DEBATING DISARMAMENT: 
BRIDGING THE GAP IN THE 
NUCLEAR ORDER

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GEORGE PERKOVICH: Good morning. My name is George Perkovich. I'm vice president for studies here at the Carnegie Endowment, and director of the Nuclear Policy Program. I want to thank and applaud you all for being here relatively early on a Tuesday morning. It's my pleasure to introduce this morning Harald Müller, who's a friend of long standing, because we don't say old friends anymore because we've gotten to the point where, for both us, it's becoming plausible that we're old friends. So we're friends of a long time.

And Harald is the executive director of the Frankfurt Peace Research Institute, which is the order in which we say it in English, it's PRIF in – is the acronym in Germany. And he's been a long-time, extremely well-known expert on the nuclear order, among other things. And he's going to talk with us today about what I think everybody in this room understands is a fundamental challenge in the nuclear order, which is reconciling the different perspectives, normative expectations, interests, demands that are expressed by the states that have nuclear weapons or that enjoy the benefits of extended deterrence, as compared to those that don't have nuclear weapons.

And this gets played out whether it's through debates about Article VI of the NPT or debates about nuclear cooperation and many other elements of the nuclear order that Harald will talk about. And while we understand and while I think people in government are especially understanding of the challenge, because they confront it all the time, it's less obvious what can be done about it – what can be done to reconcile these competing perspectives and claims. And that's also something that Harald is going to address, and where I think we all are open for - to constructive recommendations.

And in many ways, this focus reflects what is the new research focus of Harald's institute. And I hope maybe in the question period – I may ask him to elaborate on that because I think it's a very exciting focus that the whole institution will take because the way they're organized and set up, it's to have a coherent research agenda that then applies to the whole institution.

And for the next number of years it will be on justice in the international system, which I think this conflict or this set of differences that we'll be talking about in many ways is interpreted and expressed through competing demands for justice. And I think there's – it's a very fascinating research agenda that they're developing there, and I think fairly rare. And so it would be welcome at some point, Harald, talking a little bit about that.

But let me get out of the way and invite Harald to make his presentation on the nuclear order and then we can have a discussion back here. Harald.

HARALD MÜLLER: Thank you very much, George. Good morning, everybody. Let me start with a nostalgic sigh. (Chuckles.) It is no more than a quarter of a century that I was one of the few participants in the first-ever Carnegie nonproliferation conference. At
the time, it was 36 of us. And it has really exploded since, I would say. But speaking at Carnegie, I just cannot spare that memory.

George has already introduced you – warned you of the thrust of my presentation. When we look at the NPT today, the cleavage between parties that was already tangible when the NPT was negotiated has become ever more obvious. And the 2010 conference – NPT conference which I attended as a member of the German delegation, sitting at times behind the closed doors, should not be taken as contradicting this idea of a deep rift because there was a consensus documented at the end. It was a very hard-fought consensus. And it was a consensus at minimal level. And everybody who would dispute that, read this final document.

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The key to this cleavage is the issue of nuclear disarmament. It has been the hottest topic during the negotiations. It has been the hottest topic in most NPT reviews from ’75 on. And those reviews that have failed, where no consensus could be reached, failed inevitably on disarmament issues.

Of course, this focus on disarmament reflects the inherent asymmetry in this treaty. And it’s not so self-understanding for international treaties that they have different rights and obligations for the members. It – only a minority of treaties shows this feature. And the NPT is probably the most prominent among them. So it endows the parties, nuclear weapons state and nonnuclear states with unequal rights and obligations. And that is in tension with the fundamental principle of formal equal sovereignty, which of course is still the rule of the game in international relations, whatever real inequality might exist among the nations.

Now, before I enter into the substance matter, let me highlight this point George made about the thrust of PRIF’s research program. We start from the assumption that foreign policy and international relations are not just about maximizing utility by rational decision-making machines. That idea of the human mind and character is a fairy tale by doctrinaire economists and their faithful followers.

Notions of fairness are part of our hard wiring. Recent findings of brain research, evolutionary biology and small child psychology concern that very powerfully, besides from anthropology and more recently even experimental economics go into the same direction. Ideas of fairness and justice are a firm part of human thinking and human practice. That sounds like good news at first glance; it’s not so good news if you think about it. Unfortunately, justice claims diverge and feelings of injustice insert a strong degree of emotions into political interactions.

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Now, back to the NPT. In the NPT we meet two very different, if not opposite, philosophies of disarmament – those of the nonaligned movement by and large and those of the nuclear weapon states. The NAM philosophy I would label “big bang.” Here the idea is
that the decisive step must come up front. The most recent pet tool for that is a nuclear weapons convention modeled after the biological or chemical weapons convention.

And the idea is that in order to terminate the procrastination and the attempts at a convention which the nonaligned thinks they discover in the behavior of the nuclear weapons states, one needs a single legal act that determines the whole disarmament issue for good. A nuclear weapon convention must line up the steps towards zero in a time-bound sequence so that at the beginning of the process you know exactly when it will end.

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The single disarmament obligations on that road towards zero must be unconditional on other arms control or on broader political conditions. Nuclear disarmament, in other words, is a self-standing process. It is not related to anything else. For the time being, no further improvements of the toolbox of nonproliferation will be admitted under this philosophy without credible and tangible movement towards zero.

Now, my assessment of this philosophy – it reflects the experience with 40 years of the NPT without getting to zero. The reductions in numbers which we have witnessed over the past 20 years, and which are very impressive indeed if you look at the starting point, are interpreted as economizing on the size and structure of the arsenals in a vastly changed security environment, but not as genuine move towards disarmament.

The philosophy has the advantage to give an unambiguous road map, thereby removing uncertainties about what the nuclear weapon states are up to – uncertainties that stand indeed in the way of disarmament today. However, it is not realistic to abstract from the political circumstances under which disarmament is possible. I think that’s the major flaw. It also ignores the very negative impact which nuclear weapons proliferation has on disarmament. And that is the second major flaw here.

