

Interview

Anna Péczeli,

*Research Fellow at the National University of Public Service
and Assistant Lecturer at the Corvinus University of Budapest*

Ece Batman

Ash Yurtsever

Rita Marques Ferreira

Introduction: In October, 2015, the ICRP conducted an interview with Anna Péczeli, research fellow and assistant lecturer about contemporary issues concerning nuclear weapons and non-proliferation. She gave us her insights of the mentioned topics by pointing out the main theoretical approaches as well as current disputes regarding nuclear disarmament. Therefore the interview focused on her opinion and former academic researches about global nuclear politics, the challenges concerning the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the threats of nuclear terrorism.

The world has changed a lot since the end of the Cold War. Today not two, but nine countries have nuclear weapons. Do you think the world is becoming more and more dangerous?

When I get this question, I usually start by saying that if we look to the absolute numbers, there was a significant reduction of nuclear weapons since the Cold War. The peak was in 1986 with 65,000 nuclear weapons, so compared to the 50,700 nuclear weapons we have today, it is a significant reduction. I would like to draw the attention that there was some progress: we have much less nuclear weapons today than we used to have in the Cold War.

During the 1990s, the United States used to have more than 30,000 nuclear weapons; the Soviet Union had 40,000 in the 1980–1990s. Compare to what we have today it is significantly less. However, I would still argue what we have today is much more than we need, and we could implement more serious measures in the future. If I look at the danger, I am still convinced what kept the Cold War cold and started a nuclear war were the strategic considerations that are still solid today. Even with the Russian government being more aggressive than it used to be in the 1990s, I still believe there are very strong norms against the use of nuclear weapons, and I can only imagine that the United States or Russia would be ready to push the button in really extreme circumstances. So I really do not think between the US and Russia or between US and China, the chance of using nuclear weapons would be higher today than during the Cold War, actually it is probably less dangerous. The reason why I am more concerned is that we have other non-state actors in the picture. We know now that Al-Qaeda was pursuing the acquisition of nuclear weapon, the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo, responsible for Tokyo's 1995 chemical weapon usage, also claimed to look for nuclear weapons, so we know several really effective terrorist organisations that in one point of their history considered to acquire nuclear weapons. That is why I think new threats have entered the picture, making it less stable than it was during the Cold War. Until 1970, we had five nuclear states, the P5, who had a strong state control over their nuclear power. Today we have more states with nuclear weapons and we have new players who are threatening deterrence, because the traditional nuclear deterrence is very difficult to apply to these new actors. That is why I would argue that between the great powers, danger has not increase, but today we have to consider new threats, the nuclear terrorism. That is why I defend the nuclear disarmament of Global Zero.

Considering that four of the nine nuclear states did not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty, what is your opinion about the success of this document? And what can be done to improve it?

I am still a big supporter of the NPT. It is a very successful treaty. When it was established in the early 1960's, President Kennedy said at that time if we do not conclude an international agreement that would establish the limits of the proliferation, then in one decade, 20 or 30 countries would possess nuclear weapons. NPT's intention was to avoid the proliferation, when Argentina, Saddam Hussein's Iraq or Brazil were thinking about getting their own

nuclear weapons. South Africa actually succeeded and it is until today the only country that has dismantled the nuclear weapon stock. We can list a number of countries that at a certain point in their history were thinking about acquire and develop a nuclear weapon. Without the NPT, I believe plenty of them would have succeeded and we would be living in a much more dangerous and much more instable world today. So from this perspective, the fact we only have nine countries with nuclear weapons, I think it proves the success of the NPT. The other reason I consider it as an important mechanism besides disarmament, prevention of proliferation, and safe use of nuclear technologies, is that it has a really advanced technological system, owing to the International Atomic Energy Agency and the agreements to verify what each country is doing and how they are using nuclear technology. We have the mechanism to report back if some government is diverting a military program; we have experts who control different region and there is the whole system of weapons free zone... There is a very wide system that leads to the non-proliferation and also to the nuclear disarmament and safe use of nuclear technology. So NPT is a complex system with many benefits. Even today, the NPT is one of the most efficient armament control agreement with 190 states signing it, which shows the importance and relevance to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We have many bilateral agreements between the US and Russia to limit their arsenal, however, apart from these bilateral mechanisms, we do not have any obligations that would force the non-nuclear proliferation and disarmament besides the NPT. This is the only mechanism that obliges the United States, Russia, China and the United Kingdom to pursue the ultimate world disarmament and to reach Global Zero.

