

# **Nuclear Weapons and Transatlantic Security**

James Leonard, John Isaacs, Shervin Bolorian & Dr Joanna Spear

Meeting with a delegation from the Defence Committee of the WEU Assembly – The European Security and Defence Assembly, 17 June 2008



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On June 17, 2008, BASIC hosted a meeting with delegation members from the Defence Committee of the Assembly of the Western European Union – The European Security and Defence Assembly at the Washington, D.C. Home of Stewart R. Mott.

Below are the briefings delivered by Washington-based peace and security experts Ambassador James Leonard, John Isaacs, Shervin Bolorian, and Dr. Joanna Spear.

- Ambassador James Leonard – steps to nuclear disarmament
- John Isaacs – U.S. nuclear policy and the Presidential race
- Shervin Bolorian – policy toward Iran's nuclear program
- Dr. Joanna Spear – Afghanistan, climate change and nuclear power

## **How We Will Get to Zero. How You Can Help**

Ambassador James Leonard

The process of eliminating nuclear weapons will take many years – decades – and it will go through several distinct phases.

**Phase I:** Includes U.S.-Russian bi-lateral negotiations with two linked objectives: reducing the total number of warheads held by each side, and eliminating the possibility of an accidental firing of even one nuclear weapon. The objective of reducing warhead numbers is a continuation of the process that began in Helsinki in December 1969. It led through SALT I and SALT II and START and the Moscow Treaty of 2001. I have no doubt that the next U.S. administration and the Russian government will resume this reduction process next year. I hope the two governments will also take up the task of eliminating quickly the dangerous postures of both nuclear forces that have missiles that could be targeted on each other and fired unintentionally by mistake in a matter of minutes. The Clinton administration addressed this problem with the Russians and proclaimed that it had been solved. It has not and it obviously should be.

**Phase II:** When the U.S. and Russian nuclear forces have been reduced to levels close to the nuclear forces of the United Kingdom and France – 200 to 300 warheads deployed or deployable, then a second, Five-Power phase of nuclear disarmament should start, bringing in China. This second phase can and should start in five years or less, but I am not predicting any such good sense or good fortune. The object of this Phase II should be the complete elimination of deployed and deployable weapons by the five governments. It could take a number of years to work out the procedures for the safe and verifiable elimination of warheads and of the means of delivering them, but once all five governments have removed their deployed weapons to storage and promised to destroy them, there is no great rush to finish the job.

**Phase III:** Includes addressing the other nuclear-weapon states and would-be NWS like Iran. These other problem states should not be neglected while the five major states are reducing their nuclear forces. But the politics and the security calculations of the Middle East, the Subcontinent and elsewhere are relatively independent of the strategic relations among the Five. The nuclear Five are not very effective at preaching disarmament to others unless they practice what they preach. But all five could go to zero and India and Pakistan could still say: "So what? We still need our deterrent." It is nevertheless reasonable to expect that the good example of the Five plus and the even better example of the fifty or more non-nuclear states who could have gone nuclear but chose not to will protect and preserve the non-proliferation regime and will enable the international

community to bring pressure on India, Pakistan and Israel to solve their security problems without nuclear weapons and agree to join in getting nuclear weapons down to a true zero.

### **What can you do to help?**

When the United States and Russia sit down to discuss further reductions in strategic weapons, they should also take up the problem of non-strategic weapons. The Russians will certainly want us to withdraw our nuclear weapons from Europe. We will want them to pull their nuclear weapons back behind the Urals, or better yet, eliminate them.

If I were the next President, I would be tempted to pull all our weapons out of Europe unilaterally; but some people warn that our allies would be very upset and that some could even contemplate starting to build their own nuclear deterrent. I don't believe this for a moment. But please tell us what you think. It would contribute to getting a good start down this long road to zero if our allies would tell us clearly and publicly that these weapons are no longer needed. They are simply survivals of the past and should be eliminated ASAP.

## **A Brief Synopsis of U.S. Nuclear Policy**

### **John Isaacs**

There are many uncertainties about U.S. politics. We can never be sure that what candidates say during elections will be implemented when the winners take office. At least in this country. But one thing I can assure all our European guests. As of January 20, 2009, George W. Bush will no longer be in office. That, I guarantee you. And if you are polite enough not to issue an audible sigh of relief, I can assure you that the great majority of Americans are going to.

The good news on nuclear weapons policy is that both of the major contenders for President of the United States – McCain or Obama – have promised major changes in U.S. nuclear weapons policies.

We had expected that from the Democratic nominee.

