



ATLANTIC MEMO #19

Global Zero is an End in Itself - Focus on First Steps!

The vast majority of Atlantic Community's authors and commenters argues strongly for the abolition of nuclear weapons. During the Global Zero Theme Week they concluded that a nuclear free world may only be an idealistic objective (Mohsin), but that the aspiration towards it is an end in itself, as the pursuit of Global Zero will help discourage further nuclear proliferation, however it will not stop Iran or North Korea (Posaner, Korb/Wilkins). In this context, the policies recommended by our members mainly focus on primary and intermediate steps towards nuclear abolition and not the ultimate goal of zero nuclear weapons.

Our contributors largely agree, that the most important step towards a nuclear free world is to take into account the security concerns of all nations, not only the major nuclear powers (Ghoshroy). If this basic prerequisite is not fulfilled, the goal of disarmament will never be achieved. In terms of policy recommendations, participants emphasize three crucial points in order to create a global security environment conducive to nuclear disarmament:

1. The West must consider the *larger* security concerns of North Korea and Iran.

There is broad consensus that the most vital step towards Global Zero is negotiating progress on a broad scale with both North Korea and Iran (Blechman). The community believes that a joint Western and Russian commitment to zero will not be persuasive enough for states with a history of defiance in the international sphere. Put simply, "moral reasons" will not suffice (Lawson, Milunovic, Stadler). In particular Pyongyang fears America's "hostile policy" that is less connected to nuclear superiority but instead to the threat of conventional attack, economic sanctions, and attempts to subordinate its government. Improving political relations with Washington is seen as Pyongyang's primary condition for denuclearization, more so than the elimination of the US nuclear threat. Members conclude that such anxieties regarding US conventional power and leverage in the international community similarly apply in the case of Iran, thus stopping the nuclear programs of both Iran and North Korea will only be possible through sustained US diplomatic give-and-take (Sigal).

2. Conventional Disarmament must run parallel to Nuclear Disarmament.

The majority of our contributors agree with Charles Ferguson when he states "that further progress towards nuclear disarmament [...] will only occur through linkage to conventional arms control." Nuclear weapons are merely used to deter nuclear threats but also to counter conventional superiority (Heinrich, Macdonald). Most importantly in this respect, NATO has to offer Russia meaningful strategic dialogue that addresses Moscow's key security concerns, namely conventional military inferiority vis-a-vis the West.

3. US and Russia must lead the way with deep cuts in their nuclear stockpile.

Tom Collina leads the consensus of our members when stating that one of the most crucial steps towards Global Zero is to achieve significant and permanent cuts in US-Russian arms stocks. According to the community, this would not only include a serious reduction of their nuclear stockpiles, but also include an agreement on a test ban as well as talks on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty including other nuclear states (Blechman). As the US and Russia together possess more than 90% of the world's nuclear weaponry, initial commitments must be made in both Washington and Moscow to lead the global nuclear disarmament effort by example (Mazzucelli). Thus, all our contributors appreciated April's joint commitment by Obama and Medvedev to eliminate nuclear weapons and stress the overarching importance of the completion of the START replacement treaty by the end of 2009.

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