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Poles Apart: Deterrence or Disarmament After the Russo-Ukrainian War?

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Manpreet Sethi: Hello everyone. Good afternoon. Well if everyone can settle down please. We'll start the session for the morning. Good afternoon everyone. Welcome back after lunch to a session on a subject that we haven't spoken about at all since morning. Yes, we are going to talk about the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the impact that it's going to have on the nuclear order, particularly on nuclear deterrence and disarmament. Where are we going to be heading with the consequences that we see here?

I think these are some of the questions which are uppermost in everyone's mind. Is the value of the nuclear weapon going to be reinforced as a result of what we've seen a nuclear Russia do with a non-nuclear weapon state in terms of nuclear coercion, and nuclear deterrence against the nuclear weapon states. Because what we are seeing is constraining of the actions by the nuclear weapon states in the theater.

Certainly, we all agree that nuclear weapons have shaped the conduct of how the operations are taking place in this region. Or, if the first question is, is this going to reinforce the value of the nuclear weapon? The other question is, with the heightened sense of risks that have come with the conflict, is it going to push us towards disarmament? Are nation is going to realize that it's not worth for us to get into such a crisis again, and again, given that crises are not going to go away. In fact, what we have today are nine nuclear-armed states, in rather difficult relationships with each other.

These are not just in terms of the dyads between them, but that the, as I said earlier, elongate into strategic chains in many of the cases. In this situation then, is nuclear

disarmament, the way we should be thinking about how this world should survive and get rid of nuclear weapons? We find in the new set of nuclear-armed states that have come up, there are new sensibilities about how they look at nuclear deterrence. The postures are different, the doctrines are different. The sense of whether risks are good for deterrence or bad is also different, because there are many countries that believe that risks are actually good that they enhance deterrence.

In this situation then, how do we examine the questions of deterrence and disarmament and where we want to be in the next some decades? To address these questions, I have an excellent panel with me, perhaps the best in the sessions, in the conference. Right next to me is Mariana Budjeryn, she's a senior research associate with the project on Managing the Atom at the Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center. Right at the end, there is Ambassador Alexander Kmentt. He is the Director of Disarmament, Arms Control and Nonproliferation department of the Austrian Foreign Ministry. Right next to him is Mélanie, Mélanie Rosselet is the Director for Strategy and Policy at the French Atomic Energy Commission. Here in the center is Michiru Nishida, who's a professor at the School of Global Humanities and Social Sciences at Nagasaki University.

As you can see, we've got a varied set of experience and expertise with us. The detailed bios are on the app that all of you I'm sure have downloaded. I could only do justice with a line for their introduction. We have a lot of ground to cover and I'm going to start by posing My first question to you Mariana. Your book on nuclear disarmament of Ukraine is just about to be published, so you are best suited to help us understand the argument that if Ukraine had nuclear weapons, not just a Soviet vintage, but of its own built over a period of time, it could have not been attacked in the manner in which it has been. Do you think most states will reach this conclusion that having nuclear weapons when you have a hostility with a nuclear weapon state, you need nuclear weapons of your own? Is nuclear proliferation on the anvil, do you think?

Mariana Budjeryn: That's a very important question and one that I get asked a lot these days. Before I launch into trying to discern it, as many of you know, I am Ukrainian, there are some of my compatriots that sit in this conference. I cannot speak on behalf of the Ukrainian people, but for what it's worth, I want to thank each and every one of you who have contributed your thoughts, your tax dollars, your analysis, your concern to my country and the plight of its people in this hour of need. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

[applause]

The counterfactual of Ukraine possibly having a nuclear deterrent and whether it would work. For one, social scientists with historical awareness, I should say or historically tuned-in social scientists are very wary of counterfactuals. Because they might paint the world of, say Ukraine exactly the way it is today only with nuclear weapons, and that's of course not the way history works. Ukraine would have been an entirely different country had it launched a program to convert this nuclear inheritance that had got from the Soviet Union into its own nuclear deterrent.

It would have had to summon immense economic resources, withstand international opprobrium. Survive into independent sovereign adulthood under that pressure, and

also strategically make sure that it has survivable second-strike capability versus an enormous nuclear arsenal of the Russian Federation. I have to say, assuming that that could be done, assuming that somehow Ukraine could have mustered this feat. It's hard to argue that somehow nuclear deterrence would work differently for Ukraine, or than it works for France, or for UK, or for the United States, if we assume that nuclear deterrence works.

What I see happening right now in this war and the role of the nuclear factor in this war, is that yes, the conflict is constrained, the war is constrained in the original territory, with the original to belligerence. It has not spilled over east or west. Whether it is the working of nuclear deterrence, that will be a big question that the scholars will have to peruse. I think it is a safe thing to assume that nuclear deterrence does do some work in restraining this conflict and keeping it bound to Ukrainian territory that is not covered by nuclear deterrence. Neither of its own or of that of a patron, of an ally.

The nuance of Ukraine's disarmament story notwithstanding, and there's a great nuance, and there will be a book that will hopefully shed light on some of it. The optics of this situation are awful. There you had a country that had a nuclear option, that had a claim to that nuclear option as a legitimate successor state of the defunct Soviet Union. It decides to disarm in exchange for nuclear assurances pledged by nuclear weapons states, including the Russian Federation, and gets in turn, invaded and disseminated by one of the assures let's put it that way.

