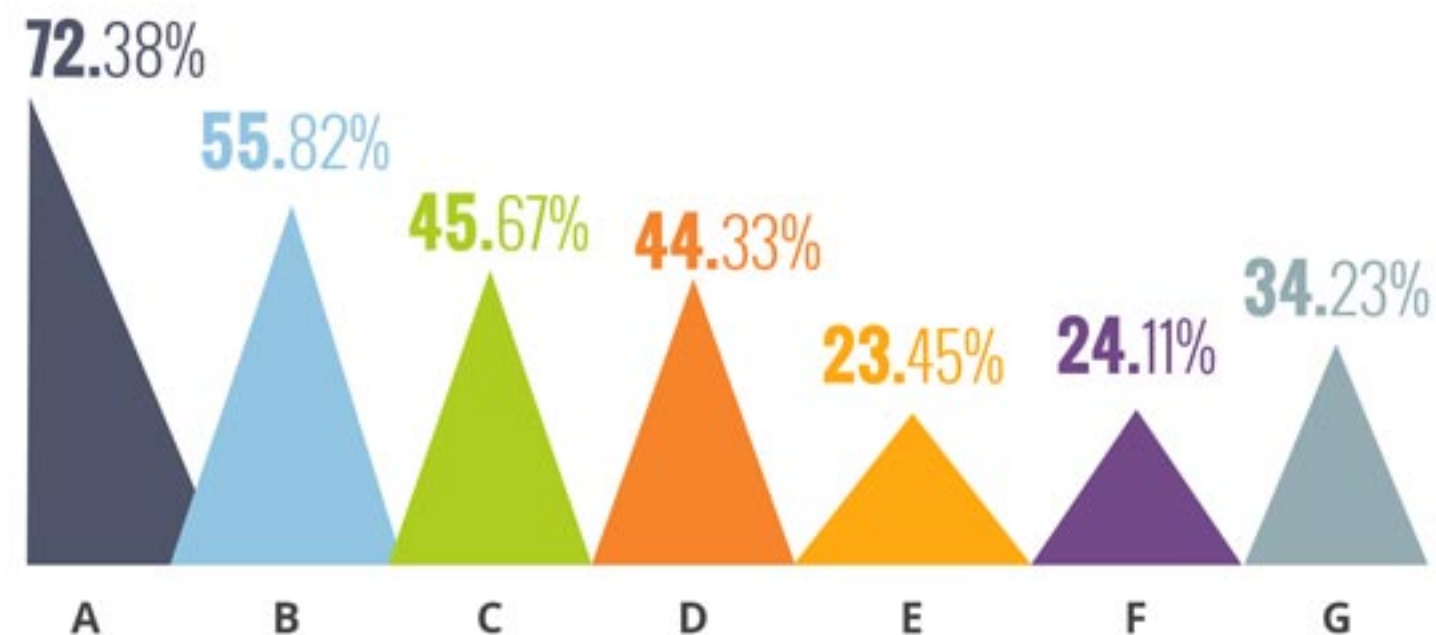
A - I can't affect the outcome
B - I'm too busy on things that more directly affect my life
C - I don't know what the answers are
D - My country does not have the influence
E - I am generally content with decisions made in my name
F - I am worried about the impact on my reputation/Job/Standing
G - I don't care

The answer "spread of nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons use" was the least chosen in a list of global issues that will affect individuals' lives and motivate action.

What global issues do you think will affect your life most in the coming half century that might motivate you to take action?