The philosophy of the nuclear weapons states – and let’s assume for the sake of it that there is a genuine disarmament philosophy by the nuclear weapons states, so I think they are good boys in the first place – I would call it disarmament incrementalism. They maintain that nuclear disarmament is possible only under specific, conducive circumstances, from which cannot be decoupled. So that is exactly the opposite of the NAM philosophy. They also state that a much stronger nonproliferation regime in terms of verification and of enforcement is needed to support a true disarmament process. Only if nonproliferation is carved in stone can steps towards zero be made.

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For these two reasons, nuclear disarmament cannot be precalculated. That speaks powerfully against any timelines that are imposed because it must be adapted to the possibilities and constraints of the day as they develop. It can go only step-by-step, and that is from one step to the next and not according to a preset agenda. And it must also remain in the hands of the nuclear weapons states themselves for long. The early jump into multilateralism is seen as hurting.
My assessment – I think they are right that political circumstances constrain or open opportunities for nuclear disarmament. But the backside of that is that this implies, under Article VI of the NPT, that it is the duty of the nuclear weapons states to work for establishing those circumstances. As great powers, they are the main shapers of the international system, notably its state of security. And if they claim they need specific circumstances to move towards nuclear disarmament, it’s up to them in the first place to shape these circumstances. And they don’t, I must say.

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I agree that verification and enforcement are indeed important for maintaining the disarmament process, but I should also note that enforcement today is essentially in the hand of the U.N. Security Council. And that is, in other words, the P-5 and that is in other words the nuclear weapons states. Their record so far is unconvincing.

So again, one very important aspect of improving the nonproliferation regime, which they claim is a condition for disarmament, is in their own hands. And there is a strong impression, which unfortunately I must say I share, that some nuclear weapons states, and specific political forces in some other nuclear weapon states, use circumstances as a cheap excuse to evade their obligation.

Now, you could basically look at these two philosophies exclusively in terms of conventional national interests. The nonaligned then aim at reducing the power gap between them and the nuclear weapons states by disarmament. It eliminates one very powerful tool in the hands of the latter ones. And at the same time, they ask for technology transfers under Article IV to fester – foster their own economic and energy development. That is of course solid national interests.

But closing the power gap also reflects the idea of formal equality, one of the basic principles of justice, not just in politics but across the board. The more unequal they are, the more virulent the quest for formal equality is necessarily. And we should keep in mind that even Russia and China plead for equal security as one of their key positions in nuclear matters.

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The second aim, that is, technology transfer, reflects the idea of compensatory action in order to make good for past injustices and, of course, also the claim that urgent needs must be fulfilled, a basic principle of social justice that is reflected in welfare states. The attitude which reads those aims is connected with the historical experience of suppression, humiliation and being deprived of basic collective rights, and that living further of historical experience explains a lot of the emphasis which nonaligned states, whether democracies or nondemocracies, put on sovereignty.

That’s quite interesting for a European. I mean, in the European Union, you know, it’s a place where states have given up a share of their sovereignty voluntarily – more than anywhere else in the world. And these 19th century notions of sovereignty, which we hear from the nonaligned, sometimes strike a very strange chord in Europe.
But one has to understand the history. We developed autonomously with full sovereignty until such time that we decided it would be a good idea to give up a little share of that while they were deprived of sovereignty for 200 or 300 years and now have it back and want to keep it and want to get equal.

The NPT, with its inherent inequality, evokes this attitude of resentment with a revenge. Its enforcement – the NPT’s enforcement by the Security Council, where four of the five nuclear armed permanent members are indeed former imperial powers – adds to this resentment. The nuclear weapons states – again, you can say it’s clear it’s national interest. What they are doing is nothing else and defending their privileged position and maintaining the power gap, and, as an aside, serve their own national security interests as they see it.

But if you go through the five one by one, you find additional motivations that go a bit deeper into the soul. The United States appears to believe – and that is a bipartisan belief as far as I can see – that U.S. global responsibilities require military superiority over any conceivable coalition. And it is not just a matter of narrow interest. It is a matter of the identity of the U.S. as an exceptional power for the good, for stability and for a viable international order. That idea, of course, is deeply ingrained in the U.S. political elite, and still popular, according to public opinion polls in the U.S. population, despite the costs which it causes.

Nuclear disarmament in the U.S. view then – and I think that the present government is absolutely sincere in its commitment to that goal – but nuclear disarmament in the U.S. view must be compensated by commensurate gains on the conventional side, like the revolution in military affairs, prompt global strike capabilities, missile defense and space efforts. And of course, this insistence on a superiority, caused by the feeling of responsibility, is a showstopper for other nuclear-weapons states to join the train.

For Russia, nuclear deterrence is the only means to ensure both national security and a world power status to which she feels entitled. And it’s a feeling that goes back at least to Peter the Great, and a position from which it feels unfairly pushed away since the dissolution of the Soviet Union by relentless U.S. pressure. And I don’t judge whether this is a right or wrong feeling, because it’s a feeling.

For China, nuclear deterrence prevents being blackmailed into inferior status, and thus being deprived from its rightful place in the sun of world politics by the superior United States. And again, you know, in China they celebrate even a Humiliation Day as a national holiday to remind the nation of the dark age of the 19th and early 20th century. And to re-emerge from that age is a deeply held feeling, not only in the communist leadership, but it goes deep into even the liberal opposition in China.

For France and Britain, nuclear weapons remain – apart from their permanent seat in the Security Council – the last symbol of great power, to which they feel entitled for
historical reasons and because of the particular character of their nations. I always say the French will be the last nation to give up nuclear arms. And my recipe is probably to permit France to make the Musée d’Orsay the museum for nuclear weapons, so that they will be the only state to be permitted to have still some. And I think that would probably them – make them happy enough to join the whole disarmament train. And I should say that I’m Francophile, apart from nuclear issues.