Even if Ukraine prevails, at a cost of its grit, with the help of Western weapons, even if it stands its ground versus a nuclear weapon state, Russia, none of the thousands of people who've lost their lives now will be returned to life. None of the women will be unraped, none of the kids will be untraumatized by this war. I think a similar country in a similar security predicament will take a very hard look at Ukraine's situation, not because it might prevail still against a nuclear-armed adversary, but to avoid that situation in the first place.

Sethi: Very right, I think we all understand that what was seen to be in the case of Ukraine a success in the disarmament side, suddenly it's brought us home, the fact that nuclear deterrence does matter when you're facing hostility from a nuclear weapons state. Since we're talking about nuclear disarmament, let me bring in Ambassador Alexander here. Now, it's paradoxical that on the one hand, we have the treaty on prohibition of nuclear weapons, which is today in force, and the numbers of countries which are joining it is growing, and yet the salience of nuclear weapons seems to be also at an all-time high. Nuclear modernization continues across the nine nuclear weapon states. In these times then, what really is the value of the TPNW?

Alexander Kmentt: Thank you so much. First, I need to say I speak in my own capacity, of course, so please don't hold it against the Austrian Foreign Ministry. Then, together with Gustavo Zlauvinen and my colleague from Ukraine, I'm the only speaker from a non-nuclear weapons state, non-umbrella state, so I apologize to the entire global south that a fairly ancient white guy is now trying to speak on behalf of them. Because the arguments that I make, and the arguments on the TPNW is I think the points that are shared by the vast majority of states who are often

disenfranchised in this debate and also in the debate thus far this morning wasn't really heard.

You talk about the salience, it's a matter of perspective, which makes our field of work so interesting. You talk about the salience of nuclear weapons, and I think my perspective or the perspective of I think the vast majority of states, is, that actually what we see is the precariousness and fragility. We are at a fork in the road. It's absolutely possible that there will be more focus on nuclear weapons, more focus on nuclear deterrence, and nuclear arms race, and we see much of that already unfolding. Followed, I think inevitably by more proliferation, potentially the demise of the MPT. That's one way of looking at it.

The other thing would be to try to change the paradigm. I think a strong case can and should be made that what we are seeing now, throwing the nuclear dice is just simply too precarious and too risky. How do we deal with a situation like that? We can continue, or the states that have nuclear weapons can continue to rely on nuclear deterrence even though we know and we heard this morning about the assumptions on which it is based, the uncertainties on which it is based, and we know that it can fail catastrophically. Or we try a clear rejection of nuclear weapons, of threats with nuclear weapons, use with nuclear weapons. Because of the unacceptable risks and the consequences which would be shared by everyone.

Nuclear deterrence, it assumes non-use, but it is based on the credibility and readiness to use. How exactly would these weapons be used in this scenario? Against whom? What are the targets? How do you deal with the global consequences? That's the conversation I think that can propel us more into the discourse on this element. I think the line between responsible threats with nuclear weapons and irresponsible threats with nuclear weapons from the perspective of the vast majority of states is extremely blurred. What exactly are responsible threats with nuclear weapons in light of what we know about the consequences and risks of these weapons?

That is, I think, part of the value of the TPNW because it puts this very much into focus. When all vectors are pointing in one direction, which is extremely dangerous, and the end point of that could be absolutely catastrophic, the TPNW makes the argument for a change of paradigm. I think in the value of this treaty right now, crucial to strengthen the taboo against nuclear weapons use. It's also crucial to strengthen this trend towards more proliferation, because of course, it makes the stigmatization point, and I think that is often overlooked. The value as a non-proliferation measure of these sets of arguments.

I think, of course, we heard about the assumptions and uncertainties, but there is demonstrable empirical evidence on the humanitarian consequences. The breadth of them, the interrelationship of them, the fact that we can't deal with them and we understand risks much better. That I think needs to be weighed against the uncertainties and assumptions on which nuclear deterrence is based. I think it's a really important contribution to discuss the legitimacy of the status quo, the ethics of the status quo, and of course intergenerational justice also. I think that that is my short answer, the value of the TPNW right now, it works on a legal plane, and of course, that's for the countries that sign and ratify it. It works on a political and

discursive plane as well and I think it couldn't be more important than right now. Thank you.

Sethi: Thank you. Melanie, if I can bring you in now. Alexander mentioned the humanitarian consequences, and we all understand the argument that comes from there for moving toward nuclear disarmament. I want to question the idea of the utility of nuclear weapons from the military dimension and whether the Russia-Ukraine conflict has shown us the limits of the military utility of nuclear weapons. To achieve a political objective, is there ever going to be a right target that one can find which will make you then come out better off, particularly when you're facing a situation where retaliation of some kind is going to be certain?

Therefore, what is the utility of nuclear weapons as you see it in the context of the conflict that we are going through?

Mélanie Rosselet: First, thank you so much to you and to the Carnegie for the invitation and to give a French perspective, not necessarily the French official view on these important issues. To your question, I think nuclear deterrence has been working so far between NATO and Russia. Both Russia and NATO have been deterred from starting a direct confrontation on each other territory. Russia has been forced to accept the support provided by NATO allies to Ukraine without being able to retaliate into NATO's territory or against NATO personnel.

NATO countries on their side have been very careful to support Ukraine, but not to become belligerent in this conflict. Nuclear deterrence has not failed. It has worked where it was supposed to work for NATO, protecting its vital interests, enabling it to support Ukraine more and more. In short, we can say that nuclear deterrence has created a ceiling of violence in this conflict. It prevents a direct confrontation, and thus, a major war between Russia and NATO so far.

