

The Prague Agenda – Challenges and Prospects

The Global Zero and Beyond: Theory, Politics and Regional Perspectives (academic conference)

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Panel II: Global Politics & Regional Perspectives

Chair: Michal Smetana, Lecturer, Institute of Political Studies, Charles University in Prague

Hans Kristensen, *Director, Nuclear Information Project, Federation of American Scientists, Washington*

Nikolai Sokov, *Senior Fellow, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP), Vienna*

Bernd W. Kubbig, *Senior Research Fellow, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF – HSFK)*

Camille Grand, *Director of the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris*

HANS KRISTENSEN

Director, Nuclear Information Project, Federation of American Scientists, Washington

Mr. Kristensen has been following these issues for a while and he finds it very interesting because of the emphasis on reenergizing the nuclear reduction process and the reaffirmation of the elimination of nuclear weapons. On the other hand, the US perspectives on a nuclear weapons free world are very shallow in the sense that there are a lot of ambitions: A nuclear weapons free world has been a goal of US policy since nuclear weapons started to exist and it's supported by the vast majority of its allies. The Obama administration has reenergized the international and national expectations among many of us to move in more decisively in that direction. But of course like some of the previous speakers mentioned, this has also triggered or reawaken the people who are not in agreement with this direction, therefore what we are experiencing now is a very polarized debate.

Given the prominence that the US has, or certainly the current administration in contributing into this long term goal of eliminating the weapons, it is surprising how little specific official thinking there is, at least at the public domain, about what that world would look like. Thinking about this is still very much un-conceived and it is a strange and puzzling situation. But it also means that what we have in the US is a prevalent view that a nuclear free world would significantly enhance the US military position because of the overwhelming conventional capability. This is what Mr. Kristensen sees more as the US debate which tries to struggle with combining the two issues; one being how do we get there and what are the steps we need to take to get to low numbers first, deep cuts and eventually to a position where we can begin to think about what it means to move to the elimination of nuclear weapons? And then on the other hand this trend that has been with us for a long time, that even without a firm decision or firm date for moving towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, the US has been eliminating nuclear weapons and nuclear missions for many decades, because of the advances in convention capabilities but also because the world has changed. Even before the cold war ended, we could see for example the US navy unilaterally starting to phase out tactical nuclear

weapons systems that were deployed at US warships all around the world. The conclusion was basically that they were no longer needed and that everything could be achieved with conventional forces. They did not require that the Russians would do the same, although it would have been appreciated, but there was no condition. We've seen other examples of weapons systems been retired, most recently in 2012 with the reduction of the nuclear tomahawk land attack cruise missile, which ironically happened at a time when the Obama administration was under increasing attack by the conservatives and the opponents of unilateral reductions. It just disappeared from the inventory. It was not announced, it was not declared and it just disappeared.

At this point, the elimination of nuclear weapons certainly seems like a distant goal and Obama's statement in Prague that it might not happen in this lifetime has been used by some to say "certainly not in my lifetime". Even if we have the 2009 Congressional Strategic Posture Commission report which is very influential and still defining the US nuclear policy, although he was not asked to talk about the ultimate goal, the chairman nonetheless said in his introduction that all the commission members believe that reaching the ultimate goal of a global nuclear elimination would require a fundamental change in the EU politics. So on one hand the US continues to reduce nuclear weapons, it continues to reduce nuclear missions and it has had a policy to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons for many decades, yet there is very little specific action about how to get there except taking concrete steps - this step by step approach that was mentioned earlier. There is one report or study that was done by the state department in 2012, which was attempting to define something called Mutual Assured Stability. It was produced by the International Security Advisory Board and it was trying to define a design for what the world should be like if you could imagine an elimination of nuclear weapons. It says: "A relationship among nations and international organizations (such as the European Union) in which nuclear weapons are no longer a central feature for their security, deterrence based on nuclear destruction is no longer necessary, and the likelihood of nuclear war is treated as remote because their relationship is free of major, core security issues such as ideological, territorial, or natural resource competition issues, and the benefits from peaceful integration in economic, political and diplomatic spheres provide a counterbalance to the perceived advantages of nuclear conflict". These are enormous goals. Obviously if you imagine that the world has to change that much before you can envision moving towards the elimination of nuclear weapons then it's never going to happen. Now the effects of such a move -and we are not just talking about the elimination of nuclear weapons, but also the effects of significantly reducing nuclear weapons- will have significant impact on the US posture review. The biggest issue there is that if we are actually able to convince other nuclear weapons states to give up their nuclear weapons, it would be an enormous strategic advantage for the United States in terms of conventional capability. One of the biggest fundamental contradictions in this process is that the US wants to move towards the elimination of nuclear weapons, but a precondition of doing that is to increase the capability of conventional forces and strengthen them in that sense. However, increasing those conventional forces would almost certainly prevent other nuclear weapons states from ever deciding to give up their nuclear weapons in order to match the US conventional capability. Thus there is this loop which is deeply contradictive and it may not be strange why there isn't any specific thinking or an agreement about this in the US.