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Now note, please, that power and security interests in all these cases are wedded to particular ideas about entitlements derived from the particular identity of the country concerned. And it is analytically almost impossible to disentangle the two. How can we bridge the gap? The first thing is to take political conditions seriously, but to address them in a way that makes this move digestible to the nonaligned.

Interestingly enough, we can start from the NPT in that regard. It’s often overlooked that political conditions are written in the preamble of the NPT. And let me just read preamble paragraphs 12 and 17 to prove my point. Preamble paragraph 12 says that, I quote: “The easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between states is needed for the cessation of the arms race and complete nuclear disarmament.” In preamble paragraph 13, it reads: “States must refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.” And Article VI of course makes a connection between nuclear disarmament and conventional disarmament in the typical distorted language of the ’50s and ’60s, but the connection is clear and cannot be ignored.

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Now, having said that, there is this connection. It is unclear what these conditions might be. No one could say, out of the top of his head, what political condition one-two-three you need to go to zero. So the treaty community should set up a procedure and a preparatory process to the next review to address this issue. It might set aside time; it might task a subsidiary body for the next revecon with considering this item. This body should also be concerned with the issue of universalization, which is regularly on the plate of review conferences, as if our holdouts are inevitably part of the political conditions and must be part of the disarmament process.

There could be a resolution in the UNGA addressing conditions for nuclear disarmament. We have hundreds of resolutions addressing nuclear disarmament, but none which has talked about political conditions for it. The CD, if it ever works – ever starts working again, should write in the task list for the ad-hoc committee on nuclear disarmament – which it had foreseen when it provisionally agreed on an agenda in 2009 – the exploration of that issue of political conditions.

It should also be regularly addressed by the new P-5 consultations, which are highly welcome, on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. And NATO and the EU could
address the issue. And groupings like the New Agenda Coalition and the new Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative, in which Germany is working, could do so as well.

The second question: what to do with this idea of time-bound steps. I share the skepticism of the nuclear-weapons states that it is possible to get an agenda with a date for each point of this agenda. But one could have a sort of limited time-bound incrementalism like that. Set target dates for the next two or three disarmament steps. Actually, in the principles and objectives in the – of the 1995 extension conference, exactly that was done for the CTBT and the cutoff treaty. It worked for the CTBT very well; not so for the cutoff.

Create the duty of accountability for missing the date. Those who are concerned should explain why it didn’t happen. Set implementation dates and interim dates for any disarmament agreement. This has, of course, been the practice in all disarmament treaties, with the exception of SALT and Moscow treaty.

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Create also a duty of accountability for missing the date, the duty among the contracting parties and towards the NPT community. That follows the example of the Chemical Weapons Convention, where the United States and Russia and also other states like Albania had missed the deadline for their dismantlement of chemical weapons, and they had to explain that to the conference of states. And they had to get an extra permission for an extended deadline. So that is a good practice that could be introduced into the nuclear sector as well. Accept also that the final agreement of going to zero will contain strict time limitations. One could tell that right away.

Now comes the hard part – and I’m not sure whether it’s possible or not – but one could at least consider setting a target date for achieving zero in the end. We have already two such proposals on the table: by the NAM, which propose 2025; and by the International Commission on Non-Proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament, which propose something between 2030 and 2040. I think it’s – that would be too ambitious. But to set a date more than a generation away, such as 2050 to 2060, I think is sort of realistic when the goodwill is there. And of course it might be missed, but then there is a accountability duty for explaining missing the date.

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The third consideration concerns the Nuclear Weapons Convention. The Nuclear Weapons Convention, of course, is an idea that emerged from the NGO community in the ’90s, and was taken by Malaysia and by Costa Rica to the United Nations General Assembly and into the NPT review process, and the nuclear-weapons states don’t like it.

But in 2010, for the first time it entered the language of the consensus declaration in a sort of indirect form. It was noted as one of the proposals which Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made in his five-point disarmament plans. It was not endorsed; it was not welcomed; it was noted – which is usually the first step into the door. (Laughter.) So it’s – that’s now a reference text on which people who like the Nuclear Weapons Convention can rely.
Now I agree that such a convention cannot be negotiated right away. And I have second thoughts how nuclear-weapons states could use a tool to stop nuclear disarmament for good. If I were one of them in the – (inaudible) – I will say, yes, I will negotiate it. And then I would – I would say: in the CD. And then we have 10 years more of a(n) idle CD, and then maybe the CD starts working. And then I negotiate and negotiate and negotiate, and I say all the time: But look, we are now negotiating the Nuclear Weapons Convention, so we have no time and energy left to negotiate any other single small disarmament step. And then the negotiate ends. You see? So I think one should prevent that risk.

But one could agree that aspects of the Nuclear Weapons Convention could be explored by expert groups. Again, we have a precedence when negotiations on a comprehensive test-ban treaty were not possible in the ’80s. The CD set up an expert group to explore possibilities for verification. And this expert group did terrific work. So when the serious negotiations on the test ban started, much of the work on verification was already done. That could have delayed these negotiations considerably, but since the experts had set up a system – idea of a system – the negotiating parties had hardly to do much more than to pick it up, to round it out, and it was ready. That could be done for important aspects of a Nuclear Weapons Convention as well.

Aspects that should – could be submitted to expert groups for exploration is a definition in the first place: What the hell means zero nuclear weapons? In this country, the idea of virtual arsenals defined as zero is very vivid. I don’t like this idea at all. But it shows that there might be huge controversies, what zero means. And that is, of course, a good subject to put to an expert group.