Now, of course, it's more of a mixed bag when it comes to Ukraine and what nuclear weapons do that. Russia is practicing in Ukraine what the French nuclear strategists call aggressive sanctuarization. That is Russia deviates from a strictly defensive deterrence to use nuclear weapons as a tool of intimidation, coercion. Enabling Moscow to wage a conventional war of aggression against its neighbor in the shadow of its nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapons or at least nuclear rhetoric are used in an offensive way to impose a territorial fait accompli and to try to break Ukraine's and western will and determination to help.

The third point is that it is therefore very crucial to defeat that strategy of aggressive sanctuarization and to demonstrate, as you rightly say, that nuclear weapons cannot and shall not be used in that way, that nuclear deterrence is for defensive purposes only. That's what also Russia said in January when it committed to the declaration of the P5. Otherwise, it would set a very dangerous precedent.

To answer your question, in the third nuclear age that we are living through, nuclear deterrence and strong security guarantees from responsible nuclear weapon states will be needed. Needed to face the threat posed by potentially disinhibited nuclear states that pursue a revisionist agenda. Nuclear weapons will be part of the problem, there is no denying that, but like it or not, nuclear deterrence will continue to be part of the answer for the foreseeable future and as long as nuclear weapons exist.

Sethi: With the three of them having spoken, we know that nuclear deterrence seems to be the name of the game for the time being. We are stuck with nuclear deterrence until we can get to nuclear disarmament. Our risk reduction then has to be -- some of the answers have to be found on the ground of risk reduction. I want to pose that question now to Michiru. The biggest nuclear risk in the current situation seems to be arising from the fact that there are no strategic dialogues leading to misperceptions and often worst case assumptions about adversaries.

You have studied the role of nuclear transparency, particularly between US and USSR Russia. They had a parity which enabled transparency, at the nuclear level they were largely talking about similar kinds of arsenals and capabilities and therefore, transparency allowed for certain kind of arms control to take place. I want to bring in the issue of China, where China has a nuclear asymmetry and it believes in the value of ambiguity of deterrence. In the absence of transparency then, how can nuclear risk reduction be achieved when you want to bring in China into the picture?

Michiru Nishida: Thank you very much for having me today for this important conference. With regard to the transparency in China, I think the premise that transparency cannot be possible for Chinese nuclear arsenals is because of its small size of the nuclear forces may not be so relevant today. Even if we take the argument that because of the small size, transparency is not possible for them, their nuclear arsenals is growing, and for the last 10 to 20 years. Even if we take their argument, as the level of nuclear force is growing, then the level of transparency can be increased to some extent.

For example, their argument is that if they disclose the number of nuclear warheads then they would be worried about the US offensive decapitating co-strike. Then even before the parity, they can, for example, come about with a rough number of aggregate numbers of nuclear holdings. For example, they can say they have no more than 300 or 400. They don't have to discuss the exact number of nuclear holdings. With that, they can still have the margin of some kind of ambiguity that they would like to maintain, but at the same time they can show their commitment to article 6 within the NPT.

Because transparency is the basis for any nuclear disarmament, without transparency you cannot know whether a nuclear weapons state is actually implementing disarmament. Without transparency we cannot verify anything, so transparency is the first step for nuclear disarmament. Corresponding level of transparency in correspondence to their level of nuclear forces should be possible.

If we got to nuclear risk reduction, that's also very important. Transparency is part of nuclear risk reduction, and with regard to China, for the last 10 years or 15 years, I think the US has been trying to engage with the Chinese, but it's not been possible so far. In that case, the minimum we can do is to convey the united message, especially in the peacetime before crisis starts, that any kind of nuclear blackmail that the Russians are doing should not be done in East Asia.

That could be said as a message of deterrence, but that is forcefully and clearly made or communicated to the Chinese authorities. That's a strategic communication. That kind of strategic communication is very important for nuclear risk reduction.

Also, in the peace time, the close consultations amongst allies is very important, because if there's any daylight amongst allies, status quo changing country like China or Russia always try to exploit that daylight. That kind of close consultations on what is the interest of each ally and what is the objective of any contingencies, that's very important for risk reduction as well.

Sethi: We've seen negotiations between allies are as difficult as they are with adversaries in several cases. I wanted to ask you a follow-on question Michiru, about what do you think are the lessons that are coming out from the Russia-Ukraine conflict in East Asia? We did hear some noises in Japan and South Korea about them wanting to go towards nuclear weapons. Since making use of the place that you're coming from, can you give us a sense of what is the thinking in Japan and South Korea about the utility of nuclear weapons?

Nishida: This is exactly what may happen when this kind of nuclear [unintelligible 00:26:30] happens in the world. Japan, as soon as nuclear blackmail started in last February, I think a couple weeks later, already the debate on nuclear sharing started in Japan. Also in Korea, I think now a lot of discussions on the redeployment of nuclear weapons in the Korean Peninsula. I think this is not helpful, but this is exactly what happened. There's a linkage between what can happen in Europe and East Asia. A lot of Security Experts in Japan are closely watching the developments in Europe, and especially in terms of deterrence, and also in terms of assurance.

What NATO or the US might do or how they might react to this nuclear blackmail will be seen in East Asia very closely. They would watch closely how the Chinese and the North Koreans would perceive how the US and NATO would react to whatever nuclear [unintelligible 00:28:07] in Europe. That would affect nuclear debate in East Asia or even future nuclear proliferation. This is very important discussion. What is happening in Europe will very much affect in East Asia.