What are the biggest challenges today regarding the non-proliferation norm?

The biggest challenges come with the nature of the NPT as a discriminative treaty in the sense that it divides the world into two categories: the nuclear weapon states, the P5, which are legally recognised as nuclear weapon states; and the rest of the world, considered as non-nuclear states. The two categories have different obligations under the treaty. For instance, the nuclear weapon states are expected to pursue negotiations towards the Global Zero, but there is absolutely no verification included in the NTP to verify disarmament and there is absolutely no timeline regarding when they have to implement the reductions and its phases. This has been a problem since the beginning and puts a big tension between the nuclear and the non-nuclear states. Those states that are part of the non-alignment movement, in general, argue

that nuclear states should pursue much faster disarmament and they should reach Global Zero in the foreseeable future. There is a group between this two extremes, Hungary is one of the moderate countries, who are until certain extent attach to the nuclear weapon states by certain security insurances. In Hungary's case, we are under the umbrella of NATO, we are also protected by US strategic nuclear weapons and we are under the so called US umbrella. Israel is also perceived to be under this umbrella, as well as Japan and South Korea. Those countries are benefiting until certain extension from nuclear deterrence and from the deterrence of this weapons. Although they support nuclear disarmament, they say it can only be done step by step and as a slower process, rather than, as other countries defend, be done very quickly. This big tension between the nuclear "have" and the nuclear "have not" has been present since the early days of the NPT, but during this year reviewed conference this kind of problems were very vivid and very strongly present in the debate. The gap between the two categories is growing constantly and it might eventually undermine the NTP and trigger some other mechanism out of the scoop of NTP, because some of these countries feel that the treaty is no longer able to represent the best interests of non-nuclear states. Now they are looking for new alternatives and ways to advance nuclear disarmament.

Do you think the Article X of the NPT, where any country can withdraw from the Treaty, as it happened with North Korea, in 2003, represents a weakness of the document?

All treaties that I have seen so far in my career include a withdraw clause. This is not a specific of the NTP. The bilateral agreement between the United States and Russia contains withdraw clauses, saying that if the vital interests of the countries are threatened they have the right to withdraw. The US has withdrawn from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty during the Bush Administration, so this is not uncommon. But I think the reason why you have to include it is because otherwise you might risk that the countries may not accede to the treaty, if they do not have the option to withdraw. It is like a loop whole: if their interests are not respected for the long term; if they have a withdraw option, they might be able to accede to the treaty and have national legislative bodies dug the agreement. Without the withdrawal, they might not be able to do that; they would be left with a treaty that only half of the states would be signatories. That is why having a withdraw clause does not make your treaty restricted. However, you can make it more difficult to withdraw, maybe making it less tempting to withdraw. In the framework of the NPT there has been an ongoing discussion

after North Korea announced that they wanted to withdraw (and in fact withdrew) on what to do about this issue. The 2010 and this year's NPT conferences tried to explore how to restrict those who use nuclear materials, how to not let them be used in production purposes, even after withdrawal. If you decide to withdraw from the treaty and go to the military option then there should be still some constraints exist to the use of those materials in the later phase. Today is an ongoing discussion in the NPT, how to restrict the withdrawal and how to make it more difficult to convert your program into a military program. In sum, I do not think to have a withdraw clause shows a weakness of a treaty.

In April 2015, as it happens every five years, the NPT was reviewed. The states could not reach an agreement to convene a regional conference to discuss issues related with the establishment of a Middle East free zone of all mass destruction weapons. Do you consider the meeting a failure?

