

Achieving Change

(Full paper by Xanthe Hall, IPPNW Germany, a part of which was presented at the Framework Forum Roundtable in Geneva on August 24)

Anyone read the Wall Street Journal op-ed by William Lloyd Stearman (served on the United States National Security Council staff from 1971-1976 and 1981-1993) on August 22, entitled „Why the U.S. Still Needs Nuclear Weapons Superiority“? The argumentation presented by him is symptomatic of one of the underlying problems of why it is so difficult to achieve change.

Stearman says: „...strategic nuclear weapons are the "blue chips" in poker games of serious diplomacy“ and: „Though times and players have changed significantly, I believe it is still imperative that the U.S. maintain any "blue chip" advantage it might have. We should continue, as we have so far, to heed the declaration President Kennedy made in Berlin 50 years ago: America should maintain a nuclear capability "second to none." Reducing our warheads to dangerously low levels—or unilaterally disarming—would be foolish.“

First of all, times and players really have changed significantly. If a company in a modern business environment was to realise that its approach was not working because:

1. The context has changed
2. Technology has changed
3. But both the approach and institutional structures have remained the same,

then they may consider getting professional help from a consultant on change management. That consultant might advise the following measures:

- A systematic diagnosis of the current situation and the need for change
- The capability for change
- Identify levels, goals and strategies
- Adopt a measurement system for evaluating success
- Develop a sequence of steps and interdependencies, identifying which steps can be taken in parallel and which should be taken first in order to facilitate further steps
- Resolve differences between stakeholder aims, establishing common ground to build on and emphasising benefits of change
- Find best practice forms of communication between stakeholders
- Establish effective education at all levels, including top
- Make a plan to counter resistance to change, personal counselling, alleviating change-related fear
- Effectively monitor process of change with constant evaluation.

All of this might apply to the way we approach multilateral disarmament within United Nations fora.

The Framework Forum, set up by Middle Powers Initiative and PNND, grapples with the first three of these points: a systematic diagnosis of the situation, the need for change, the capability for change; to identify at which levels that change can take place, what goals it should achieve and by what strategies. These are the conditions for creating a nuclear weapon-free world. You can read more details about the criteria needed in the excellent briefing paper by John Burroughs* which was

presented at the Berlin Framework Forum in February 2013, which includes thoughts on building the framework for a nuclear weapon-free world.

The Framework Forum „aims to bring government representatives together in a series of informal track-two meetings to explore options and develop proposals that would feed into a more formal deliberating or negotiating process“.

The Open-Ended Working Group is that more formal deliberating process, and I hope I am not jumping the gun by calling it a „process“ in the hope that its mandate will be extended and perhaps even lead to a negotiating process.

So what might be the next step in our change management? I believe that the most important element to deal with is our capability for change, i.e. what are the blockages for stakeholders, particularly for those possessing or sharing nuclear weapons? What are the conceptual mindsets and frameworks that hinder change or resist it? Take another look at what Stearman says.

Stearman’s argumentation contains two mindsets:

1. The national interests of the United States supersede those of the global community
2. Strategic stability in a bipolar world are still of utmost importance.

At the Framework Forum in Berlin, Nancy Gallagher* presented a very thought-provoking paper challenging both of these tenets. I have not time to go into both here, but you can read her full paper to get a deeper understanding of this.

On the second point, briefly, she puts forward the theory that the „strategic stability mindset“ which existed in the bipolar world of the Cold War needs to be replaced by a new conceptual framework of common or cooperative security in a multipolar world. Strategic stability, which is using nuclear deterrence to maintain a balance of military power, is still at the core of present nuclear doctrines although it is outdated. The concept has transitioned from the minimisation of nuclear war to focussing on containing the aggressive behaviour of others and trying to reduce numbers, in particular those that give the enemy an advantage, while not increasing risk.

If the desired change or „End state“ as the NAC put it in their working paper, is to be prohibition and elimination of all nuclear weapons, then the „strategic stability mindset“

- Distorts our thinking
- Interferes with productive dialogue
- Is hopelessly vague and means different things to different stakeholders
- Focusses on numbers of weapons, rather than changing behaviour
- The lower the number of weapons, the higher the insecurity becomes
- And negotiations are impeded because of differing requirements of nuclear weapons possessor states for maintaining strategic stability.

The alternative conceptual framework – which is actually not at all new – of common or cooperative security defines arms control as:

NOT being a technical means for enhancing strategic security, but rather

IT IS an instrument for building and managing an evolving security order

IT IS an integral part of a political process in which states reduce threat and use of violence in international relations.

A multipolar world is one that should be inclusive of the full society of states, all of whom have a shared interest in peace as a normal condition. Marc Finaud* also spoke more about cooperative security at the Berlin Framework Forum.

Why, then, might countries still choose to build or maintain nuclear weapons?

Tarja Cronberg* shed some light on this in her paper at the Berlin Framework Forum. She gave three possible reasons:

1. Security – a possible threat in the future or a perceived threat now;
2. Domestic – political survival, political branding, customary behaviour, collective trauma;
3. Normative – prestige, identity

We need to address these stakeholder attitudes and put emphasis on the benefits of alternatives. After all, the vast majority of states don't use nuclear weapons as the basis for their security or as „blue chips“ in diplomatic dialogue. States that don't possess or share nuclear weapons need more empowerment to lead in this process of change.

To use the smoking analogy that is often applied to this discussion - and one that IPPNW likes to use since tobacco is one of the other great killers - non-smokers need to take the lead in creating smoke-free spaces to live in (like nuclear weapon-free zones), and create the norm that makes smoking illegitimate. But to eliminate smoking, one must provide support and therapy for the smokers and help them to understand the benefits of giving up. I know, I did it myself. And in my view, it is about deconstructing old mindsets and replacing the advertising lies of the tobacco industry (relaxes you, makes you look chic, everyone you know does it) and replacing it with others (better health for you and your children, saves money, smell good, taste better). A concerted campaign against nuclear weapons similar to the way we campaign against smoking is what I would call „Disarmament Education“ that goes all the way to the top.

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