Sethi: Mariana, if I can then draw you in too. Is non-proliferation sustainable without disarmament? We've seen the NPT had this whole question about whether the responsibilities of the non-nuclear weapon states have been growing over a period of time, while no movement on disarmament has taken place from the nuclear weapon states. Therefore the questions come up again and again about how can we make non-proliferation sustainable unless there is movement on disarmament as well. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Budjeryn: Indeed. That's the crux of the matter, the commitment, this Article 6 of the NPT is one of the main bargains that tries to ameliorate the ultimately, a very unequal, unfair discriminatory system. In which some states base their own security on nuclear deterrence, but others are expected to give up that right and provide for their security by other means. That's long-term, not a sustainable situation. We see it today playing out with TPNW coming as a this resistance movement as it were, to this unjust system. Progress on Article 6 has been absolutely crucial to reconcile, to at least ameliorate part of this predicament.

Of course, with the war in Ukraine, with the war in Ukraine I think it is safe to assume for the next few years we're not going to see significant progress on arms control. Certainly not between Russia and the United States up to the best prognostications, perhaps some kind of status quo on the New START could be maintained and

parties might commit to just continue on observing the obligations even after New START expires in 2026.

I see this war having many ramifications for the global nuclear order in none of them are particularly new. The Article 6 issue has been with us for a very long time. It's just these chasms, these tensions will be exacerbated. How they will reverberate through the system, whether that will result in more proliferation remains to be seen. There are very good arguments out there and as authors of some them are present with us today, that say that might not be an immediate wave of proliferation that we can see. Fair enough, but the future is long. 20, 30 years from now, it's hard to predict which country might draw which lessons from the current situation.

Sethi: I find several arguments and literature suggesting that proliferation could be good, that it will constrain wars from happening amongst nations. My concern always with the argument that nuclear proliferation might be a good idea is that you just have to step onto a busy street and I come from India, I know what those busy streets are like. When you are worried not just about having control on your own vehicle, but the fact that the others must also have control on their vehicles so that there's no inadvertent collision. If we are getting into this proliferated world where we have also started rather loosely talking about the idea of limited nuclear war.

Mélanie, I want to ask you about your thoughts on the idea of limited nuclear war because I have always felt it's an oxymoron. What is really limited about the use of nuclear weapons? Are we going to count it in terms of the numbers of nuclear weapons used? Is it going to be about the yield of the weapon? Is it about the number of people who die immediately or those that will die over a period of time? How do we understand what is limited nuclear war?

Rosselet: There is no limited nuclear war. From the French perspective, it's absolutely clear, nuclear war cannot be won and should not be fought. In the French concept and it should be and it's also I think for the P3 the same and for NATO. Nuclear weapons are not weapons of use, they are not there for warfighting. They are political tool to make the calculus of waging a war of aggression irrational because you will have costs that outweigh in many, many ways, the potential benefits. That comes to a point that there is worse than nuclear weapons. There are nuclear weapons without deterrence.

The fact that nuclear weapons were used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki is horrible. It took some time to make sure that nuclear weapons and deterrence are the same. That are political weapons that are there not to be used, but to prevent war. The priority should be to stick to that and not to normalize the perspective of using nuclear war on the battlefield. I think that's where we are today. I had a word of proliferation but maybe later.

Sethi: Alexander, if miraculously, the nations were to come to the agreement that disarmament is the way to go, what do you think could be some of the first steps that we should be taking towards that? You've been part of the TPNW, the Vienna Action Plan was announced by them in their meeting. Are there some pointers there that can get us towards disarmament?

Kmentt: I feel really tempted to respond to some of the points that were raised, if I may. Once again, I want to make the point that it is striking how the perspective of the vast majority of states is regarded. It's not just the security issue for nuclear-armed states and allies, it is a pertinent security issue for the rest of the world. They have agency. The interpretation of the vast majority of states is that the very practice of nuclear deterrence is at the expense of their security. I think it's really important too. That's the crux of the divide, so to speak.

It can be backed up with the arguments of what we actually know what would happen if these weapons are used, because the consequences are global. This is deeply unjust, and it's a serious security issue for the rest of the world. My country is surrounded by NATO countries with the exception of Switzerland, but there is a NATO base 50 kilometers south of the border, so if nuclear weapons were to be used, my country would be directly impacted. The same goes for a nuclear war between two nuclear-armed states in the northern hemisphere.

We know from the research, that it can have global impact, food security. What's the justice? It is a pertinent security issue from Sub-Saharan Africa's perspective. If deterrence fails, in the north, between a conflict where African countries have absolutely nothing to do with, and it leads to a famine. It's a security issue. I really want to reject this disarmament, this utopian. It's a security necessity, from the perspective of the vast majority of states. I think that's important. It's perceived as deeply unjust, what's going on. I think that's the driver. It's not based on idealist approach. It's based on a clear security analysis.

This is why States Parties ratify the TPNW because they want to push those countries that haven't rely these weapons to try to find a way out of this paradigm. Which is, of course, it must be based on international law, it must be based on unequivocal norms. Obviously, the way to go is the understanding that because of the consequences and risks, the security calculations behind nuclear deterrence is not quite as safe and stable as is assumed. I think that is a really important discussion that needs to be had.

All we talk about here all the time is the threat perception between nuclear weapons states and allies. Of course, they are absolutely pertinent, but the perspective of the rest of the world is completely disregarded and I think that is really important. If you wonder here, what's going on in the NPT, if you wonder where the TPNW comes from, that's the discussion that needs to be had.

I just wanted to make the point, it is seen as illogical to say that nuclear weapons are only for deterrent purposes, and cannot be used. Because nuclear deterrence relies on the credible readiness to use them. How credible can a threat be, if you say, "I'm never going to use them." Of course, you have to make everybody believe that you're going to use them. That leads to direct security concerns for the rest of the world. I think that's important.