If you ask people who attended the NPT reviewed conference, everyone will probably say that it was a failure. If we look at the evaluation of reviewed conferences, it has become a tradition that if you have a consensual final document the conference was a success; if you do not, then it was a failure. I think it is not necessarily black or white: it depends if you have some meaningful results coming from a reviewed conference, even if you were not able to reach a final document. However, this year's reviewed conference was, until a certain extent, a complete failure, but not only because of the Middle East. The NPT has three pillars: the first one being disarmament, the second is non-proliferation and the third one is the peaceful use of nuclear energy. The reviewed conferences are organised in every five years, but the treaty itself does not obliged you to organise it every five years; it says that you can organise reviewed conferences if you want to. So far it has been the practice to have these meetings organised every five years. In fact, they are organising preparative meetings three years prior to the big one and they had three prep meetings before this reviewed conference. The reason why this one was a failure was because we can see that in all three pillars there were extremely huge divisions and tensions during the debates. The Middle East has been traditionally the most problematic issue in the framework of NPT. The idea of establishing a Middle East nuclear weapon free zone was already raised in 1974, immediately after the inforce of the treaty and it has been a key issue since then. In 1975, we could only conclude the final document in exchange the countries would advance the goal of a nuclear weapon free

zone in the Middle East, and since then it has sort of keeping the NPT capture. In many cases the failure of the conferences was due to disagreements over this zone. Last time, in 2010, we actually concluded a final document and that conference was considered a huge success, but in exchange for the consent the countries promised to the Arabic countries there would be a Middle Eastern nuclear weapon free zone. They promised that by the end of 2012 they would organise a big meeting, where all countries of the region, which includes all Arabic countries, plus Israel and Iran, should be present to start the negotiations for a nuclear weapon free zone in the Middle East. They actually nominated a Finnish diplomat, Jaakko Laajava, to be a mediator between the parties and to prepare this Middle East summit. Over the course of those two years, when he was working on this issue, he had more than 300 personal meetings with different players around the region. It was really unbelievable how he was preparing it and bringing the parties together, but 2012 was a very busy year: we had the presidential elections in the US, we had election in Russia and in Iran and we ran out of time. By December, it was clear they would not be able to arrange this meeting, so they postponed it, but they did not define a date for the new meeting. So when we went to the reviewed conference this year, we already knew Egypt and other Middle East countries were really frustrated for postponing of the 2012 meeting, by having no progress at all in the Middle East free zone issue. So, we are kind of suspected that there would be disputes in this field. The pillar of non-proliferation was the reason why the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, on the last day of the conference, said they were waiting the consent and they were not willing to accept the final document that was drafted before and specifically named the Egyptian tactics the reason of the failure. And what Egypt was trying to do in the previews three weeks, they came with a proposal saying the new deadline is the 1st of March 2016, by the time they have to conclude and organise a meeting on the Middle East nuclear weapon free zone and they said the meeting should not be organised by the three depository states of the NPT, which are the United States, United Kingdom and Russia, but it should be organised by the UN Secretary General. The reason why it was important is because if the Secretary General was responsible for organising this meeting, then Israel could no longer use the fact that it has never signed the NPT as an excuse to stay away from the conference. Israel has never signed and ratified the treaty, so they do not comply with this final document. In fact, over 2010 and 2012 they went to many of the preparatory meetings and they met with Ambassador Jaakko Laajava and tried to explore the option of the meeting. They were at least a bit open to the idea, but they could always use the excuse that the document was not obligatory to them. But if the meeting is organised by the UN Secretary General, then Israel

can no longer use this excuse. The other big problem is that the three depository states would not be responsible for holding the meeting, so they no longer would have the veto power over the agenda. Israel is afraid that if they do not have the right to agree to the agenda before the meeting, then the whole meeting would be about to perceive the Israel nuclear weapon program and nothing else will be discussed. The official Israeli policy in this regard is that they are open to the idea of disarmament, but only after there is a lasting and working piece of agreement in the region. So, if security is provided in the region, then after that, they are ready to talk about disarmament. The Arab and Iranian approach to the issue is the other way around: they say disarmament is the trigger that will lead to peace in the region; so disarmament first and peace talks after. The US, the UK and Russia would no longer be responsible as depository states of the meeting and would not have a veto in the agenda and Israel is afraid this might mean that US would not veto any kind of agenda that not comply with Israeli national security interests. From an Israeli perspective this framework of the meeting was totally unacceptable and, of course, the reason why the US vetoed it and said they were not consent on this issue, was that it would go against the national security interests of Israel. It is interesting to see that Benjamin Netanyahu and President Obama are not the closest friends in these days and have had serious arguments over the past years. However, the day after the US broke the consent, Benjamin Netanyahu thanked President Obama for it. From an US perspective it was the Egyptian negotiator tactics that led to the failure. But I have talked with people who have been there and they said it was not only the non-proliferation pillar that was shaken this year, but also the disarmament pillar. Like I said, there are a lot of tensions between nuclear and non-nuclear states. From the side of non-nuclear states, they tried to push many new initiatives that would bring the issue of disarmament out of the scoop of the NPT and tried to find other mechanisms that would advance to this goal. The most important was the Humanitarian Initiative, which was first organised in 2013 by Norway, then we had a second conference by Mexico and in the end of 2014, we had the meeting in Vienna. These days Austria is the strongest supporter of this humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament. They argue that a new treaty could be concluded by the UN General Assembly, which could create a normative to do a much faster disarmament, giving the historic example of the landmine agreement, which was a creative moment for disarmament of landmines and triggered in a similar negotiation. But, honestly, I am a little sceptic about the Humanitarian Initiative, because the NPT is about much more than the question of disarmament. There are so many reasons why the NPT is important that anything that undermines the legitimacy of the NPT is a wrong approach, in my perspective. The

