



## Transcript

# Disarmament and Non-Proliferation: The Nuclear Question in a Changing World

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**Patricia Lewis:**

Welcome everybody; I'm delighted to be here. I am Patricia Lewis. I'm the new research director here for International Security. We're delighted to have with us today three excellent speakers: John Woodcock MP; Anaiz Parfait, European Campaign Director of Global Zero; and Kat Barton who is Research Associate of The Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy here in London and a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, ICAN.

*[Screening of clips from Countdown to Zero, a documentary film produced by Global Zero]*

Now, one of our speakers, for extremely good reason – John Woodcock – has to leave at eight o'clock. We are going to be very disciplined in our time keeping and we're very grateful, John, that you came at all. I'm going to first turn to Anaiz Parfait from Global Zero. Prior to joining Global Zero last year, Anaiz was at Greenpeace and also at EDS – a leading research centre on the environment and development issues in Canada. She has also worked as a consultant for Unisféra, a centre of expertise on sustainable development where she focused on land management in African countries. Anaiz.

**Anaiz Parfait:**

So Global Zero: two co-founders believed a few years ago that the time had come for a new movement for the elimination of all nuclear weapons worldwide. They believed that like most other world-changing movements throughout history, this one would need to be led by young people. They asked themselves – would the first generation born after the Cold War take up this cause and bring an end to the Cold War's most dangerous legacy? The answer was originally yes.

For the last three years, students' leadership has been at the heart of Global Zero's success. We have now 100 student groups in ten different countries and more than 450,000 citizens and 300 imminent world leaders have joined Global Zero. Global Zero's goal is to get political leaders together to work out a deal to begin reducing arsenals globally to world zero. Global Zero has developed the leading plan on how to accomplish this. This plan calls for the US and Russia – who have more than 90% of the world's nuclear weapons – to cut their arsenals to 1000 nuclear weapons each, and then to bring other nuclear weapon states to the first military negotiations in history.

More than 20 years after the end of the Cold War, Russia and the US continue to keep large numbers of nuclear missiles targeted towards each other, including European-based tactical nuclear weapons. Today, the remaining US tactical weapons – there are 200 of them – are stored in Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, the UK and Germany.

The location and exact count of the Russian nuclear weapons in the European continent is uncertain. The most credible estimate gives a range from 2000 to 4000 active weapons. Tactical nuclear weapons – those American and Russian nuclear weapons based in Europe – remain on high trigger alert statuses. They are ready to be fired at any moment, even if right now there is no plausible scenario for either country to use them. These weapons no longer have any military utility and US tactical weapons in Europe were actually deployed during the Cold War to target Soviet bloc countries and to deter the Soviet invasion. The countries that were targeted are now part of NATO, which means that those tactical weapons now have no targets. One question remains: why are they still here?

The removal of US and Russian nuclear weapons from Europe would be a major step reducing both countries' arsenal and would form a critical path of a new round of US/Russian nuclear arms negotiation. So as NATO's new strategic concept leaves the door open for the removal of the US nuclear weapons from Europe, Global Zero, has made, for a few months and will continue to make further progress in relaying both public and political support for the removal of those weapons before the crucial decision-making moments, which is in one month, during the next NATO summit in Chicago at the end of May.

Our Global Zero NATO Russia commission, which was comprised of 15 imminent American, European and Russian security leaders [such] as Sir Malcolm Rifkind MP, Victor Esin and Wolfgang Ischinger, presented a report at the last Munich Security Conference in February, calling for this removal. Our goal, as a movement, is to influence the outcome of these NATO summits by building public support. Our campaign seeks to make vocal champions of the host countries that have already supported the withdrawal of those tactical nuclear weapons, [such] as Germany and the Netherlands. In Germany for instance, tonight is a key moment for our campaign as there is a parliamentary debate on that issue, which was prompted by one of our Global Zero leaders, [*name inaudible*], in Germany.

Global Zero will also focus on countries such as France, who are actively investing political capital to keep the nuclear weapons in Europe, even if they

are not in their territory. In addition to the influences of Global Zero members who will try to generate pressure through our thousands of online activists and 100 Global Zero campus groups worldwide, we have a longstanding partnership with some of the largest online organisations worldwide.

So that is our main focus right now, within Global Zero. Thank you for your attention.

### **Patricia Lewis:**

Now I'm going to turn to John Woodcock MP, who was elected Labour Co-operative MP for Barrow-in-Furness in 2010 and lately has been named Shadow Minister for Transport. His interests in parliament range from defence issues to campaigning for greater protection for threatened bowling greens. He is the Chair of the Labour Friends of Israel and Vice Chair of Progress for the Labour Campaign.