I encourage everyone to have a look at the declaration that TPNW States Parties agreed to in Vienna. Can I just read one short paragraph of it? It says, far from preserving peace and security, nuclear weapons are used as instruments of policy linked to coercion, intimidation, and heightening of tensions. This highlights now more than ever, the fallacy of nuclear deterrence doctrines, which are based on and

rely on the threat of the actual use of nuclear weapons, and hence the risk of destruction of countless lives, of societies, of nations, and of inflicting global catastrophic consequences.

Then, of course, TPNW states parties insist that depending on the total elimination of nuclear weapons, all nuclear-armed states never to threaten or use these weapons under any circumstances. That's the security call from the vast majority of states, which I think is just simply mostly disregarded in this debate. I think it's really important to engage in this discussion and if the bridge building or if the poles apart are supposed to be getting closer, there needs to be a discussion that takes this perspective more seriously. It's just not happening. I think it's really important to change this. Thank you.

Sethi: Thank you. I think I'm so glad you brought in this perspective because the paradox of nuclear deterrence is often not understood. That the more you want deterrence to hold, the more you have to have the preparedness to handle deterrence breakdown, and that really can pull you into a cycle of how you think nuclear weapons are usable. In fact, if all of you promise to be very short on your answers, I want to ask a common question to all of you, which is, what if the norm of non-use of nuclear weapons is broken, what do you think will be the impact of the use of low yield nuclear weapons? Would it conventionalize the use of weapons? Would it set a precedent for others to follow others to follow in the future, because having that norm I think does matter?

In fact, all this talk that we heard about the Dirty Bomb, I think it shows the strength of the norm because Russia is wanting to build up a pretext before it can do something. It wants it to be seen as a legitimate action, so the norm does matter. If that norm is broken, then would it conventionalize the use of nuclear weapons, or will it lead to greater abhorrence for nuclear weapons and move towards disarmament?

Mariana let me start with you.

Budjeryn: I think it would certainly be the latter. It would be the greater abhorrence, and even greater need to figure out what to do in order to prevent that from happening again. I also see the priority should be, is to prevent this from happening in the first place.

Sethi: Absolutely.

Budjeryn: To enforce this norm of non-use in a space incidentally where deterrence is not a factor in Ukraine, for instance. This for me, it's a great case study to test this nuclear taboo that Tannenwald talked about, because she talked about it in the context of deterrence doing the similar work that the nuclear taboo is doing, and therefore it was hard to parse them out.

Well, here we have a space in which there is no deterrence, no nuclear deterrence per se, but we're looking at how to enforce a nuclear taboo in Ukraine. What we're finding out is that it's really difficult. What is it that you can credibly threaten Putin with on behalf of the West, on behalf of Ukraine, in order to dissuade him to go nuclear in Ukraine? I think we find our options wanting. This is a great time of reckoning for all of us.

Sethi: Thank you.

Michiru, your thoughts on this.

Nishida: Yes. Before going to your question, I love to just echo and thus comment on remarks. I totally agree with you, that perspectives of many non-nuclear states have not been highlighted. I think we need to highlight those concerns from the security perspective, as you said, and also humanitarian perspective as well. I think TPNW is doing a very important work for that, but at the same time, from security perspective of the many Japanese security experts, we also have very imminent nuclear threats we face.

Japan is probably the country that is faced with the most imminent nuclear threats. Not just those countries that hold nuclear weapons, but countries that are willing to change status quo with nuclear weapons. This is the most important aspect.

I think as you said, we need to be closer, not close apart, but we need to be closer, and that's why I'm glad to hear that you said that perspectives of nuclear power states and allies are also important. I think we can have a bridge-building perspective if we respect each other's perspective.

With regard to the norm of non-use, I think this is a very, very important norm that we have to maintain.

Sethi: Once it's broken, what do you think will happen?

Nishida: As Mariana said, it's going to be a very serious issue, but I think it could go both ways. Many people would say nuclear deterrence or nuclear weapons are more important, so we should go nuclear. On the other hand, many people would say this is just so horrible that we should abolish nuclear weapons, and this voice will also be strong. I think it'll be a very-

Sethi: Split.

Nishida: -world split. I think in this current world, one of the reasons that the world is so united, especially the European countries are so united, and the Western countries united to support Ukraine, is not just because of the very, how do we say, abstract kind of thing, but because of this horrendous genocidal-

Sethi: Consequences.

Nishida: -activities on the grounds by the Russian forces, so the perspective has become more individual not just a state. I think that is one of the reasons why so many people are very strongly supportive of Ukraine's fight against the Russians. If that's the case, then I think nuclear abolition voice may be also very strong because if the world witnesses the consequence of the use of nuclear weapons on the ground, it's going to be much, much more severe than what happened in Bucha and other places.

In Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for 10 years, there was a press restriction to what happened on the grounds to the world. That also helped-- not helped, but was one of the reasons that what exactly happened on the grounds in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

was not so known. This time if it is known, it's going to be spread so fast through SNS and so on. In that case, it could go either way, but nuclear abolition movement might be stronger.

Sethi: Sure. You think upherence could also increase? Thank you.

Mélanie.

Rosselet: First, ambassador, I wanted to give you some perspective. I respect your point of view and the necessity or the perspective of elimination of the threat posed by nuclear weapons and nuclear weapons, but the objective of, I think in the longer term, we share this objective. The problem is how do you get there, and it is as important as setting the objective, is to create a path in which you make sure that you are not going to trade potential mass destruction for actual mass injustice, which is what would be the case if you had unilateral disarmament of democracies only of nuclear weapon states that stand to their responsibilities as members of the Security Council.