reason why I was mentioning the Humanitarian Initiative is that there are significant problems in the First Commission, and in the NPT as well. Many people told me that if the consent was not broken in this Middle East issue, then many members of the non-nuclear group would break consent due to the disarmament concept of the final document, which they did not find strong enough. In this sense, officially it was the Middle East, but there were many tensions in the conference and the reason why I think it was a big failure it was because it missed the opportunity to fill these gaps. It actually made some of these gaps even bigger. In the future it will be a huge challenge to bring the parties together again to the same table.

One week after the attacks in Paris, United Nations, as requested by France, allowed every country with capacities to take all measures to stop the Islamic State. Considering the rise of the jihadist group, do you think the world is now facing the threat of nuclear responses?

There are many radical organisations that have the intention of acquire nuclear weapons. I have not heard this about ISIS, whether they are pursuing nuclear materials or not. I do not know if they planning to do that. Regardless the advance of ISIS and the attacks in Paris, I do believe that nuclear terrorism has grown compared to the 1990s and the end of Cold War, we are definitely facing new threats. What is important that President Obama is also concerned about this and he has even launched an initiative that tries to limit the dangers of nuclear terrorism. In 2010, he started the so-called Nuclear Security Summit series. The first summit series took place in Washington DC, the next one in Seoul, and the third one took place in The Hague. We will probably have the last meeting in Washington DC again in the end of next March. In the framework of these summits, what the leaders of the world are trying to do is focusing on those weapons materials, which could be stolen by terrorist organisations and be used to produce either dirty weapons or nuclear weapons. In the framework of these NSS series, from 2010 until 2012, they have made very significant and very successful advances in this field. In the end of the Cold War, we had around 50 states that were in possession of high rich uranium; today we have about 20 of such countries. A third of this progress was achieved owing to the framework of the NSS summits. Since the Washington Summit, twelve countries have got rid of their high rich uranium stock piles; one of them being Hungary. Very significant action has been done by world leaders to reduce the threat of nuclear terrorism, simply by secure those materials that could be use by terrorist organisations. Of course there are still plenty of materials out there. The problem is that President Obama, in this NSS series,

is focusing on weapon material that are in civilian control and that is only a small portion of all weapon usable material. I think only a quarter or one fifth that are in civilian control and all the rest is in military control. But I would immediately add here that although these NSS series does not touch the issue of military materials, in general those materials that are in possession of military are much better guard than those in civilian control. So, I think the danger has grown in the past few years, but owing to these NSS series the awareness of world leaders has also significantly grown and now we can see some concrete measures that have been taken to mitigate the risks of nuclear terrorism.

In December 2008, around 300 world leaders launched the Global Zero campaign, an initiative with the main goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons. What is your view on this campaign?

Personally, I am a supporter of Global Zero and I consider it a very important goal to be reach in the foreseeable future. President Obama has already said it is not going to happen definitely during his presidential term and probably not during his lifetime. He was very supportive of the idea, but also realistic to see this is going to take a long time. And I agree with that, this will not happen from one day to another, but I also consider this goal as something that should be pursued and be reach maybe by the end of my lifetime. Who knows? The activities of the campaign are very interesting. I am not sure how the whole campaign started, but I always have the feeling they have a really good mixture of activism, mobilising especially young people in the US. They have organised so many different and visible activities, like taking bikes and circulate around the White House, showing what would be the epicentre and what would be the range effect of a nuclear weapon, if it was dropped there, like in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. They are doing really good campaigns and they are very good mobilising the next generation, young scholars and next leaders. However, I would also add immediately that they are much more than their campaigns; they also have very strong supporters from the expert community and also from the military. One of the most influential supporters of the campaign is a US Army general, who was responsible for the management of the nuclear weapons and the preparation of war plans in the US. Having a commander like this as a supporter is a big advantage for the organisation. Whenever I read Global Zero reports sometimes I do not agree with the timeline they draw, when I think is not feasible in such a short time, but, still, they

have the expertise behind it. Also, from a technical perspective they came up with some really good arguments and articles.