In Prague President Obama promised two things: to take concrete steps in reducing the number and role of nuclear weapons and while working on that, he pledged to maintain and modernize the nuclear forces, so that they are credible as long as nuclear weapons exist. Not surprisingly the different participants of the debate in the United States have each been cherry-picking from the speech, choosing the parts that favor their agenda. The arms control community tends to favor the first part about the practical steps towards elimination whereas in the camp of opponents, they focus on the

other aspect which is about modernizing the remaining arsenal and that has taken over the debate for the last couple of years in the United States. Seen from the outside, the US has a nuclear policy which comes across as schizophrenic and where it can be hard to grasp the point. Mr. Kristensen hopes that gradually the debate will be more specific about where the emphasis is. Ironically the debate over this issue has not only exposed some of the contradictions within the US policy, but it has also exposed some of the challenges, some of the allies who depend on continuity and rely on US nuclear weapons for their own protection. There is a requirement both for the United States but also for the other countries to think more deeply about what this process will look like and how we get there.

In terms of the effects on deterrence, one of the problems of course is that 'deterrence' is one of the most misused words you can possibly think of, because it can be used to define pretty much anything and when people tend to use 'deterrence', it is not always clear what they mean. According to Mr. Kristensen, the arms control community in the US and the US government officials tend to talk about deterrence and assess the deterrence requirements from two different perspectives. The arms control community tends to talk about disarmament from a very simplistic view, saying that these are the types of forces that can inflict a certain amount of damage that would be required to deter any rational adversary. Of course that is also the starting point for the military and those policy makers who shape the nuclear posture and policy, but their focus is more on the next step: If deterrence fails what are the requirements to the forces to win or to de-escalate the conflict on conditions that are simple to the US and its allies? So these two different ways of talking about deterrence means that two communities end up on very different conclusions about what is needed, what can be done and how quickly. This is not just a problem in the United States, we can also see huge differences between the individual nuclear weapon states if you ask them what kinds of forces and how many of them they need to maintain a credible deterrent. Russia and the United States have several thousands of nuclear weapons and hundreds of them deployed on a continuous alert, but if one asks other nuclear weapons states, they can maintain the deterrence with much less. The United States and Russia insist that they have to have nuclear forces on alert. Britain and France to some extent, but much less and all the other nuclear weapons states on this planet do not see a need for having nuclear weapons on alert during peace time for their deterrence needs. Therefore there are very different perspectives and very different ways to achieve decisions about how much is needed and what kind of deterrence will work.

The end of proliferation appears very difficult and the US has not been very specific in the public debate in identifying what those conditions will have to be. Right now the focus is not on that, but on the gradual reduction and the drawdown of force levels. One of the biggest problems for the Obama administration is that we have just seen the new employment policy for nuclear weapons employment strategy come out. Whereas it's pretty straight forward to illustrate that you have reduced the numbers of nuclear weapons, it is much harder to illustrate how you have reduced the role of the nuclear weapons. How do you illustrate that? Because if you say it is important, you have to be able to show that you have done it and that it has some real impact on the world.