I think make no mistake, what would be the consequences of the United States right now unilaterally disarming, or NATO getting rid of their nuclear weapons right now? I think it would be more proliferation of more nuclear weapons, so a bigger problem, more disinhibition from revisionist states, and in the end, more violence with conventional by the use of nuclear weapons.

The second question is, how do you make sure that you do not trade potential mass destruction with nuclear weapons for actual mass destruction with other weapons? In Ukraine, unfortunately, conventional weapons are killing, and it's another counterfactual. Would Russia have invaded Ukraine, wouldn't it have invaded Ukraine if it hadn't had nuclear weapons? It is possible that it would have invaded Ukraine anyway.

In other words, I think it's wrong even from a security perspective to disconnect the question of nuclear weapons from the strategic context and the objective from the ways to get there. In that way, it is wrong to treat nuclear weapons as some states in differentiated and to make equivalencies between behaviors that are not equivalent.

You quoted the TPNW and the conference, the result of the conference. What struck me is that Russia was not mentioned in the final documents. When you fail to name the problem, I think it's very difficult to solve a problem when the problem is not properly framed.

Sethi: Mélanie, I'm sorry to interrupt.

Rosselet: Yes, sure. On your question--

Sethi: There's a long list of questions which is coming in thick and fast, so we must get to some audience questions.

Rosselet: I'll come back to your question may be in another round.

Sethi: Okay, right. Alexander, to my question. I don't want you to answer.

Kmentt: If the non-use is broken, first of all, I absolutely agree, we must stay on the preventative sides of the argument. I think that we would be in completely uncharted waters. Anybody who thinks that we know what's going to happen, I think is not right, because we simply don't know, and the potential for catastrophic outcomes is extremely high.

The argument that I would make, if, say, Russia breaks that and uses a nuclear weapon, it would be extremely important to have the strongest international response possible. The question I'm asking, is the strongest international response more credible if it is linked to a categorical rejection to threatening and using nuclear weapons, and how is that possible if there are nuclear deterrence doctrines, which themselves foresee the use of these weapons? I think that's the case at the moment, and I think you would have this debate very much if nuclear weapons were to be used, say one nuclear weapon is used, you would have this debate very much between those who say, "This is now the moment to finally categorically-" which of course, is the much stronger reaction.

Then those who would say, "This is an irresponsible act, and that form of deterrence is responsible," it would be a different kind of message. I hope we're not going to end up having this debate, because then we failed to stay on the preventative side of it.

Sethi: I hope so too.

Kmentt: I just have one response. First of all, on the day after the declaration was adopted, the Russian Foreign Minister issued a statement complaining about the declaration. It didn't mention Russia directly, but they felt very much spoken to, and I'll tell you openly why we didn't mention Russia, because a lot of the TPNW state parties said, what about fire and fury, and what about other cases?

Unfortunately, that is my country, we would have liked to be very clear on Russia. We see this and we wonder in the West, why when we take this issue to the General Assembly, not everybody votes the way we want. Why isn't it clear to everybody who are the good guys, and who are the bad guys? It is not seen that clearly in the rest of the world. I think that's a fact, and it is because of some double standards that simply need to be addressed.

I would like to have stronger vote in the GA, but these are facts, and I think it needs to be addressed, and is also part of the nuclear weapons debate.

Sethi: There are several stories there that I'm sure all of us want to listen to but, in the interest of time, I have to get to the questions which have come from the floor, and I think quite a few of them extremely thoughtful have also been answered in some of the questions that we raised earlier.

Let me start with this question, perhaps I can put it to you Mariana. Usually, the never-ending cycle of deterrence, coercion, escalation is ended by reassurance measures, and we saw that also in the Cuban Missile Crisis. What kind of reassurances could be demonstrated by both sides to stop this crisis?

Budjeryn: I wish I knew.

[laughter]

I think we'd be in better situation if there was a quick answer to it. The parallels with the Cuban Missile Crisis are somewhat fraught, I think, because the differences, I think, are more significant than the similarities between then and today. Putin is no Khrushchev, and Khrushchev did at one point realize he had miscalculated, and he was willing to accept some kind of a deal. I personally don't see any such indication from President Putin and his surrounding today.

For Ukraine, it's an existential plight. It's an existential plight, plain and simple. It's not about wanting more territory than you're entitled to, it's the realization that what we have been seeing from 2014 is salami tactics. They lobbed off Crimea, so there was some reaction, so then **[unintelligible 00:55:10]**, so everyone said no military solution, and at that time, probably there wasn't, given the state of Ukrainian military. They froze the conflict with the Minsk Accords. What happened? That became a ticking time bomb that Russia could set off when it chose to. At this point, I think the general kind of sentiment in Ukraine is, this is the time of reckoning. We're not going to push this war to our kids, we'll fight and die today. Because at least we have a chance to create a country where our kids are free to shape their own destiny.

I think it's an utterly unsatisfactory answer because the reason I do not see any potential at this point for a settlement or reassurance or negotiation, basically because I don't know what Mr. Putin wants short of the destruction of Ukraine.

Sethi: Well, in the first panel, also, we saw all the panelists struggling to find an answer to that, as to what those assurances could be.

I have this question now on disarmament. Perhaps, Alexander, I can put it to you. This is about how should we view the continuing advancement of disarmament verification technology? Is the international community ignoring some of the other drivers that we should be looking at for moving towards disarmament and verification technologies? Advances is one of them. Is it a force, which is pushing us closer towards a pro-disarmament atmosphere?