The New START program entered into force in February 2011, promoting the transparency and the reduction of United States and Russia nuclear arsenal. However, on the summer 2014, Russian's President Vladimir Putin stated in a speech that "other countries should understand it's best not to mess with us". Three months later, Russian newspaper Pravda published an article entitled "Russia prepares nuclear surprise for NATO". Can you comment on this?

The crisis in Ukraine had a very strange effect on the relations between the US and Russia and on the dynamics of arms control as well. Sometimes this kind of policy of loose lips is scary, which basically means high ranking leaders and officials are using some really harsh words, which reminds us to the worst days of the Cold War time. But I would still say that, when it comes to actual policy, I am not sure these loose lips have a big effect on the action of the leaders. The New START is a very good example in this regard. It was conclude in 2010 and then ratified by 2011. The US said two years later, in July 2013 in Berlin, they are ready to go deeper. Unfortunately, Russia was not on board for further reduction. Even if the US and Russia have some significant problem today, the notification that are possible in the ratification of the New START agreement have been ongoing since the treaty enter into effect and the crisis in Ukraine did not have any negative effect on this. Since 2011 they have changed data and notify each other for military exercises, more than seven thousand times, that is really a huge amount of data that has been shared with each other. The agreement allows for each part, on a year basis, to conclude eighteen insight inspections. On the other side, and even though the crisis in Ukraine happened, still they have maximised and conclude all the eighteen insight inspections. In this sense, on the technical level they still have a strong cooperation. The quote clearly shows that there are very harsh rhetorical exchanges; Putin is very hard on his rhetoric towards the US. The new Russian military doctrine says that NATO military developments has the biggest threat to Russian national security and make some strong arguments against the other side. However, still, when I look at the implementation of the New START agreement, both sides have started to reduce their nuclear armament. They are cooperating, visiting each other in their nuclear field, and this does not seem to weaken because of the tensions. I hope that part of this rhetoric is only for the Russian and US

population. For Putin is very important to make Russian believe that there is a valid threat coming from NATO and that Russia needs to stick together to stand against the threat coming from the West. So, part of this rhetoric is for the Russian population and not really for NATO, because when I see what is going on in real terms, in arms control, the New START agreement is still solid and I really hope this is going to remain.

In July this year, Iran and P5+1 reached an agreement, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, regarding Iran's new nuclear program, in order to reduce the nuclear arsenal of the Middle East country. Iran is a signatory state of NPT, however is known for its non-compliance attitude towards the international treaty. What is different with this new agreement? How can the international community be sure that Iran will now respect the agreement?

One of the most positive effects of the new deal is that it will make sure Iran will implement this so called protocol. The International Atomic Energy Agency, under the umbrella of NPT open the option of signing an additional protocol in 1997 and, although in early 2000 Iran have signed the additional protocol, they have never signed the treaty. This means the additional measures are not enforced for the inspectors when they come to verify what Iran is doing underground. This new agreement will actually force Iran to enforce the additional protocol, so we will have advance verification mechanisms to make sure Iran is compliant. The additional verification measures will inspect everything in the nuclear field, from mining to nuclear waste disposal; inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency will also be able to go to facilities, which has never been open to them before. That is definitely an important aspect of the new deal and it is also going to be good from the perspective of the international community, because it will see that Iran is compliance with the agreement and this might restore the trust of international community in the country. Apart from verification, the agreement itself settles very hard reductions in Iran's nuclear program. The number of centrifuges today is about 90,000 and it has to be two thirds of it and only first generation centrifuges can be maintained. The amount of high rich uranium they have today can build nine nuclear weapons, but with the reduction, these ten thousand kilograms will be reduces to three hundred. That will be enough for only a small portion of a nuclear weapon, maybe two percent of a nuclear weapon material. So, the material and the centrifuges will be significantly reduced and limited in their technical capabilities. Besides that, verification will be