In terms of how to reduce the role of nuclear weapons, the arms control community talks about this as a very important way to constrain the nuclear weapons states, almost force their hand towards deeper cuts and elimination. For the administration it looks more as a way to catch up with reality that is happening in the world, when for example the situation with the Soviet Union ended, there was obviously enormous changes to the posture and many of the nuclear missions simply fell away. But now as we are looking at the next couple of decades, how to illustrate how we further reduce the role? Does it mean one has to explicitly explain what is left? This is one of the dilemmas in the guidance policy. How does that affect how we are currently planning nuclear operations? How do you illustrate additional steps? That is the real challenge. Finally, Mr. Kristensen said that the US has to be more

specific about what the conditions are for moving forward. Also, one has to be careful not to over-dramatize the circumstances that should be in place for nuclear elimination. It is, of course, always possible to argue that something is really hard and very risky, especially when it hasn't been done before. However, just because moving toward deep cuts and eventual elimination is difficult, doesn't mean we should let that deter us from trying to find some of the conditions that need to be in place so we can move forward.

NIKOLAI SOKOLOV

Senior Fellow, Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation (VCDNP), Vienna

Mr. Sokov started by joking how he doesn't like talking about Russia as he finds it boring, but that it was the only way he could get into the conference. According to him, the world is made of pessimists and optimists. The pessimists say that a world without nuclear weapons cannot be worse than the world today, and the optimists say it can be worse. The Russians quite obviously belong to the category of optimists.

When contemplating the future world, there are two key questions: Firstly, does the future world need deterrence as a policy? Secondly, should that deterrence be nuclear? It is as simple as that and discussions about missiles, sophisticated war plans or escalation scenarios are secondary. The central thing about nuclear weapons is that they are so terrible that they provide ultimate deterrence. It is true that a taboo of using nuclear weapons exists. No one really plans using them, but their mere presence is something that can stop states from launching into World War III. This is also the foundation of the Russian thinking. The future world seen from Moscow looks dark, unpredictable and quite dangerous. This vision is to a large extent formed by the experience of a series of wars, which have primarily been launched by the United States and NATO. We're talking about Iraq, Libya... And now we face the Syrian scenario about the use of force, which is a violation of the international law. Thus what has happened after the end of the cold war, is that the use of force by great powers has become more common than during the cold war. In some ways the world is actually worse than yesterday ,says Sokov, and explains how in the US older people tend to say that the cold war was actually bad, but at least they understood what was going on. Things were more predictable back then, now things seem very unclear.

When we talk about the future trajectory of the international system, most of the talk has focused around a multi-polar world since the late 90's. That talk was actually launched by Primakov when he was Prime Minister. The trick here is that the use of the term in Russia is actually wrong. When Primakov talks about multi-polarity, - and even today when we hear a discourse about multipolarity- he actually means a whole different concept: a concert of powers like the Congress of Vienna. According to his vision the great powers should come together to make joint decisions and the Security Council is the place where this is supposed to happen. Unfortunately that vision was shattered rather quickly, with Kosovo already in 1999. The interesting thing about the concert of powers is that there is a dissipation of power in today's world whereas in the past you had a very small group of states that were supposed to be part of the concert. Now as Russia sees that dissipation, it prefers to work through different bodies, the G20 and new kinds of arrangements, but with the same principle. For example the G8 is really seen as quite useless, because the differences and conflicts continue to prevail. At the same time we have seen the impact of the global wars that have happened during the last 15 years and the continuing conflicts with the United States and other great powers. In addition

there is the China issue, which is like the elephant's presence in Russia's room, which they don't talk about, or if they do, it's in a neutral way. We know from theory that a multi-polar world is based on a balance of powers, therefore the more the Russians are beginning to see that the concert idea does not work, Syria is just another reason to think that way, the more they believe in the classic balance of power system. And if we talk about the classic balance of power system, we need that ultimate deterrence or the world will slide into World War III.