Kmentt: I think I mean, I'm not a technical expert, but new technologies can have an incredibly positive contribution to verification efforts. I think, when we look at the verification challenge, as such, it's more a political one, because we actually know how to do verification. It's difficult, as long as verification is conditioned with maintaining strategic stability and nuclear deterrence, because that makes it so difficult, but the technical side of it, I mean the IAEA knows its job. We now have open-source opportunities, so there's plenty on the technical side. Still, there are challenges but obviously the real challenges on verification are not technical. They are political ones.

Sethi: Mélanie, I can pose this question to you, because it's about nuclear deterrence, and Stephen Young is asking, given the increased salience of nuclear weapons in Russia and China, the world is a more dangerous place, yet we are told nuclear deterrence is here to stay, and we did start with that conclusion. Is there a tipping point where the changes and the policymakers agree to, because it's too risky to continue down this path of nuclear deterrence? What might that tipping point be?

Rosselet: Historically, you had the arms control began when after the Cuban Missile Crisis, where you had conditions, you had a stalemate on the ground, the two parties considered it, they could not achieve their goals militarily, and there was a very high crisis, and they realized they couldn't go on for forever, but that began arms control. That didn't stop the logics of nuclear deterrence. I don't think there's a tipping point, there's a miracle solution that would be another solution as what we have right now, which is trying to go for a pragmatic, progressive approach of nuclear disarmament, in line with a strategic context. There is no escaping that.

What I fear personally, is that the strong push for abolition will have strategic effects, but only in democracies, because that push that what TPNW achieves is a moral stigmatization, but it is asymmetrical. It works where you have civil societies, it works here, where you can have wonderful debates on the gender and the climate dimension, but it doesn't work in North Korea. I'm not sure TPNW supporters have mentioned success in North Korea or China to make their points. We must work together, and there is no other solution.

Sethi: Michiru, if I can ask you this question. This has come from Scott Sagan, and he's asking, won't the proliferation effect of any Russian use of tactical nuclear weapons depend on whether it is successful or not? If it ends the war in a way that is consistent with Russian war realms, then it would lead to wider proliferation, but if the nuclear use leads to Putin's overthrow or to Russia's defeat, then the result could be less proliferation. Would you agree with that, coming from East Asia, if you have any thoughts here?

Nishida: Yes. Basically, yes. Even if Russia does not use nuclear weapons, I think it could go both ways as well. People might say nuclear deterrence worked, but on the other hand, people might say, "Well, Russia couldn't use nuclear weapons, and deterrence doesn't have any credibility because of the fact that the Russians was able to invade a neighboring country with nuclear weapons, which nuclear weapons was enabler of the invasion, so we should go for nuclear disarmament." I think it could go both ways, even if whether or not Russia actually uses nuclear weapons or not.

Sethi: Certainly. There is a question here from Jess Rogers. We always talk about the need to strengthen norms against use and proliferation. What might be the most effective fora and processes to strengthen those norms?

Mariana, you want to go?

Budjeryn: I think we do have, over the past few decades, several decades, we've built up plenty of very good and viable international institutions. It's just a matter of leveraging what we have. We have NPT. It's an amazingly near-universal forum. We have CTBT and CTBTO that needs to be brought into force. It's a matter of leveraging what we already have.

Just to comment on Scott's excellent remark. I think to a certain extent, yes, it does depend on the outcome, but once again, you can never unwind, you can never undo the damage that has already been done with this conventional strike. I think countries will be looking at that saying, "How can we prevail despite nuclear use? How can we prevent that from happening in the first place?"

I hate saying that because my whole career has been focused on arguing that Ukraine did the right thing, that it was the strength of the non-proliferation regime and non-proliferation norm, and it's exactly what we should be building up, but I see deterrence is working. I hate to admit it. It is working. NATO is deterred. West is deterred. When Russians say, don't interfere, the west doesn't interfere. That to me is a sign that deterrence works.

Now, it's harder to argue the other way around, that Russia bomb NATO supply lines. Maybe that was not their plan in the first place. Maybe they're already struggling to conduct a conventional war with Ukraine. Maybe opening another front with NATO would not be otherwise, if it were not for NATO's nuclear weapons, they would otherwise bomb him. I doubt that. That's a harder case to make, but I see the West as deterred. For people or for countries that see this power of deterrence, it might be a very seductive thing, let's put it that way.

Sethi: Actually, when you have to fight a war in nuclear shadow, I think it does constrain the contours of that war, and India has discovered that. Every time we've been in a crisis with Pakistan, when nuclear weapons are with both the countries, the sense has been that you might have the superior capability, but you do have to look at the consequences of using that capability in a manner that could get the nuclear weapon to be triggered from the other side. That's the hard reality that all of us confront with this.

I have one question on TPNW, Alexander, that I'll ask you, and then there is another question, which can perhaps be our last one given our time constraint, which is to the entire panel. Alexander, to you first, this is about, TPNW member states seem to have made the choice not to make TPNW the divisive issue at the NPT Rev Con. Do you anticipate this will remain the case through the next review cycle also, or is a more aggressive approach needed from TPNW states to push nuclear weapon states to more concrete steps towards disarmament?

Kmentt: Well, the argument that the TPNW is divisive for the NPT only came from the opponents of the TPNW. It's very clear from the TPNW states part, is that this is in full complementarity with the NPT and fully supportive of the NPT. It's actually been always considered as gravely offensive to the states parties that have pushed the TPNW. Just look at Ireland has invented the NPT with the Irish Resolution, essentially. Mexico has led the entire continent to the nuclear weapon-free zone, South Africa, Kazakhstan, or Austria.