Modalities of dismantlement – how to do it, how to verify it – verification in a nuclear-weapons-free world, which of course is of an order of magnitude more challenging than what we have today in the context of START or the NPT; how to handle civilian nuclear power – it’s quite a different matter whether you have no fallback position to nuclear deterrence, and you have plutonium and highly enriched uranium in any place; the organization that will be needed to manage the implementation of the treaty; the issue of enforcement – that’s a big one; enforcement is much more serious, again, in a zero-nuclear-weapons world than today; and the conditions for entry into force – all this could be explored over time in an expert group.

And one could also consider whether one is willing to set a starting date for the negotiations on the Nuclear Weapons Convention. Again, something difficult to achieve; but if you say we are willing to consider starting in 2020 or 2025, it would give a lot to the NAM and still not dismantle the nuclear-weapons states at once.

The fourth possibility for bridging the gap is an idea which was in an article by Tanya Ogilvie-White and Santoro in the nuclear – Nonproliferation Review last year. The idea was that one negotiates quid-pro-quo linkage package deals, in which one disarmament measure
which the NAM like is put together with a nonproliferation measure which we like, and put as a package together to the review conference.

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Well, I mean, if we – if we are realistic, that is the way review conferences have worked anyway. The whole thing was a quid pro quo. The difference here would be that one could – one makes single deals, one measure to one measure. That could be inserted into the preparative process for 2015. And measures for nonproliferation, of course, could include things like the additional protocol as verification standard; procedure in case of withdrawal; making safeguards perpetual even after withdrawal; support for multilateral fuel cycle arrangements; and the like.

There is a group of NAM moderates who have led during the last review conferences and which were quite accessible to reasonable proposals: Brazil, Egypt, South Africa, Indonesia, Malaysia, Chile, Mexico, Algeria – probably also, for the time being, the Philippines, as long as the 2010 president is still around – he is ambitious and wants to stay in that field. Just bring them together as – sit in a room with them, the P-5 and them, and just discuss these deals. It’s also possible that bridge-building groups like NAC and NPDI could help in that regard.

Now, George, do you want me to go on and say a few things about substrategic nuclear weapons, or shall I stop here?

MR. PERKOVICH: Yeah, I think the – you’re calling them substrategic – people here are calling them different things –

MR. MUELLER: Whatever.

MR. PERKOVICH: – but I think it’s – it is a real pressing issue in the future agenda and on the Hill. Yeah, please.

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MR. MUELLER: OK. You know, I mean, you can call them how you like. I think there is no term that is really fit – because on the one hand, it’s a special category; on the other – on the other hand, what it is – strategic, substrategic, prestrategic, tactical – is always in the eye of the beholder. For Estonia, a 60-kilometer artillery shell is strategic.

Well, let us just memorize that the NATO arrangements of nuclear sharing legally always stood on (very sane eyes ?). The preamble of the NPT names, as a number-one objective of the treaty, the prevention and avoidance of nuclear war and the devolution of nuclear weapons in the hands of NATO non-nuclear-weapons states – what basically happened exactly at the moment when the risk of nuclear war is on the rise, so it’s contradicting the basic purpose of the treaty. I mean, it was in a – in a way tolerated. And you can say, well, customarily – but in the – in the recent 10 years, it has become much more prominent as a complaint by the nonaligned, and of course also the Russians and the Chinese.
In the context of the inequalities in the NPT, the trouble is that it creates implicitly a third category of parties: those that are under a nuclear guarantee and are even entitled to carry nuclear weapons to target in wartime. That implies that there are nuclear-capable carriers in the national armed forces and nuclear-trained – (inaudible) – which is not exactly, if I would start from the – (inaudible) – I would define a non-nuclear weapon. (Laughter.)

Also, there is the anomaly, which is not illegal, of deployment out of the nuclear-weapons states’ territories. As I said, the criticism has become louder over the years. The NGO community is also particularly outspoken. So the NATO arrangements add to the cleavage. They are a headache. I mean, it’s not the thing that explodes the treaty, but it’s a headache that adds to the other problems. The first-use option of NATO frankly is an open invitation to proliferate to anything else. When the most powerful agglomeration of military power in world history – which features more than 60 percent of world military expenditures – cannot renounce the first use of nuclear weapons, how can anybody then announce – renounce the possession of nuclear weapons, independent of doctrine?

And if you read through NATO’s strategic concept – read, “The appropriate mix of convention and nuclear is necessary to guarantee peace,” and you read that from an Indonesian point of view – or from an Iranian point of view, or a South African, or Algerian – you just wonder. By the way, the way NATO writes its communiqués also forgets that there are people in the world that are not members of NATO. They never appear to reflect how it impacts on the minds of others. It’s just incest, and I find that worrisome.

We should also note that inaction might lead to the phase-out of nuclear sharing by default. The Tornado, which is the German air force’s carrier for gravity bombs, U.S. gravity bombs, will be dysfunctional sometime in the ’20s. There is no plan for replacement. The Eurofighter, which will replace the Tornado in its conventional role, will not be figured for nuclear missions.

And we have a statement of the speaker of the conservatives in parliament who says there is no plan by the present government, as there was no plan by the past government, to have something that can carry nuclear weapons, which is interesting.

Now, in NATO I see presently six positions. We have the two European nuclear weapons states – one very outspoken, one rather quiet, but the positions are not so different. Don’t touch the issue. The alliance might be weakened. And in the French case, a very powerful driver for blocking all change of policy is a concern that the French nuclear deterrent might come under pressure, because France, of course, has an air-based leg of its nuclear deterrent, which in the definition I use is not really strategic. The French call it strategic, but it’s, of course, capable of very selective employment and all that. So that might be involved in any disarmament talk by default.
The U.S. point of view, as far as I can read it from far away, is, well, well, it might be a good idea to get these weapons back home. They present some risk when they are on foreign territories. They are probably more a headache than an asset. But we don’t want to wreck the alliance. And as long as we have members which are insisting on this very visible, tangible deterrent, it’s not up for us to call for withdrawal.