Barack Obama has made important pledges of seeking expanded nuclear non-proliferation policies. Senator Obama has:

*Endorsed bringing back the CTBT for a Senate ratification vote.*

*Talked of expanded nuclear non-proliferation programs.*

*Proposed extending the START I agreement.*

*Endorsed the concept of zero nuclear weapons advocated by Mssrs. Kissinger, Shultz, Nunn and Perry.*

But what is most encouraging was the speech by Republican nominee Sen. John McCain at the end of May. Senator McCain has:

*Endorsed legally binding and verifiable reductions on U.S. and Russian nuclear weapons, something that the Bush Administration was allergic to.*

*Endorsed expanded nuclear non-proliferation programs. He talked about reconsidering the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.*

*Proposed strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency.*

*Proposed pursuing negotiations for a Fissile Material Cut off Treaty.*

*Even used the dirty word "negotiations" – or at least quite often dirty word to the Bush Administration.*

Now there were ambiguities in Sen. McCain's speech. And of course there are uncertainties.

But I think it is now fair to expect that either a President McCain or a President Obama

will put nuclear weapons issues high on the agenda for the next Administration.

Copies of analysis that our organization published on the McCain and Obama positions are available: Obama vs. McCain: A Side-by-Side Comparison on Arms Control.

But a cautionary note.

The next President will enter office with a long, unfinished agenda. There is the matter of a recession. High gasoline prices. Housing foreclosures. Forty-five million Americans without health insurance. A little war in Iraq from which we need to extricate ourselves. Uncertainties in the Middle East and with Iran and North Korea. Which means that those of us involved in nuclear weapons issues know that our issues will have to compete for the time, attention and political capital of an Administration with much work to do. And there are major disputes ahead over deploying a third national missile defense site in Poland and the Czech Republic and other issues that divide the United States and Russia that could prevent nuclear cooperation. But all in all, a promising environment for 2009 on nuclear weapons issues.

## **U.S.-Iran Policy**

### **Shervin Bolorian**

The narrative of isolation and pressure has historically driven U.S.-Iran policy in Washington. This narrative heavily informs policy documents like the recent National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) and explains why the report's drafters conclude that a posture more forcefully tilted in favor of hostility is likely to persuade Iran to abandon its uranium enrichment program. While the NIE acknowledges a cost-benefit mindset among Iran's leadership, Iran's behavior in 2003 suggests that a series of more conciliatory gestures, chief among them being concrete security guarantees, are likely to produce more results than the limited P5+1 proposal.

### **Political Backdrop**

The 1979 hostage crisis is still firmly rooted in the minds of policymakers. Both major political parties score free points among the U.S. public by appearing tough on Iran. Democrats are particularly sensitive to being seen as weak on national security in the forthcoming elections. Practical and rational policy options that would improve U.S.-Iran relations and thus lay the groundwork for preventing the possibility of nuclear proliferation are victimized by these dynamics.

### **NIE's Findings**

The NIE judged with high confidence that Iran halted a nuclear weapons program in Fall, 2003 and implies that a political decision would more effectively induce the Iranian leadership to stop their nuclear energy program than a military option. The document then suggests that Iran will respond favorably to a "combination of threats of intensified international scrutiny and pressures, along with opportunities..." to gain certain carrots. The Bush Administration uses this conclusion to: save face and justify the current policy of stepped up pressure on Iran in the UNSC; continue a hard-line stance on Iran; and accede to the possibility of talks only after Iran ceases uranium enrichment activities. This explains why President Bush and Congress continue to stay the course on Iran, in spite of the intelligence community's judgment that Iran is not developing a weapons program.

### **NIE Misses**

The threat from Iran's bitter enemy, Iraq, may have been the principle driving force behind an alleged nuclear weapons program. With Saddam Hussein's removal, a chief security threat to Iran was also removed as well as a key motivating force for any alleged program.

The Grand Bargain floated by Iran in May, 2003. This Iranian proposal delivered to the United States via the Swiss, contained various items for negotiation (including Iran's nuclear program) in an effort to normalize relations between the two countries. This is important because it indicates a desire for rapprochement from Tehran. Its rejection by the United States also raises questions about American regime change signals, since the United States flatly opted not to negotiate when given the opportunity.

The failure of unilateral sanctions, over an unfortunate era of bad blood between the two countries, which has colored relations and left little in the way of trust and good will. This is important because the nature of the relationship suggests that more of the same has not and will not change Iran's behavior.