implemented. One of those facilities which cause the biggest concern for the international community, the heavy water reactor, which moves on plutonian fuel, will totally reconverted, with the ultimate purpose of limiting the weapon usable material of this facility. There are many different technical aspects with the new deal which are creating very strong limitations on what Iran is going to be able to do for the next ten to twenty five years, depending on the limitation. And, although Republican Senators and representatives did not like that after ten, fifteen and twenty five years all these limitations will be gradually lifted and Iran will be able to do again whatever they want to do, as it is stated in the framework of the NPT, still I say that, if there is an agreement that works for ten, fifteen or twenty five years and Iran has complied since the beginning, then probably in ten years we will not have any reason to be worry about it. I can understand the concerns of Israel and conservative circles in the US, but ten years from now we can have a completely different situation. I always say it is time to give a chance to this deal, because without it Iran's nuclear program will develop very fast and without limitation, and with this deal we can limit its nuclear program. Also, I see the potential in the deal to build some trust between the West and Iran.

How do you think the new agreement with Iran has affect the balance of powers in the Middle East, being Israel now the only with nuclear arsenal in the region?

Israel from the very beginning argued that this deal is not good, because is not strong enough. They are afraid that Iran, under this agreement, will still be able to develop a nuclear weapon and argued that, if not now, in ten or fifteen years there will be no limitations. They were heavily against the deal and launched a really effective campaign in the US. I was following it on a daily basis and it was crazy to see how much tension it was on the deal. One of the most effective lobby organisations in the US sent 14 million dollars on the campaign against the deal, and we could see Benjamin Netanyahu coming almost once every day against the deal, stating that it was against Israel national security. But now the deal is enforce, so Israel will have to find a way to live together with this agreement and to start trusting in these international mechanisms. In general, I think this agreement may create some difficult movements for Israel in the future, because if there is a nuclear agreement with Iran, the only diplomatic player in terms of nuclear weapon is Israel, in the Middle East. After the Iran deal we may see some renewed moment for the Middle East free zone or nuclear disarmament in the region and this will push the shoulders of Israel to engage in conversations for nuclear

disarmament. Of course the first step of this should be Israel, at some point in the future, to come clean about its nuclear weapons capabilities. Until today Israel has not officially acknowledge it has nuclear weapons, they have this opacity in their nuclear policy. International community believes Israel has nuclear weapons since the 1960s. Now we have some declassified documents from the United States, from conversations between Richard Nixon and Golda Meir, and they show some signs, in direct reflections or mentions, on this nuclear weapon arsenal. But, still according to the Israeli officials, they have never confirmed or denied the existence of these weapons. In this way, if you start negotiating on nuclear disarmament in the region, the first step should be they to come clean with their capability, acknowledging what they have and start discussing about what kind of insurances they will need in exchange for nuclear disarmament. I think Israel is afraid this deal will bring out this issue of nuclear disarmament in the region again. So far, they could point the finger on Iran, stating is Iran who is destabilising the region, and they could use Iran nuclear problems as a shelter, but now we have the deal. This might bring some difficulties to Israel in the future.

Saudi Arabia has indicated its willingness to have nuclear weapons from time to time. Since 2013 it is also often claimed that Pakistan would sell such weapons to the Saudis. Recently the kingdom's ambassador to London said that "all options are on the table" if talks fail to keep Iran in check. What do you think about the possibilities for the Saudis to go nuclear?

Honestly, I am not an expert on Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, but from the very beginning I have a feeling most of it was directed against Iran, when there were some really tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia. We know Saudi Arabia was really afraid of Iran developing a nuclear weapon during the Bush Administration, we suspected there were some behind the doors things, when Saudi leaders asked President Bush to launch a strike against the Iranian facilities. We can see there is an honest concern on Saudi Arabia about Iran and the balance of powers in the Middle East and most of these statements were, for me, due to their fears that they might lose the leadership. I do not think Iran would be able to take this leading position from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, who are the most influential players among the Arab states. Iran will probably never have the same kind of legitimacy in the region, but, still, we can see that Iran is supporting organisations among the Middle East, like Shia activities, and in some aspects this undermines the power of the kingdom. So, there is an honest concern about Iran, but, to what it stands, they really thought that a nuclear weapon would solve these problems. I