Then you have the disarmament five – Norway, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany – who say preferably, we would like to get rid of them. And if you ask from our heart, we wouldn’t mind unilateral withdrawal, but of course we submit to alliance discipline. And that’s very much the German position right now.

There are positions in between. Slovenia, most prominently Poland, which has shifted position from outright opposition to a mediating position, interestingly, under the Tusk government – and probably also Turkey, which is hard to read – agreeing on the principal dispensability of these weapons, but they want to have it as a result of negotiations in which there is some reciprocity by Russia.

Then we have the resenters (ph) – the Baltic States, the Czech Republic – which are very concerned about a continuing threat from Russia. Russia does not help so much with the Baltic States, as the Russian air force flies regularly into Baltic airspace, which is an old habit, unfortunately, of procuring security by intimidating small neighbors.

It doesn’t work very well, and that makes me hope that one day, this will dawn in Moscow and the practice will end. And that is certainly something one can negotiate, you know, that NATO, maybe, withdraws the weapons from Europe in return for some concessions on the practice of the air forces in Russia.

And you have a lot of NATO members which are just not committed, don’t say. And the result so far is procedural procrastination. We have this group working. We will have the Chicago summit. My prediction is nothing will happen there. We will have interesting words addressed to NATO members, but not to the outside, as usual, and that will be it.

Now, the outlook. I start from the assumption that to get movement in the issue would be good for the NPT. And there is a couple of options – and I don’t take sides among the options, I just line them out. I know that at the Carnegie Endowment, there are people who are much better than I am at that, so I’m shy to come clean here.

First of all, it would be possible to get rid of them unilaterally and to substitute specific defense promises to concerned states, conventional defense promises. And these promises then would have to be underlined a little bit by visible activities, like exercises, and that would be – would not be appreciated in Russia. But one would have to explain it to Russia, that there are conditions under which this exercise could be rescinded, but these conditions must be met.
Secondly, one could get rid of them in return for asymmetric Russian concessions, which only partially must touch the issue of Russian sub-strategic nuclear forces. And I have already talked about the stop of overflights of the Baltic territories. And one could imagine, you know, a thinning-out of conventional Russian forces along the borderlines for the Baltics and so on.

Third option – putting them into New START II, which would address, probably, all types of nuclear warheads – deployed, unemployed, tactical, strategic – probably with a lot of leeway for the parties to decide themselves on the composition of their arsenals. If the Russians believe they need more tactical nuclear weapons than sub-strategic, so be it. But that would come at the cost of either nondeployed or strategic nuclear warheads.

It is also conceivable to get a specific, fairly limited agreement on sub-strategic nuclear weapons. Alexei Arbatov has made quite interesting proposals in that direction. One could agree to asymmetric holdings – that's related to declarations – and could then consolidate these weapons in some distance of each other's borders, which in practice for NATO, would mean the weapons go to the United States.

In that case, one would maintain the infrastructure, contrary to present Russian demands. One could separate the storage of the warhead from the bases of the carriers, be it aircraft or something else, so that mating the two would take a lot of time – warning time, in fact.

And the most radical possibility would be – would be to do a big pact that brings together conventional arms control, a revival of CFE, missile defense, prompt global Strike, strategic nuclear weapons and sub-strategic nuclear weapons. Negotiation-wise, that would be a nightmare. Strategically, it has some logic to it. And since I am not the one to negotiate it, I can put it on the agenda.

My conclusions: In the NPT context, justice claims and identity issues are as important as conventional national interests. Ignoring that fact means underrating the emotional momentum that is behind the political positions we hear. The disarmament issue is intimately immersed in this complex set of motivations on either side.

The two philosophies of NAM and nuclear weapons states are opposite, but not unbridgeable. It might be possible to devise a path that combines the ideas of time-bound disarmament and the Nuclear Weapons Convention with those of necessary political conditions and incrementalism.

Sub-strategic nuclear weapons are a rather complicated part of that whole path. It must be noted that issues of justice claims play a role here too – those of the more recent NATO members for ensured sovereignty as the historical compensation of being deprived
of sovereignty for so long, those of Russia for equal security. And we should feature in the increasing revulsion against nuclear weapons in some European countries, notably my own.

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All this makes solutions not easier, but options are there. It would certainly help the coming review cycle if, at least, a serious attempt would be made – if movement could be visible. Thank you so much. (Applause.)

MR. PERKOVICH: Well, thank you, Harald. That was a tour de force, and a kind of blend of philosophy, anthropology, history and strategy that we don’t often get, but which struck me as particularly insightful. So let’s open it up to discussion and questions. We’ll call on you, and please introduce yourself – and the microphone’s coming to you.

Q: Ed Burger, the Eurasian Medical Education Program. Is it conceivable that the still-evolving postures of some members of the NPT and some non-members of the NPT – to wit, Israel, India, on one hand, Pakistan, Iran on the other – the evolution of those positions may change any of the fabric that you’re talking about, and maybe the urgency of considerations?

MR. MÜLLER: Well, the urgency, certainly. The more nuclear weapons states you have in the world and the larger the arsenals grow, the more difficult it is to turn around the whole process. We know how long it has taken to turn it around for the big two.

I did not address this issue not to complicate my brief any more, but my feel is that we have to find a way to involve the holdouts, with the possible exception of North Korea, rather soon, into a process – North Korea not because I think it’s very much sui generis, and it’s relatively easily containable – if the five which are involved with the six-party talks do their job right, because none of them has any interest that this issue explodes.

But for the other three, it’s a different matter – for Pakistan and India because they are basically the back end of the arms race chain, which goes from the United States through Russia, China, India, straight to Pakistan. And so they must be somehow involved. I mean, if the Indian nuclear arsenal grows, at one point the Chinese will want to have compensation. And that may accelerate the growth of their own – the size of their own nuclear weapons arsenal.