Mr. Sokov went on to repeat that looking from Moscow, the world seems quite dark and dangerous, although this is his personal view, as he doesn't represent the government or any non-governmental organization. Thus if a state needs solid deterrence capability for the future, can it rely on conventional capability? Today the United States and its allies have a near monopoly of conventional capability and if the elimination of nuclear weapons will just freeze that monopoly, then who will want to eliminate the nuclear weapons? That's exactly the Russian point of view and that's why Russia does supports the concept of limited nuclear use to balance that conventional superiority. Of course Russia is trying to build its own conventional capability and Mr. Sokov believes that Russia will probably succeed in this. In fact research shows that the technological gap is actually very narrow, but the big question remaining is will the United States agree to eliminate the nuclear weapons? And what about China and India? That's a big question mark. But more importantly, continues Mr. Sokov, the problem with conventional deterrence is that it's usable! If conventional deterrence can in fact reduce collateral damage and all the horrid things associated with conventional warfare, we can actually expect the conventional deterrence to be used, he explains. In this sense if we eliminate nuclear weapons but the international system is the same as it is now, we will likely see conventional war, which will be rather nasty. This once again leads us to the idea that we probably need that ultimate deterrence, because nuclear weapons are so terrible that no one wants to see them being used.

To conclude, Mr. Sokov asked if the efficiency of an international system built on conventional deterrence could be mended? He was remembering the 80's and 90's when he worked for the Soviet and Russian Foreign Ministry where they tried to answer that question. The idea was to develop Gorbachev's initiative on comprehensive system of international securities. They tried to develop the concept and thought about economic integration, humanitarian and cultural issues, international law. The result was an extensive concept paper, but in Mr. Sokov's view the team failed to construct a world, which would be harmonious. The interesting question is how you do it today, because now we have the legacy of the use of force outside the international law and secondly we have non-state actors, something that we didn't have to take into account in the 80's. This makes it extremely difficult. The system of international relations is clearly unrealistic, argues Mr. Sokov, but when we look at states we see real instruments that are being used to deal with these kinds of problems and challenges, and that's a fundamental contradiction built-in into the system. His final point was that in the future, Russia is likely to continue to listen to the concert of powers, but it will probably become increasingly pessimistic. It will insist on being in charge at the Security Council, but all the challenges discussed above will actually lead it to rely on a combination of nuclear and conventional capability for security. As the conventional capability develops and improves, the old Russian security policy, which relies on nuclear weapons will probably go down. Nevertheless Mr. Sokov does not really see a complete removal of nuclear capability in Russia's policy in the foreseeable future.

BERND W. KUBBIG

Senior Research Fellow, Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF – HSFK)

The last time when Mr. Kubbig was in Prague in 2006, he was presenting a book on missile defense. He recalled that the discussion was quite intense: The minister of defense actually said that all critics of the missile defense are “idiots”. Strong words, which ignited a really good discussion on this subject at the time. Now in his 2013 speech, Kubbig wanted to invite the audience on a trip from Prague to Helsinki, in order to fill in some gaps in President Obama’s somewhat schizophrenic Prague speech and to talk about the topic of nuclear free world without making reference to the region. Mr. Kubbig also wished to incorporate and integrate some of the positions heard earlier at the conference about concretizing Obama’s Prague speech by going to Helsinki. According to him, Helsinki stands as the symbol for the so far not very productive effort of the international community to fulfill its own pledge of May 2010: it was planned in the context of the NPT review conference to envisage a conference in Helsinki to be held in 2012 that would have dealt with the establishment of a nuclear free, a biological free and a chemical free zone in the Middle East. It is a much more demanding goal than Mr. Obama has set out in Prague in 2009.