cannot say if it was just rhetoric or if there are some people who actually believe this is the solution for all of their problems. Personally, I do not agree with this, I do not think that if Saudi Arabia acquires a nuclear weapon it would restore the balance of powers in the region; I think it will destabilise it and cause more problems to Saudi Arabia than they are facing today. On the Pakistan, side if I look to the policy these days, they want to be members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which is the biggest export controllers of nuclear technology, and for them to sell nuclear weapons would be a big violation of every possible norm that we have in nuclear control. I do not think Pakistan would take the chance of pick one nuclear weapon from the shelf and sell it to Saudi Arabia. They could not get away with it. If that weapon would be use, you could find out its origin, so everyone would know this weapon came from Pakistan. They could not even denied it and I do not really think that they will take the chance of selling one of their nuclear weapon and facing really harsh sanctions against them, losing the chance of acceding to some organisation that is fighting for the nuclear disarmament and arms control. They are trying to reach the Nuclear Supplier Group, so I am not sure about the seriousness of the Saudi's intentions. I would not be surprise if it was only some loose lips policy to threat Iran and I do not think Pakistan would be willing to sell nuclear weapons to Saudi Arabia and have all negative consequences that would come with it.

The United States has invented the most powerful thermobaric bomb in 2003, called the "Mother of Bombs". In 2007, Russia tested a similar one and named it "Father of All Bombs". Since then more tests and developments have been made. Is it likely that highly destructive non-nuclear bombs could replace the nuclear ones in the near future?

I know there is a very strong intention in the US to develop conventional weapon that could, maybe not replace, but take some of the roles that nuclear weapons play today. I am not sure about this weapon, because it is to hit softer and medium targets. Most of nuclear weapons in US are supposed to target really heavy targets, so this "Mother of Bombs" would not be able to pose a risk to Russia submarine base, for example. But of course this is just the first step on the long run. I can see the potential in conventional development and they might take over nuclear weapons. In the US, they have a program called Prompt Global Strike, still in the research and development phase, which means the acquisition of the weapons has still not started and probably will not start in the next five to ten years. But they are exploring the idea of precision guidance of conventional weapons, which are long range weapons, meaning they

can reach any part of the world within one hour. They would not carry nuclear weapon as long range weapons, but they will be carrying conventional weapons and bomb packages. Whenever I talk to people who negotiate with Russian or with a Russian expert, they always say that one of the biggest sources of their concerns is that the US and NATO, as an alliance, may in the long run be able to develop effective precise long range conventional weapons, because that would undermine the strategic balance between the US and Russia. At the moment, there is still a balance between the two countries in strategic arsenal capabilities and this would definitely give a special state to the US. But as we are lowering these numbers and the US is becoming more able to develop precision guides and long range effective conventional weapons, then that might create some leverage for the US and NATO, that Russia may not be able to counterattack with different measures. Consequentially, they are really worried about these conventional weapons developments. I think in the long run, what these weapons will cause, is that we will have an even more complicated arms control process that we have today. I think as we are getting close to zero and lowering the numbers of nuclear weapons in US and Russia, it will be more imperative to consider every aspect that could pull the stretch from Russia perspective. They will not accept a disarmament agreement unless some of their fears are addressed. In the long run, I believe there will be some limitations on conventional weapons, on ballistic missile defence as well and it will also be necessary some limitation on the outer space. All needs to be channelled into the debate and into the negotiations, otherwise Russia will never accept to get rid of their nuclear weapons. They feel these weapons are the ultimate guarantee to their security and if NATO and US do not agree to some limitations on the other field, then the arms control process will be jammed. This is one of the biggest consequences of these modern programs on the conventional field. They complicate the nuclear arm control negotiations and, in the long run, they will have to be included in these talks, if we want to Russia stays on the table and to continue the process.

* * *

© ICRP 2015
<http://culturalrelations.org>
institute@culturalrelations.org

Batman, E., Yurtsever, A. and Ferreira R. M., 2015. Interview with Anna Péczeli, Research Fellow at the National University of Public Service and Assistant Lecturer at the Corvinus University of Budapest. *Cultural Relations Quarterly Review*, Vol. 2. Issue 3. (Summer 2015) pp.20–35.

For more information concerning the article and citation please contact us via email at institute@culturalrelations.org.