[52:24]

What can one do? I mean, we know that the smaller nuclear weapons states always state, with some reason, that they come in when the big ones have come down either below 1,000 warheads or down to their level of a few hundreds. One could imagine, though, that they commit to a ceiling which they promise not to trespass, and that once the United States and Russia has come down, they will then join the process of reductions.

That, I think, is a possibility. The problem is we would first have to rely on declarations. That’s not so alien to the whole arms control process, but of course more brittle than a verified treaty. One could imagine a further scheme, which is when they make
their declarations, they just tell us what threshold they would not trespass. They don’t tell us how many they have. And there might be some headroom there.

[53:44]

The headroom might be motivated by one or two of them believing they need a bit more to feel secure and by others who believe they cannot tell how few they have in order not to compromise their deterrent. Either possibility is there. So they declare a ceiling. At the same time, they hand over a sealed envelope in which their real holdings are noted, and they give it, let’s say, to the IAEA, and it will be deposited in a safe which can only be opened if the party and the IAEA both turn their keys.

Now, the sealed envelope lies there and will be opened when it’s – when zero is achieved. Meanwhile, these other states declare, year by year, changes in holdings – which, of course, does not tell us about the inventory until we open the sealed envelope, because then we only have to add or distract (sic) the annual change from what is written on the envelope, and we can get their actual inventory, which is then verified.

Now, to lie on the sealed envelope – there is a risk of being caught rather quickly once verification starts. We had such a scheme – it’s not invented by me – we actually had such a scheme, that’s little known, in the Western European Union, in the ’50s, ’60s and ’70s, until the mid-80s. The Western European Union had an arms control part of the treaty, which was mainly meant to keep control of German rearmament. And each year, WEU members were turning in a sealed envelope to the WEU, giving holdings of main conventional weapons systems in certain sites. And for each site there was one envelope, and the WEU would draw one and then open it. So giving – accounting for weapons in sealed envelopes we have plenty of experience with.

And it’s a way to involve the three holdouts and, of course, the three of the P-5 who are not yet part of any arms control agreement – to involve them early on, to bind them into the process, to start the process, to see to it that they don’t push forward with ever-higher numbers while the two big ones reduce, without forcing them immediately to reduce under verification, which would be probably too much from them to – (word inaudible).

[56:39]

MR. PERKOVICH: Ed, and then we’ll come over here.

Q: Thank you. Edward Ifft, Georgetown University. You’ve given us some really good insights, Harald, into how the NAM views the world. And I’m wondering if you could shed a little light on how the NAM views the world without nuclear weapons, in terms of how do you keep the peace, how do you enforce the rules?

I mean, it’s clear that they don’t want the U.S. to play world policeman using overwhelming conventional superiority. I don’t think they want NATO to play that role either. On the other hand, they surely don’t want to go back to the world of 1945. So the only other alternatives I can see is that you give the U.N. some really formidable military
capability, or you somehow rely on regional organizations. But I don’t see the NAM urging either of those either.

[57:36]

MR. MÜLLER: Well, look at the regional practice of NAM states. You have one region, ASEAN – two regions, ASEAN and South America, which are virtually war-free, and that’s NAM regions. They’ve done it. They’ve done it mainly by the development of their relations – in the ASEAN case, by setting up one of the most formidable and impressive international, regional organizations which the world ever has seen.

You have the African Union, which is much more brittle, but which has – and they negotiated that by themselves – which has an excellent charter, which has a step-by-step approach not only to international conflict but also to domestic conflict. And that approach, at times, has worked. Inter alia, the African Union has a group of elder statespersons which can be called upon to go – to go to governments and to tell them to stop activities that foster either civil war or interstate war.

That has worked in two cases. And of course, it draws on the particular appreciation which elder people have in African cultures – a feature, by the way, which I appreciate the more by the year, the older I get.

It’s also interesting that the Arab League, in the case of both Libya and Syria, is calling for U.N. action, which is a major shift in the way the Arabs behave towards the world community. I mean, usually they – they dealt with their own problems as their own problems – don’t touch me – and now they are engaging. We know what the considerations and the interests are behind that, but nevertheless they are engaging.

This does not yet give a complete and comprehensive picture which would answer your question right away, but it gives indications that as we go down the road towards zero, it is a possibility to engage the NAM on that issue concerning both interstate and intrastate conflict. And it really points to a combination of regional and U.N. activity.

[60:08]

MR. PERKOVICH: Right. I think we’re – we need to take two at a time because of the numbers – (inaudible) – and we’ll go here, and then to the gentleman back there, middle – to the middle.

Q: Sameera Daniels, Ramsey Decisions. Thank you for that wonderful presentation. And I’m just wondering, is it feasible – or maybe it’s already been done – where there’s a comparative analysis of the cultures of, you know, let’s say the State Department, Defense Department – and, you know, the – their rationales for pursuing the policies that they do?

Because the thing that I have maintained is that – that I’ve seen from one forum to another – is that different departments and individuals and think tanks, they have their own sets of, you know, policy experts, informants, whatever you call – I’m new to this whole
area. And I think that that has to be done to really get at what some of the objectives that you are suggesting. So –

MR. PERKOVICH: This gentleman here and then we’ll –

Q: Hi. Ryan Tenna (ph). I work at the Australian Parliament. What role do you think that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, or at least ratification by the U.S., has to play in creating the political circumstances for multilateral disarmament? And do you think that the American structure of government hinders, I guess, proliferation efforts?

[01:01:45]

MR. MÜLLER: Well, that was a good one. (Chuckles.) Yes, well, of course there are many studies of, in particular, U.S. foreign and security policies over the years that point to the impact of different bureaucratic raison d’etre. There are one or two very good books on U.S. strategic culture which deal in particular with the Pentagon.