### **John Woodcock MP:**

Thank you. I am going to speak from the lectern if I can. I'd like to thank Chatham House for having me here, and can I give my apologies for having to leave. My wife is due to go in to labour, she is in Barrow-in-Furness and I must be on the last train at 8.30pm, otherwise there is no point in going home if I am not on it! [Laughter]

It is great to be here, not least because this being a young persons' event allows me to be young as an under-35 year old for one night only, so that's fantastic.

As many of you will be aware, Barrow-in-Furness shipyard is one place in the UK with a capacity to construct nuclear submarines. If the success of the deterrent goes ahead, Barrow will be the only place where the boat can be built. But I am absolutely clear on this – that decisions on the nuclear deterrent should primarily and ultimately be a matter of national and global security, and not of employment.

I am occasionally asked how my faith impacts on my politics, and the truth is I don't know. The one thing I am clear of is that the video shown – and I commend you on it – has just shown the horror of nuclear war. I am clear that it would be an affront to nature and ultimately to God himself. So if we can be genuinely confident that the UK disarming now would make that unimaginable horror less likely, then that of course should come ahead of the many

thousands of jobs that building the deterrent would support in my constituency and across the country. In raising the importance of, and campaigning for, a world free of nuclear weapons, the Global Zero campaign is so important. I really commend you for the work that you are doing. We should not forget the significance of the decisions by Prime Minister Gordon Brown and David Miliband as foreign secretary to shift Britain's nuclear policy for the first time to be supportive of Global Zero.

There has been some progress in the last decade. There needs to be significantly more in the years ahead, but I think that to achieve our shared objectives, we need – the case I want to make now – a hard-headed multilateralism. Not a return to unilateralism, which my part in I think the country has rightly moved on from. And the prospect of a return to unilateralism is not a straw man. There is a strong argument – I'd expect to hear it tonight if I'm not about to shoot out the door as I finish – that renewal of the deterrent would be tantamount to proliferation. It wouldn't. Failing and choosing not to renew would in fact be an act of unilateralism. It would mean imminently taking a close to irreversible decision now, a one way bet that Britain would not need a deterrent in 20 years hence. Crucially, I strongly believe that that would make the world less safe from the threat of nuclear war and not safer.

In an uncertain world, which we've seen today, with several rogue states seeking nuclear weapons, deciding to give up the UK's deterrent at a particular point in the future, making that decision now would mean taking an unacceptable risk with national security. Nor do I think we should be taken in by arguments that not renewing would speed up the path to a Global Zero. I think that is a dangerous fallacy. It rests on what I think is a fundamental misunderstanding of the motivation of other regimes and groups that seek – or may in the future – seek nuclear capability. They do that to increase their capacity for aggression to other states, not because they fear the UK's independent deterrent. Without safeguards and police-able guarantees of non-proliferation, putting the UK's nuclear weapons beyond use is not sensible. Securing those safeguards and guarantees will take a multilateral approach.

There are those who argue that we should actively put the option of non-renewal on the table now, saying that if enough progress can be made from other nations between now and 2016, we would not go ahead with replacing the submarines. My concern with that approach is this: If you accept the basic assessment of global security that I've just set out then you must also accept that it is highly unlikely that we will be in a position to commit to giving up nuclear weapons for good in the immediately imminent future. If we were to

accept that, yet put the option of not renewing the deterrent on the table anyway, then we run the risk of being accused of negotiating in bad faith and ultimately setting back the cause of non-proliferation, not advancing it.

There is a review into alternatives to the submarine-based ballistic missile system due to report before the next general election – we are all interested to hear what it says. But up until now, what I think has been the Liberal Democrats' favourite option of nuclear-tipped cruise missiles on adapted astute class submarines – smaller hunter killer nuclear powered submarines that do not carry nuclear weapons – has been thought to be more expensive not less; less of a deterrent because cruise missiles are more likely to miss their target and easier to shoot down; more likely to trigger proliferation by potentially advertising an alternative way for states to achieve nuclear status and potentially more likely to trigger a nuclear war. If you are in a combat situation and a nuclear arm astute fires a missile at you, then how do you know for certain that you are not under nuclear attack? Do you retaliate before it's too late? Those are some of the difficulties that were experienced in previous decades and within the last decade as it has been shown by that video. And of course at heart it could quite possibly be illegal, under the non-proliferation treaty, which bars new forms of nuclear weapons being constructed by any state which is a party.

So what can we do? There is no easy route to this end. Richest governments of whatever hue should be at the forefront of credible efforts for a nuclear free world. We have that responsibility as one of the first nuclear states. We need to minimise the threats and maximise the opportunities.

