

Selected Essays on the Transition to a New Nuclear Order

Judith Reppy and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, eds.

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Introduction

Judith Reppy and Catherine McArdle Kelleher

What conditions are needed for a stable transition to a new nuclear order, one in which the total number of nuclear weapons would be reduced to very low numbers, perhaps even zero? We have addressed the myriad issues raised by this question with funding from a grant on “Creating Conditions for a Stable Transition to a New Nuclear Order,” co-directed by Catherine Kelleher and Judith Reppy, from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation to the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at Cornell University. The essays collected here are a sample of the work supported by the grant.

The goals of our project are three-fold: to take a fresh look at the theoretical underpinnings of the arguments about strategic security and nuclear doctrines; to encourage members of the younger generation (NextGen) scholars working on nuclear security issues to see themselves as part of a network that stretches from scholars in the field to active participants in the policy process; and to disseminate the products of the project to the policy community, in Washington and elsewhere. We have convened four workshops—in Berlin (December 2014); Ithaca, NY (November 2015); Monterey, CA (February 2016); and Washington, DC (May 2016)—and held several discussion dinners in Washington, DC. We received very welcome assistance in organizing these events from the German Marshall Fund, which hosted our Berlin workshop, and Bill Potter and Jeffrey Lewis at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies in Monterey. Elaine Scott and Sandra Kisner at Cornell provided invaluable support throughout, as did Ari Kattan, Jessica Gottesman, and Debak Das.

A number of themes have emerged from these meetings, which we outline below. First, however, it is worth discussing the broader context in which the project has unfolded. In a very real sense, the seeds of our project were sown by the “Gang of Four” op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* in January 2007 calling for worldwide nuclear disarmament.¹ This call, coming from four highly

¹ George P. Schultz, William J. Perry, Henry A. Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, “A World Free of Nuclear Weapons,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 4, 2007, p. A13.

respected individuals in the policy world, re-invigorated the debate over the usefulness and dangers of nuclear weapons around the world, and spurred a number of similar calls from diplomats and politicians in other countries. In April 2009, President Obama gave an important speech in Prague, in which he stated that the United States was committed “to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons.”² The shift in the political discussion encouraged scholars to return to the topics of strategic security and nuclear deterrence, topics that had fallen into neglect following the end of the Cold War. One such effort was a series of meetings organized by Catherine Kelleher under a grant from the Carnegie Corporation, which resulted in our co-edited book, *Getting to Zero*.³ In that volume the question of what a transition to nuclear zero would look like was broached, but not analyzed in detail. The current project is intended as a step toward filling that gap.

The dangers that nuclear weapons pose—from accidents, miscalculation in times of crisis, or their acquisition by non-state actors—have persuaded many people that a nuclear-weapons free world is desirable. The optimism that nuclear disarmament might be feasible was based in large part on the success of European countries following World War II in building a zone of peace across the European continent, historically the site of so many bloody wars, and on the peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union. The Russian annexation of Crimea in spring 2014, however, ushered in a period of conflict in Ukraine and threw the validity of the European model into question. In Asia, stability has been threatened by North Korea’s detonation of nuclear devices and a more assertive international policy on the part of China. These shifts in the international situation have made it clear that a new nuclear order will have to be robust enough to weather unexpected political shocks, as well as the challenges arising from technological changes that can undercut strategic balances and other changes that we cannot foresee. As Harald Müller has cogently argued, global nuclear disarmament will not happen in a world that looks like the world of today, minus nuclear weapons.⁴

² Remarks by President Barack Obama in Prague, April 5, 2009. At: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-barack-obama-prague-delivered>.

³ Catherine McArdle Kelleher and Judith Reppy (eds.), *Getting to Zero: The Path to Nuclear Disarmament*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011).

⁴ Harald Müller, “Security in a Nuclear-weapons-free World: Thinking out of the Box,” Chapter 4 in *Security in a World without Nuclear Weapons: Visions and Challenges*, David Atwood and Emily J. Munro (eds.), Geneva Centre for Security Policy (2013).

Instead, it will be the result of a step-by-step process of changing ideas, building new modes of cooperation and trust among states, and finding ways to respect regional differences within a global order.

The essays in this Occasional Paper offer ideas for this process. We have selected them from the larger number of commissioned papers and commentaries produced by the participants in the project. We have confined our choices to papers by NextGen participants and included examples from each of the four workshops. The issues discussed include new ways to frame deterrence logics, important both for understanding the history of the Cold War and current questions of nuclear learning (Harrington; Akhtar). Security perspectives both within and between regions are analyzed (Zhao; Martin), and the importance of cooperative approaches to security addressed (Kühn; Gheorghe).

Again, this is only a selection, limited by space constraints. All of the project papers can be found on-line at <https://pacs.einaudi.cornell.edu/working-papers>, and we commend them all to you. Taken together they offer a range of perspectives and arguments which we hope will stimulate further reflection and discussion on the issues before us.