It’s interesting to note that as far as I can see, in any single country which I have studied a little bit, you have this cultural gap between the foreign policy bureaucracy and the defense bureaucracy, and that is of course a result of the different missions which those bureaucracies have. But the gap is not everywhere as huge as here.

And notably, the weight – the different weight is quite the reverse in much of continental Europe, for example. And also, I mean, I would also say that the gap is not as far as it is here. I mean, the particular weight of the U.S. military apparatus that has grown over several decades has stood great challenges, has accumulated glory, has – lives through defeats. I mean, the weight of that apparatus is just enormous. And one could easily go back to President Eisenhower’s warning of the military-industrial complex to ask the question whether it has become too powerful in the – in policymaking.

The role of the CTBT – I mean, I see that from an entity point of view as a mighty symbol. I mean, that is the disarmament treaty that has been most emphatically requested by not only the non-nuclear weapons states at large, and the fact that it is prevented from entering into force by a minority in the Senate, is seen in many states, including the whole of the European Union, with an enormous amount of resentment. I mean, that should be clear.

The CTB, in practical terms, of course, makes it much harder to move towards new designs of nuclear weapons – not completely impossible, maybe – for the advanced nuclear weapons states. But it makes it more difficult, and it makes it very difficult for newcomers to move up the quality level – notably, to go to hydronuclear weapons. That is, I think, maybe impossible.

[01:04:55]

I’m always thinking that the complementary instrument of the CTBT that would prohibit new types of nuclear weapons would be fairly useful to prevent circumvention. And the second question, you know, does the U.S. system – is it – is it a problem? It is. It is. You have in no other state I know, including no other democracies, the possibility for a minority in parliament to prevent a treaty that the majority wants. That is unique.
MR. PERKOVICH: A small minority, 34 percent.

MR. MÜLLER: Thirty-four — well, I mean, whether that is small or big, I mean, you can — you can form a government at 34 percent and — in countries with majority voting. But it's a different matter. I mean, it’s a minority, and that runs a bit counter against the way we feel about that in Europe.

But there is one additional problem which is not in the structure of the American system but in the development of the American political culture over the last 40 years, and that is the development of the American right. There is no equivalent of that anywhere in other democracies, a — such a deep distrust in anybody else but — and right is the American; the almost Bolshevik feeling that they will always be right no matter what; the disdain, if not hatred, against the other side of the political aisle; the condescension towards allies and people of another conviction. I mean, it’s breathtaking.

[01:06:46]

And whenever I look at the present contained in the Republican Party, I’m flabbergasted that this is possible. And I'm really a middle-of-the-road German who has voted for any decent party in my country. I mean, it’s alien. It’s frankly alien. And those people have an instinctive resentment against multilateralism, arms control, believe only in the beauty of U.S. superiority. And I just cannot see how you can run the international shop with those people. We have patiently suffered through eight years of the Bush administration, always tongue in cheek, our conservatives included. And we are trembling that you bring back these thugs for a second time, quite frankly. And that is an impediment, not only for arms control, but for the survival of the whole of mankind, I’m sorry.

[01:07:47]

MR. PERKOVICH: Maybe in the next question Harald will tell you what he really thinks. (Laughter.) The — let’s — we’ll take these three right back in a row. (Inaudible.)

Q: Hi. I’m Doug Shaw from The George Washington University. Thank you so much, Dr. Müller, for the talk. I was hoping you could comment on the relationship between enforcement and compliance from a justice perspective. We assume, from a consequentialist maximizing perspective, that enforcement actions in the nonproliferation regime will have a — the desired effect on the target and on the system in general. And it seems to me a more complicated case from the justice perspective. I’d be grateful for your thoughts.

MR. PERKOVICH: And — yeah, thanks. To Greg, yeah.

Q: Greg Thielmann, Arms Control Association. It’s nice to see you and George on the same stage on this side of the Atlantic. At least since the NATO summit at Lisbon, a number of European countries and individuals have seen missile defense as a way to substitute for substrategic nuclear weapons to reassure allies, particularly those in the East. Of course, the Russians don’t see this the same way. My question is do you think there is some sort of a sweet spot in terms of some sort of tactical antimissile defenses which would
not get into the phase three and four of the phased adaptive approach and not be as threatening to Russia?

[01:09:21]

MR. PERKOVICH: And then – and then lastly – thanks, Zoe (sp).

Q: I’m Diane Perlman, School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason. You know, we thank you so much for your talk and especially your psychological insights – I’m also a psychologist. Well, implicit in what you’re saying that there’s a lot of knowledge in the whole field of conflict transformation and addressing the underlying conflicts, sort of what’s understood as second-order change, dealing with the relationships instead of the symptom of the weapons – and in 2010 at the NPT, I was with Mediators Beyond Borders and we were talking about getting language into the treaty about provisions for mediating conflicts, which would be helpful in sort of letting go of that. So could you tell me what your thoughts are about the possibilities for raising this as an issue? People were very receptive to it. And also your analysis of the motivations: Are you presenting that a lot? Are people – at the NPT, are people taking that into consideration or in the U.S. especially?

MR. PERKOVICH: (Inaudible.)

MR. MÜLLER: OK. Enforcement versus justice, presently it is a problem. It is a problem because the enforcers are the – (inaudible). And as long as you don’t have a credible move towards disarmament, that will rattle among the have-nots.

I mean, we had a fairly strong move by a minority of the nonaligned but which was vocal and influential in 2010 to eliminate all mentions of the security conflict. And of course, Iran was very much pushing that issue for reasons I have not to explain. But Iran struck something in the – in the nonmentality which reverberated with them. And I mean, it is of course, if you look at that from a – (inaudible) – point of view, let’s say, and you have the five nuclear weapons states that don’t disarm while they should. And they are banging the head of anybody who tries to get even. There is something very – (inaudible).