Firstly the threats: the first stop on the road to a global agreement must be tackling rogue and unstable states. That means halting the military nuclear programmes in North Korea and Iran, it means guaranteeing the security of Pakistan's warheads and it means working towards a nuclear free zone in the Middle East. Those are the immediate robots of broader disarmament. The opportunities are great if we can cease them. We should seek to use the genuine momentum created by the US and Russia talks, which President Obama has forced in to the forefront, and that of course is what Global Zero is seeking to do. Your interest in this issue and passion for progress can drive this debate. I commend you for it again, and I would like to work with you in the months and years ahead.

**Patricia Lewis:**

Thank you very much, John. I now turn to Kat Barton who is the Research Associate with the Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy. Prior to this job, Kat managed the Peace and Disarmament Programme for Quaker Peace and Social Witness. She is a prolific writer and used to work with several grass root campaigns on nuclear issues. She is currently on the board of trustees for the Trust for Research and Education on the Arms Trade.

**Kat Barton:**

Thank you, Patricia. Good evening everyone. I would like to say first of all thank you to Global Zero. I think we can all agree that there was some very compelling footage which really demonstrates the urgency for this issue and the need to get rid of nuclear weapons as soon as is possible. Also, before John has to dash off, whilst I would disagree with much of what you said, I would like at least to agree that I believe the decision – as you do – on whether or not to renew trident should be a matter of global and national security. And I think we should probably agree to leave the agreement there.

I'm going to take a slightly different tack. I think the key security concerns of the non-nuclear weapons states – that is, the vast majority of states in the world, especially those concerned around nuclear proliferation, power projection and the risk of nuclear use, terrorism and accident – are simply not being addressed by traditional non-proliferation and armed control approaches. The majority of states that have abided by their non-proliferation obligations have actually seen their security eroded as new states have acquired nuclear weapons while Cold War powers have continued to refine and modernise, even if some have cut their stockpile numbers. Sure, the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) was the basis for a highly successful, multilateral armed control regime that was very well suited to the Cold War and has helped to stabilise proliferation at low numbers for the past four decades.

However, I would counter that it has been in decline since most of us were still in primary school. Despite being heralded as a success, the 2010 review conference exposed a deeply fractured regime that is incapable of dealing with the tough decisions. I'm talking about issues around non-compliance, treaty withdrawal, universality, the safety and security of nuclear weapons effective safeguards and verification, and the production and use of fissile materials for weapons purposes. It is often said that nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin. I would agree with that. I certainly believe that you can't have effective non-proliferation if you fail to

address disarmament in a sustainable and importantly credible manner. Much importance is placed on initiatives like New Start. Whilst these are very welcome, the fact is when incremental reductions keep being undermined by modernisation, it is time to recognise that another way of approaching things is required.

I think that as long as nuclear arms states keep repeating the mantra that nuclear weapons are an indispensable tool for their security then other states will seek to emulate them and they will seek to require these indispensable weapons for their own security. In fact, the possession and successful acquisition of nuclear weapons has become associated with an exclusive club, with national pride, with independence and with power projection. The significant but often denied political and psychological incentives and justifications for acquiring nuclear weapons lie at the very heart of proliferation calculations by states and are reflected in the non-proliferation regimes deep contradictions.

If we are to make real and irreversible progress on nuclear disarmament, I believe we have to stop obsessing about the numbers and start paying attention to the value attached to nuclear weapons and all that they represent to their possessors and admirers. A growing number of governments and civil society experts are doing just that and as a result are reaching a conclusion that long held disarmament and non-proliferation objectives would become more achievable if states took the initiative to start a multilateral process to negotiate a comprehensive treaty that would ban the use, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and establish the tools and framework to verify non-proliferation to ensure the secure and verified dismantlement and elimination of existing arsenals and the disposal of weapons used for materials. These governments are tired of the old school narrative that hinges on the purported military or strategic utility of nuclear arms and are no longer willing to stand by and wait for the nuclear weapon states to decide the time is right to relinquish their nuclear weapons.

Instead they take a humanitarian-centred approach which takes lessons from the processes that resulted in the mine ban treaty and the Cluster Munitions Convention, which themselves focus on the unacceptable harm that any use of such weapons causes, and led to the view amongst the international community that these weapons should be outlawed.

In 2010 around 140 countries voiced their support for initiating multilateral process leading to negotiations on some form of nuclear weapons convention, treaty or framework. The Swiss government has recently produced a report on



de-nuclearising deterrents; just this week, Norway announced it would be hosting a conference next spring on the humanitarian consequences of nuclear weapons.

Just to be clear, I am not advocating a framework to compete with the NPT. Right now, the NPT is all we have got. I welcome efforts to strengthen its verification and implementation mechanisms. However, as a Cold War treaty dominated by nuclear arm states, the NPT simply lacks the non-discriminatory prohibitions and tools necessary for it to bring into being the ultimate goal of a world free from nuclear weapons. Those of us who are members of ICAN believe that what we need is to develop a treaty process that will underwrite the objectives of the NPT and actually give them teeth. Thank you.