Mr. Kubbig introduced the regional aspects of missile defense and also spoke about the potential future role of missile defense between the United States and Russia in respect to creating such a conference in Helsinki. It has to be said that both Russia and the United States are the conveners of the conference, which has not been taking place partly because Middle East states have big disagreements, but also because the two conveners Russia and United States do not share basic assumptions and they also have big disagreements. Keeping the recent Syria disaster in mind, it would be important to have such a conference in a zone like Helsinki, in a region that is free of all those weapons including the chemical ones.

As part of the first step, Kubbig asked to what extent the United States and Russia have behaved in a way that can or cannot be constructive when it comes to preparing such a Helsinki conference? His assessment of the role of missile defense in terms of either complicating or improving the relationship between Moscow and Washington as a great condition to get such a conference on the Middle East is not very charming. The missile defense issue has become and has been a spoiler. It has complicated things, it has not lead to any cooperative efforts that could have affected the behavior of both states when it comes to dealing with the pledged Middle East conference in Helsinki. This is not a positive statement and it is actually so negative that many supporters of missile defense have argued that missile defense in the East-West relationship could be a game changer to the positive. Again, the result is not just negative, but it is counterproductive. At the same time it’s far too easy to put the blame on missile defense, which is a part of a much broader and complicated relationship between the East and the West. It has become clear that the relations especially between Moscow and Washington have become sour not just because of the missile defense but because of domestic issues which increasingly have played an important role.

If one tries to find ways to make super power relationships (Russia and America) more productive when it comes to the building or the convening of an important conference in Helsinki on regional aspects, one has to find other ways rather than focusing on missile defense. It is important to emphasize that the blame is not just on the United States and Russia – that is obviously very easy. The Europeans as external powers when it comes to convening a conference on the WMD free zone in the Middle East, have also a role to play as bystanders and they could hopefully act as a model for the Middle East as a region without nuclear weapons. According to Kubbig, it is hard to see how 20 years

after the Cold War it has still not been possible to make Europe a nuclear free zone, which would make Europeans a role model and much more credible. Mr. Kubbjig thinks it is important to note that such an undertaking in Finland or elsewhere is something that has to start from the assumption that regional dynamics and regional constellations are paramount, because it's conflicts and regional state relationships that count the most in explaining why the countries in the Middle East have acquired nuclear weapons, i.e. in the case of Israel or why they might acquire nuclear weapons, i.e. in the case of Iran. Regional dynamics might also explain why other countries have not decided to become nuclear.

Kubbjig's second assumption is that if we wish to embark on a Regional Zero, you have to take into account those motives and those interests that drive the countries national programs. Those motives are at the same time an obstacle to the reductions and global zero. What does it mean for a conference that wants to concretize and regionalize Mr. Obama's speech in Prague in 2009? It means in the first place that the starting point is to get those countries from the region together to spend time in Helsinki and let them talk and express their security concerns; Why do they have the weapons? What are their fears? The second point is to overcome the unfruitful juxtapositions that we have heard from The Egyptians and the Israelis. The Egyptians want to have nuclear disarmament in an overnight period and they are afraid of nuclear weapons although they are not sure whether Israel really has them. Therefore we must bridge such delicate and obvious situations and this can be achieved by first trying to design state of the art confidence-building measures. That means we may try to first start with visits and military contact etc. At the same time we won't get very far because that's where the pre-Helsinki talks are stuck at the moment, on Regional Zero. The Egyptian leadership is very impatient and asks Israel to do things overnight. What we can try to design is a number of confidence building steps that relate to communications, that do not tackle Israelis, but try to find ways of doing this in a very modest and patient way. Unfortunately this is not the way the regional situation has developed so far. Mr. Kubbjig believes that it is the academics who should try to design a concept which takes security concerns and regional dynamics into account, but at the same time in a form which does justice to the security concerns, both of the Arab world and of Israel.