Nevertheless, the Security Council is the only legal enforcer we’ve got. And for the time being, we have to – (inaudible). So my answer would be that if they embark seriously on the road of disarmament, the justice issue would just evaporate. The problem emerged from – emerges from them not doing it.

[01:12:17]

Missile defense – I think that the largely Eastern European members who want to substitute missile defense as a glue in the alliance and think along the lines because they see the United States so wedded to the idea of missile defense, you know, almost emotional way – I think that our Baltic friends in Poland and the Czech Republic and the rest would go for any other glue-like item which would make clear that the United States remains the guarantor for their security forever. And it’s strongly felt. And I am certainly sympathetic to this strong feeling given their history.
The problem as you rightly point to is that the more we do on missile defense, the more we alienate the Russians. The Russian reactions might be exaggerated. But many security perceptions are exaggerated. One could also make the point that the erstwhile motivation for NMD could be labeled as exaggerated. Exaggeration’s always in the eye of the beholder, I mean.

[01:13:39]

Now, I mean, I think that one can get the Russians to serious cooperation in missile defense, but at a cost that is probably not digestible for the United States at present. Giving the Russians the segmentary (ph) function in such a missile defense which they long to have, sharing technology – those are – those are the two possibilities to get the Russians seriously interesting and also appeased.

But it’s a matter of Washington to consider whether those are possibilities. I’m not sure they really believe in a firewall between phase two and phase three. And I don’t think they believe in a shaping of phase three and phase four, which would completely mitigate their fears. The big problem is, once we get a genuine cooperation with the Russians on missile defense, we have then to worry about the Chinese reactions. But that’s for a different meeting.

Shall we – shall we make mediating conflict an issue in the NPT process – if I understand your question correctly. I’m a bit concerned that it might overload the process with a huge new subject and concomitant mission that’s – that is heaped on what we have already on the plate there. That is my concern. I see, of course, the connection between conflict management solution, the proliferation problem, and the disarmament problem. You could make the point that conflict management and mediation could be part of the talks on the political conditions for disarmament. And that might be the place where we could heap an additional item. And it might be a good idea to insert it there. I’m just thinking aloud.

[01:15:48]

MR. PERKOVICH: We’ve got time for one more set of questions. The gentleman in the back.

Q: Thank you, Dean Rust, retired State Department. You mentioned that the key cleavage between the two groups is nuclear disarmament. I would assert that the key cleavage ought to be the existence of nuclear weapons, which takes me to your proposals for bridging the differences. And you – I liked them all, but I think there needs to be more of an emphasis on nonproliferation; that is, even an administration like the current one cannot sustain the current movement towards nuclear arms control if the body politic here in the United States does not see a response from the Brazilians and the South Africans and so on of the world to adopt some of the nonproliferation – the strengthening measures for nonproliferation. Full stop.
I mean, I just – you’re just not going to get it. You’re worried about the other party becoming president in 2013. You ought to worry about whether Obama can sustain the current momentum unless he does – unless he’s not able to see, because that’s how they sold it. I mean, they sold it because it’s important for nuclear dangers generally and nuclear terrorism. But they also claimed that by doing this they would generate more support. And the average person – it might be there, but it’s intangible. But when Brazil sits around and says, oh, maybe we’ll get around to the additional protocol someday, it just doesn’t wash.

[01:17:22]

I’ve been inside government for 35 years. I’ve used these arguments. And frankly, most of us are very, very tired of the relentless NAM emphasis on nuclear disarmament for the last 40 years, OK? We need to see some support coming from the other way, or the nuclear weapons states, led by the U.K. and the U.S., will never be able to sustain this.

MR. MÜLLER: If I could speak to this –

MR. PERKOVICH: No, that’s good. Go ahead. Take that one out of the – that was a big piece. And I think we can close on –

MR. MÜLLER: With pleasure. Well, I mean, first of that, let me clarify the record of the last 40 years. Speaking as a citizen of a non-nuclear weapons state, which was extremely concerned when the treaty was negotiated that the nonproliferation measures meant – might strangulate its economy, we have turned around on that one.

But of course, we have noticed that between 1969 and today we have tightened the nonproliferation – (inaudible) – with our assistance at times. We have installed the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the Zangger Committee. And we have sharpened the nuclear supplier instruments several times over the years. We have considerably enhanced the impact of IAEA safeguards even without the additional protocol, through the board of governor decisions in 1992. We have enhanced the technological capabilities of the IAEA, and we have the additional protocol enforced for a majority of the members – not for every member, but for a majority of the members. And all that must be appreciated.

[01:19:20]

It has cost us a bit, this one. Verification has become more complex for our industry. Fortunately, we don’t love our nuclear industry anymore. And that is helpful. But that’s a rather unique development here.

Now, having said that, I’m with you on the need to strengthen the toolbox. And that’s why I made this pact proposal. And let’s go to the Brazilians. And the Brazilians were the ones in 2010 who said four times on the floor: We will not agree to a sharpening of the toolbox as long as there is no tangible progress in disarmament. Well, let’s ask them what do you mean? What is exactly the one tangible progress that could you persuade to sign the additional protocol? What is a tangible progress that would get you to agree to some agreement how to deal with – (inaudible), and take that up not at the bureaucratic level, but at the leadership level?
I mean, if the – if President Obama visits the Brazilian president, let's have the additional protocol on the plate and not just, you know, all these beautiful things about how the world should move – the tangible ones. These folks are receptive. They are.

MR. PERKOVICH: OK. Well, let me thank you all of you for coming and for the great set of questions, and especially want to thank Harald. Again, it was a tour de force. And there's much that I want to mull over. I'm glad we'll have this in some form on the Web, so we can go back and try to extract all the different concrete proposals that you're suggesting, the different elements of these problems. It was a very rich discussion. And we're very grateful to you for bringing it here. So thank you.

MR. MÜLLER: Thank you. (Applause.)

[01:21:31]

(END)