These are countries that have very clear direct record of support of the NPT. It was absolutely clear for us, and we actually negotiated in the TPNW framework, a very clear paper on the complementarity that really lays it out very clearly. From our perspective, it's absolutely clear. We go to the NPT with strong positions on nuclear disarmament, as all of us have had over decades, long before the NPTW came in into existence, but it was very clear for us that the TPNW is not a divisive issue.

We simply ask for a very harmless, factual recognition that that's something that happened in the past seven years. It was neither a big ask from us nor a big concession, that it was in the document, which was then not adopted anyway. I think that's the way TPNW states, but this will continue in the NPT. We are supportive of

the NPT. We want to strengthen both the disarmament side and the nonproliferation aspect, so there's no contradiction whatsoever there from our point of view.

Sethi: Great. This is a question for all the panelists. It just very simply asks, Heather Williams has asked this, do you believe a world without nuclear weapons is more secure than the world that we live in now?

I do remember, in this context, reading a paper by Thomas Schelling, Bill Thomas Schelling, in 2009 in *Dædalus*, in which he argued that there is a state of nuclear [unintelligible 01:07:44] between US and Russia, and therefore there is no need for us to move towards a nuclear weapons free world. We know what this world looks like. We don't know what a nuclear weapons-free world will be like, and therefore, whether we should move in that direction at all or not. I think along those lines, Heather is asking, do you believe a world without nuclear weapons is more secure than the world we live in now?

Mélanie, if I can start with you.

Rosselet: Thank you, Heather. It's a very good question, and the answer is, it depends. We have to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons to be a safer world, actually. It's really the crux of the problem how you get there. It has something to do with having a transformative agenda of the international order. It's also responsibility, especially to the nuclear weapon state, to make that change happen, to work for a world that is not just safer, but that is fairer, that is where there is more justice, and where you have solved the job, politics making, and the very tense situation that we have today. Otherwise, the risk is that you don't have nuclear weapons, but you have very strong incentives to start conflicts with conventional wars. We have seen that in the past. It can be very, very violent.

Sethi: Thank you.

Rosselet: We had two world wars, unfortunately.

Sethi: Thank you.

Michiru, your thoughts on that?

Nishida: I want to believe that a world without nuclear weapons would be safer and more secure, but we don't know yet. As Mariana said, deterrence is working to some extent. Without deterrence, this war could have been much wider spread, a more severe one. We have to find a connection between the current world with nuclear deterrence, to a world without nuclear weapons or nuclear deterrence. There's the need for create this connection, connecting logic that create a world where we can all safely sign TPNW, perhaps, in a longer term. I think we have to be more-- work together, not pose apart.

Sethi: Alexander.

Kmentt: It's a important and difficult question, and I think the honest answer is that nobody really knows. I think it's probably very important to be more humble in this debate, anyway, on the acknowledging all the uncertainties on the things that we don't know. The argument goes that without nuclear weapons convention, conflict

would be far more likely. Is that really so? What is really the empirical evidence for it? We don't know. I think it's actually about weighing. What we do know is that if nuclear deterrence fails, it fails catastrophically for the whole world.

Sethi: Sure.

Kmentt: It's ultimately a question of weighing, yes, there may be more conventional conflict, and that could be horrible, certainly not good. I would say at the end of the day, the risk of nuclear deterrence is probably too much of a gamble with the security of the whole world, and it has to be-- and these assumptions and answered around nuclear deterrence need to be weighed against what we do know. That is the empirical evidence on what happens if it fails.

Sethi: If it fails, right.

Kmentt: It's very difficult. If it would be easy, we would have solved this issue long time ago. It's really difficult. I think the knowledge about consequences, and also the better appreciation of risk and the additional risk drivers, and the fact that we have multiple nuclear deterrence relationships, all of them are risky. The new technologies, all of that, plus the better understanding of the complexities of an interrelationship of consequences, I think in my view, very clearly tilt the weighing in the direction we have to find a way out of this paradigm.

Sethi: Thank you.

Mariana, the last 20 words to you.

Budjeryn: A world without nuclear weapons is the world without nuclear crises, and it's a world without the specter of nuclear Armageddon, and the existential threat to humanity. We do know what the world without nuclear weapons looks like, we lived in that world before 1945, for many, many centuries. Whether the experience of two world wars in and of itself might not be enough to deter or prevent another major world war, that's an open question, and I'm not so sure I would be so quick to say that, Oh, without nuclear weapons, there would be automatically another world war.

What I do see, and that's something Mélanie mentioned, is that in this case, in the case when deterrence was not at work, nuclear threats by Russia, and nuclear possession by Russia enabled its invasion. The counterfactual is, would Russia have dared to invade Ukraine had it not been a nuclear weapon state. We don't know for sure, but I think more likely not.

Sethi: That's a thought too. If I can just add my two and a bit to that question about whether that world will be safe or not, and I think it depends on how we get there, the kind of pathway that we carve for ourselves to get to disarmament, because if we think sitting in today's world about what that world will be like, I think it's very different from the steps that we might make our way towards disarmament.

There were many other questions I was unable to take, but they always say a good session is when you end it with the questions buzzing in everyone's head. Thank you so much for being here. It's been a pleasure moderating this session, and thank you to all our speakers.

[applause]

Budjeryn: Thank you so much.

[01:14:25] [END OF AUDIO]