Having said that the Middle East is primarily about regional politics and dynamics constellations, Mr. Kubbjig notes one exception— Iran. He thinks that in this case one can explain their interest in missile program and in the nuclear program to a large extent with regional dynamics and with their experience. In this respect, the Middle East is not an island, the external relations are important. He argues that if it was possible to tackle the US-Iranian relationship, which can be described as traumatized, and if this relationship could be repaired, 80 % of all the problems we are talking about and the Regional Zero could probably be addressed. The only hope is that the president who made such a nice speech in Prague would make Helsinki happen, however, Mr. Kubbjig believes he won't. And if this was the case with respect to Syria for example, we could have a real and adequate response to the terrible things that happened in August. He is not talking about a military strike, but engaging Iran and engaging the Russians in a way that does not irritate Hassan. The Global Zero and the Regional Zero do fit together in many respects, but we should not overlook the regional specifics. If Mr. Obama chose the role of a thoughtful mediator between states in the Middle East, he could really improve the situation, concludes Kubbjig.

CAMILLE GRAND

Director of the Fondation pour la Recherche Stratégique, Paris

Mr. Grand wished to update the presentation of the Prague Agenda after nearly five years later, in order to look back at what was behind the Prague speech and to do a reality check; where we are, where are we heading and what sort of results we have achieved collectively. In his view the Prague Agenda laid down a vision of a road leading to the complete elimination of nuclear weapons in a rather undefined timeframe. As the other speakers said, it was not the first speech by a world leader in office stating this ultimate objective, since President Reagan and President Gorbachev made statements that echoed the Prague speech in a different strategic environment. Nevertheless it was probably one of the most eloquent speeches, because it did combine vision, strategy and a series of practical steps. Therefore it represents a benchmark. Many analysts argue that vision matters and that long term objectives are necessary for achieving short term successes. A good methodology is to assess some of the ideas behind the Prague speech as well as the objectives enshrined in it and check what sort of progress has been achieved and if further progress can be anticipated as part of the US policy and globally.

One of the key elements of Obama's speech was the diminution of the role of nuclear weapons in global security policy. This objective in Mr. Grand's opinion has made some progress since the Prague speech and some of its language has been included in international documents and statements. Obviously the NPT 2010 document has a more forceful language on that point than the NPT document from 2000, in addition G8 statements, NATO summits and other major events have in different ways incorporated some parts of the Agenda. Despite the reluctance of some others such as Russia, it has made its way into international language. However, what is striking is how the Nuclear Posture Review of 2010 hasn't led to many changes in the nuclear policy of the US and some of the points that were raised in this conference were not formally included into the NPR. Altogether we see that in the US Nuclear Posture Review, it's more continuity that has prevailed in the way that the US approaches nuclear weapons and in the way the NPR very much relies on the second part of the Prague speech, the one about the safe and reliable nuclear arsenal for a foreseeable future.

On the other hand countries such as Russia and China seem to be taking a different direction than diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in their security policy. When it comes to Russia, it is quite clear that multiple statements and policy decision by Putin tend to re-emphasize the role of nuclear weapons in the Russian security posture, and clearly point to the fact that Russia relies heavily and possibly even more than before in its nuclear capabilities in this strategic environment, which is not perceived as safe. The Chinese continue to pursue their modernization at a significant pace, not necessarily ending up in an arms race project, but they definitely don't want to be the smallest of the P5. Then there are the newcomers, such as Pakistan and to a lesser extent India, who are clearly not endorsing the objective of reducing the role of nuclear weapons in their security policy, quite the opposite in fact. Even in the Western world, NATO did not massively alter its own posture after the debate about the strategic concept in 2010 as the clearance and defence posture review itself were not much changed. So it seems that five years after the speech the US and the western defence policy are only marginally less nuclear and others are marginally even more nuclear. Therefore the entire purpose of diminishing the role of nuclear weapons in our defence policy has not necessarily been followed, explains Mr. Grand.