A - 27.67%
B - 53.20%
C - 35.34%
D - 53.06%
E - 43.94%
F - 45.40%
G - 41.39%
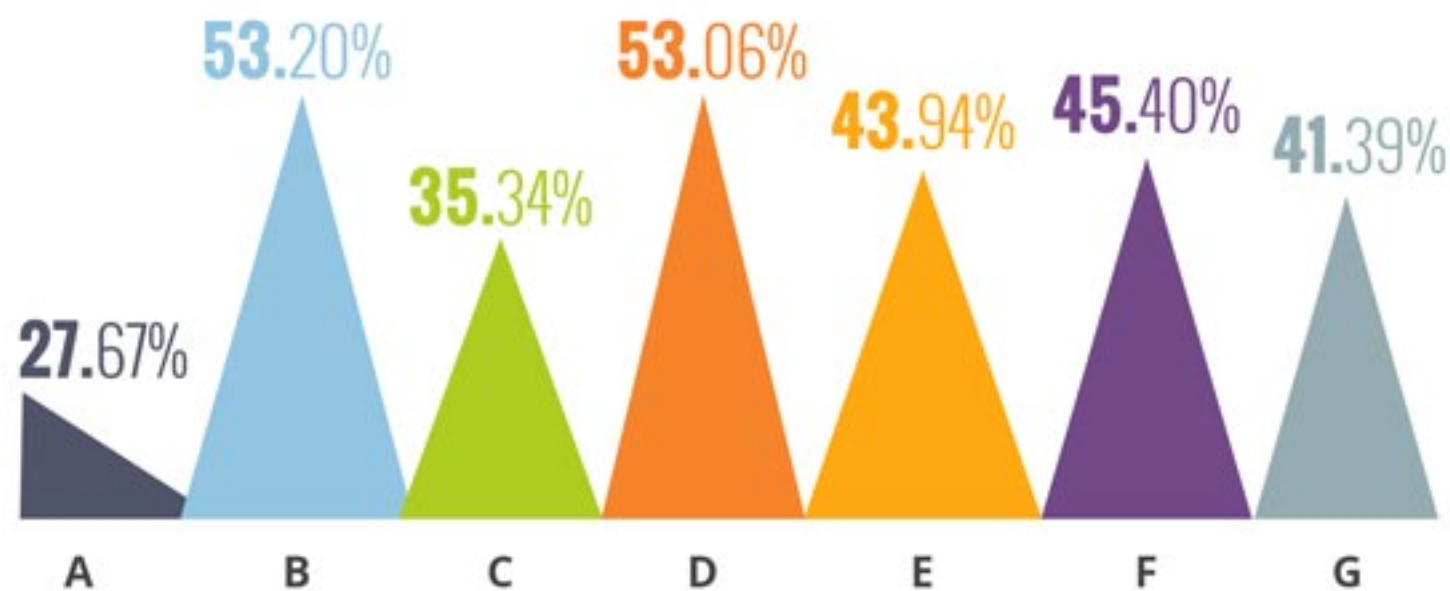
A - Spread of Nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons use
B - Global terrorism
C - Threat of attack or invasion by another state
D - Climate change and ecological destruction / breakdown
E - Exhaustion of key resources
F - Global poverty and inequalities
G - Financial break-down

There were some predictable differences between young people in different parts of Europe. Those from eastern Europe were far more likely to see threat from external invasion, and to have greater clarity on the need for robust military and nuclear responses.

We used a variety of methods and mediums for engagement with the next generation audience in order to develop and maintain an engaged community of individuals, including:

6 BUILDING A NEXTGEN SHAPERS COMMUNITY

1 Networking events

that brought together large numbers of next generation participants with each other and with experts in international security fields to meet each other and exchange ideas on nuclear weapons and other policy issues

2 Roundtable discussions

that focused on issue area exploration and development of cross-generational and multidisciplinary perspectives to reframe nuclear weapons in new narratives

3 Next Generation Shapers website

which included interactive member profiles and opportunities to share comments and written material

4 Social media channels

to build a discussion about nuclear weapons in the context of broader social issues. We focused mainly on Twitter and Facebook and asked relevant, thought-provoking questions, encouraging feedback from followers on the stories and articles we were sharing. We also ran a "Twitter Chat" stimulating two-way dialogue on links between nuclear weapons and climate change.

Our emphasis in our Next Generation community outreach was always about stimulating debate and discussion rather than recruiting large numbers. Even in our online work, we focused on creating content that appeals to a broader audience, resonating with people beyond the nuclear field in order to engage with new perspectives. We found that our in-person networking events and discussions were much more successful in terms of level of engagement, comparative to our digital online efforts. However, this is not to say that other organizations and campaigns in this sector cannot be successful using digital methods, but we feel that content, capacity, timing, and narratives are important factors for success.

7 NEXT STEPS

The Next Generation Shapers pilot project was an exploratory stepping stone to shape future dialogue on reframing the narrative on nuclear weapons.

The initial framework for the project was relatively broad, exploring open and innovative ways to approach our research and target audiences. While some of the data we collected is quantitative, most was qualitative and exposed to subjective interpretation.

We tried to control our own opinions and existing biases, but acknowledge that they will have had an influence. Our research is only a small representation of global views of the "millennial generation", largely in the US and UK. In future we hope to take our approach to the Middle East and South Asia.

> "
> *Our advice to individuals and organizations working in this sector is to apply cross-generational approaches to your work, and build in opportunities for inclusion from the next generation.*
> "

Our network members were thirsty to share their ideas with us, and with others working in the field. Many of our participants are actively seeking long-term careers in this field of work. It has recently become fashionable to engage with young people on similar issues. We hope the insights here will contribute to this. We welcome feedback on the work that we have done as well as insights and ideas for next steps and collaboration. Our advice to individuals and organizations working in this sector is to apply cross-generational approaches to your work, and build in opportunities for inclusion from the next generation.
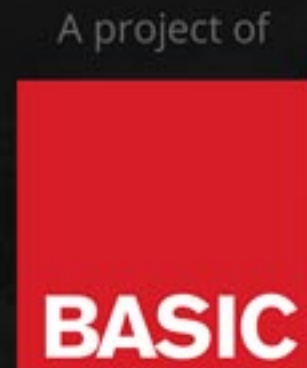
This type of engagement brings a certain legitimacy of foresight for the future, and innovation in thinking.

As an initial next step, BASIC is working under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York to apply systems thinking approaches to the nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear security sectors in order to identify key challenges for progress in these areas of policy, and in their relationship to disarmament. We will be working with a next generation audience and those working within and outside the nuclear policy sector.

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