The U.S. and international community have already applied the greatest amount of pressure on Iran to date, without the desired response from Iran. By several accounts, Iran in 2003 was engaged constructively by the EU3, whose representatives did not succumb to U.S. pressure, and issued a more conciliatory joint statement. In the aftermath, Iran accelerated its cooperation with the IAEA without the introduction of sanctions.

Iranians view themselves as victims of historic pressure from foreign governments. This suggests that the Iranian people would react favorably to serious constructive gestures from the United States and Europe. Iran's population is frequently referred to as the most pro-Western in the region. A proposal for unconditional talks with Iran would likely be received well by the population and would put pressure on the ruling elite to act.

### **Conclusion**

Since the NIE's release, the pressure on Iran to abandon its enrichment program has not abated. While the NIE suggests that staying the course will yield results, an alternative analysis of its findings in the context of the U.S.-Iran relationship suggests that the more pressure applied to Iran, the lower the chance of Iran's capitulation. Therefore, a departure from the historical approach to Iran whereby the international community tips the scales back in favor of more carrots, less coercion, direct U.S. involvement, and no preconditions would produce more favorable results.

### **Recommendation**

Members of the EU and others in the international community should step up pressure on the United States to less coercively respond to Iran's desire for economic integration and security needs, and prompt the administration and Congress to adopt a more conciliatory posture with respect to Iran and its nuclear program.

## **Short and Long-term Transatlantic Security Challenges**

**Dr. Joanna Spear**

### **Short-term challenge**

The short-term challenge concerns NATO (and ISAF) in Afghanistan. There are many tensions in the alliance over force levels and types of forces needed to mount effective operations in Afghanistan.

It is no secret that many countries put forces into Afghanistan in order to avoid having to put them into Iraq-or having to blanketly refuse U.S. requests to do that. Many countries assumed that the operations would be relatively short-lived and straightforward; neither has proved to be the case.

Now, in some ways it is no surprise that NATO is engaged in a burden-sharing debate (as far as I ever remember, that is what NATO is best at), but in some senses the stakes

are higher than during past theoretical debates, as there are troops on the ground and a lot is at stake in Afghanistan.

There is irritation in the Bush Administration that European NATO allies are not prepared to do more and that what they are doing is governed by so many national caveats that it is synergistically harming operational effectiveness.

In some senses this irritation is merited; in some senses it is not; there are many NATO forces in Afghanistan and a number of NATO allies – notably some of the newer members – have really committed many forces to the fight. The Canadians have now lost 81 troops there and British losses have reached 100 – significant numbers relative to the size of the national armed forces.

But the challenge in Afghanistan seems to be growing, not receding. The Taliban are making increasingly daring tactical moves and the government in Kabul is still rather limited in its abilities.

The solution – most seem to agree – lies in development that helps to build a stronger state. But this is proving a challenging goal – and is maybe asking too much of development over too short a timeframe. Provincial Reconstruction Teams are not working well or coherently.

Any new U.S. administration will face the challenge of policy in Afghanistan and in all likelihood will be asking the European NATO allies to do more; so the Europeans need to think carefully about their response.

### **Longer-term challenges**

The longer-term challenges I want to mention are in some ways linked together; climate change and nuclear power.

First, an anecdote; a friend of a friend is working for the State Department and has been tasked with working on the Bush administration's legacy document – and has been involved for about eight months on this paper. Number three on the list of the Bush Administration's achievements is "leadership in climate change." Leadership? To many of us outside the government, this seems a ludicrous claim – though it does point to the fact that their achievements have been few. From my perspective, the United States has been dragged kicking and screaming to the table on climate change and does still not understand the need for serious, concerted action now.

The way the issue is getting a little attention here now is via conversations about energy prices. "Energy independence" is really not possible but is increasingly talked about; "energy security" is the big phrase of the moment. The Administration (like governments in Europe) is facing criticism because of petrol prices – primarily due to speculation in the market rather than market failure.

Talk about "energy security" and security of supply is linked to discussions about China and India – but also about competition for resources. This competition could mean that the United States comes into some conflict with its European allies over who they buy from and the deals they do. Moreover, the United States is not really in energy conservation mode – but in guaranteed energy consumption mode – which is an irritant vis-à-vis climate change concerns.

One of the ways for many states to decrease energy dependence is to begin – or increase – civil nuclear power production. The U.S. stance towards Iran, of skepticism about their civil nuclear power plans, is sending a negative signal about peaceful nuclear programs.

Some of the plans out there for dealing with the dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation and fissile materials smuggling need to be re-calibrated to ensure that states can get peaceful nuclear energy, but in ways that do not increase the dangers of nuclear proliferation.

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