Secondly, another key element in the speech was the sharp reduction in numbers. Indeed the new START was successfully negotiated and led to a further reduction of strategic capabilities of both the US and Russia, but it did pass with such a narrow margin, that future treaties seem unlikely for many

years. Moreover, the reaction the US received from Russia after Obama's Berlin speech showed that from the Russian side the appetite for a full-on treaty is extraordinarily limited. The other members of the P5 have demonstrated little interest in joining the process and of course the debate on how to insert China into this as the Chinese capabilities grow is becoming a very complicated matter. Finally, and this is a point that is often forgotten, in terms of real numbers, not numbers on a treaty, the figures are going down very slowly and we are still talking about figures that are much closer to 10 000 than 1 500.

Thirdly, one important element which got a lot of attention amongst the Europeans in particular, was the fact that President Obama reintroduced the multilateral agenda when it came to nuclear issues, rather than taking purely unilateral or bilateral steps. The objective was to restore NPT Consensus after the failure of the 2005 NPT conference and to negotiate the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. In reality the NPT document was adopted by Consensus in 2010, but in the last couple of years, the consensus has been shaken, argues Mr. Grand. The lack of progress in the Middle East Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone announces fairly sour debates in the future NPT meetings. As you might know, the Egyptians walked out of the last NPT conference to protest against the fact that the 2012 conference did not happen. The CTBT has not yet been ratified and Mr. Grand thinks there hasn't been a true effort behind it; the Obama administration has not put a lot of political capital into it, probably because they believe that it won't go through Senate and due to opposition by Pakistan and China.

The Fourth element was the issue of addressing nuclear security challenges. On this front we have seen significant progress by the holding of two summits in Washington and Seoul, and the Obama administration has managed to put the issue on the agenda. Mr. Grand has doubts that a summitry about the matter would be the next step forward, as it is really becoming an expert issue. In some ways success has been achieved by highlighting the issue with the two summits, but it has now led back to expert meetings rather than summitries. Thus it is unlikely that there will be the same numbers of heads of states and governments who will attend the Hague meeting.

Last and more importantly, from Mr. Grand's perspective, one of the core elements of the logic behind the Prague agenda and in the Prague speech was to strengthen the non-proliferation regime by giving a disarmament perspective. The fact that the NPT conference ended with a final document could give a false sense of success on that front, because the 2010 document was adopted at the expense of the proliferation agenda since it was unable to mention the major non-proliferation crisis; Iran was not mentioned once in the final document and that was a deliberate decision of the US administration when it came clear, that it could kill any chances for Consensus. The DPRK was hardly mentioned because of China, so ultimately we have a non-proliferation treaty that doesn't deal with non-proliferation in order to pretend that there is a non-proliferation Consensus. Considering this and the nuclear weapons free zone debates, we are sort of shooting ourselves in the leg by doing that, says Mr. Grand. When actually looking at the real world, the situation in the DPRK and North East Asia is extremely troubling. In reality Iran is achieving significant progress towards nuclear capability and we've not been able so far to prevent that from happening through diplomacy. In reality weapons of mass destruction are being used in Syria and this is a significant development: for the first time since the 1988 a weapon of mass destruction has been used by a state, the international community is having enormous trouble in reacting and the members of the UN Security Council are having bitter debates about what is the proper course of action. Finally in South Asia, even though we pay less attention to it because it seems to be a sub-continental issue, the arms build-up and the arms race between Pakistan and India continue.

All this in mind, we are entering a system in which the non-proliferation regime is under a massive stress and it seems that the Prague Agenda has failed to restore Consensus on non-proliferation, which was one of the big achievements of the 1990's when we both moved forward on a series of treaties and successfully expanded the NPT. The Prague speech hasn't had any impact whatsoever on the policies of the countries that are proliferating and of those who support them, directly or indirectly. Mr. Grand is not saying that the disarmament is irrelevant but that maybe the disarmament steps should be endorsed on their own merits and not on the questionable view that they are necessary to support non-proliferation. He doesn't blame President Obama for the limited implementation of this Agenda, as he is not accountable for the policy choices of Teheran, Beijing or Moscow. Nevertheless Mr. Grand thinks that it might be time to review the assumption that we are moving forward after Prague as this assumption moves further away from the reality in which proliferation continues and weapons of mass destruction are no longer a taboo.