

**THE ARMS TRADE TREATY: A MODEL FOR FUTURE MULTILATERAL
ARMS CONTROL AND DISARMAMENT?
59TH PUGWASH CONFERENCE**

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Ladies and Gentleman

Firstly let me congratulate Pugwash on deciding to include a session on the ATT at this year's conference. If we are to make progress in multilateral arms control and disarmament we need a strong civil society. It is not the task of diplomats to raise public and political awareness about challenges to global security and today's 24/7 media rarely has the attention span or long term commitment to do so.

As a young man I vividly remember the campaigns of Pugwash and others in this room in the 70s and 80s. I was consequently a little surprised to observe on taking up my present job how much of that enthusiasm and energy seemed to have transferred to the conventional agenda and was certainly much stronger than on the WMD side.

I regularly asked people why this might be. I think perhaps 2 main reasons;

Firstly, to quote Kofi Annan " Small Arms and Light Weapons have become the real Weapons of Mass Destruction" and this is very visible. We see it on our TV screens almost every night.

Secondly, no one under 25 can remember the Cold War with its constant threat of nuclear catastrophe; or the environmental disaster of Chernobyl.

Over the past 2 years the nuclear disarmament agenda has successfully been brought back into sharper public focus by the action of our elder statesman notably the 4 horseman - Kissinger, Shultz, Nunn, and Perry; now increasingly drawing in the active participation of their counterparts in Europe who met earlier this week in Berlin under the new European Leadership Network initiative.

This innovative approach is very welcome and has shown itself to be a potent force for civil society to deploy. But we must also find ways to engage and harness the energy and enthusiasm of young people; their belief that the world can be a better place and that they individually can contribute to that.

So tonight's effort to make common cause and share the lessons between the conventional and WMD civil society is something that I applaud and welcome.

So what has the Arms Trade Treaty process to tell us about modern approaches to multilateral diplomacy?

The case for an ATT has just been made by Thomas Schultz-Jagow from Oxfam. Clearly in his and our view the ATT has an intrinsic importance of its own.

However it has, from the time I took on this post been part of a much wider strategic agenda aimed at re-energising multilateral arms control and disarmament after a decade of deadlock. What David Miliband called the "Coalition of Consent" and what William Hague has referred to as a "Distinctive British diplomacy"

The principle difference in the UK approach was the focus on harnessing the shared Interest and Values of other players as opposed to traditional power politics. We also combined elements of private sector approaches to marketing.

So it was quite deliberate that the countries invited to form the Core Group, or Co-Authors, who would drive the ATT process forward in the United Nations (Australia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Kenya, Finland (as EU presidency) and Japan were chosen to reflect a cross section of groups within the UN and global society. This Core Group emerged from a "Ginger Group" (a classic private sector approach to policy formulation) of about 30 states with whom we had been discussing the ATT for some months prior to its launch and who continued to play a very active role behind the scenes.

The decision to reach out and engage with Civil Society and the Business community as closely as we did is a reflection of our desire to engage directly with the stakeholders who sit behind and to a large extent drive, our governments' Values and Interest agenda.

We also deliberately chose to launch the ATT under a mandate from the UNGA because that body, for all its faults and shortcomings, is perhaps the best reflection of our global society at international level.

So the ATT initiative was deliberately not an exercise by the powerful to establish a new norm for the rest of the world community. It was a recognition that in this extraordinarily interconnected and interconnected global society that Thomas has described we may need a new approach to diplomacy.

As the United Kingdom we deliberately sought to harness the support and energy of those who shared our Values; those for whom the lack of regulation of the arms trade and the widespread human suffering that is a direct and terrible consequence was unacceptable. We also reached out to those who, for essentially economic and security reasons, shared our concern about our collective failure to properly regulate this trade, namely those for whom there was a direct Interest in taking action. This is something quite different to "consensus politics". It is not an effort to find compromise, but to harness the crossover in values and interests of others to achieve progress.

This focus on the Values and Interest agenda has proved very powerful. It has a direct corollary in our domestic politics. A good number of our political leaders come from wealthy and powerful elites but we do not elect them because they are wealthy and powerful. We elect them in large part because they reflect our values and our interests.

In the domestic environment politicians are perfectly aware of this and deliberately position themselves to do harness these dynamics. President Clinton's "It's the economy stupid" although he never said that himself, is an appeal to the citizens direct interest in having a job and a reasonable degree of material wealth. The current

fashion of many British politicians for ties and jackets off informality is a deliberate visual signal, not of power but of shared value and interest with the citizen. The failure to pay attention to this aspect of politics in certain parts of the world has been only too apparent in recent months

So in sum what we did with the ATT was transfer the techniques from domestic politics and business onto the international stage. But it would be naive to infer from this that power politics has gone away, or indeed is even in decline at the global level. The establishment of the G20 is surely evidence to the contrary; the creation as its detractors would see it of yet another “Big boys club”.

So many of you are perhaps asking yourselves what has this to do with the WMD agenda? Is there any read across?

I would argue that there is, that we have already started down that road and that unless both diplomats and Civil Society recognise this shift in emphasis then we risk losing an important opportunity.

I am always surprised by the number of our diplomatic colleagues who assume that there is a magic formula for success - the clever argument that will win the day - colleagues who would ask me why the NPT RevCon last year was a success compared to the Copenhagen summit that preceded it by only a few months.

There is no simple answer. Indeed it is probably a subject worthy of a lecture in itself. Personally, I doubt that it was simply a fortunate conjuncture of political circumstances, important though that is to success. In my view an important part of the answer lies in the long and patient work done over the previous three years to engage with a variety of actors, to understand what their concerns were, to understand the shape of their values and interests agenda and to work out ways that we might be able to make common cause, or at the very least acknowledge and if possible respond to their agenda. Civil Society and think tanks played a very important part in this process through thought leadership, but perhaps more significantly by providing platforms where negotiators from all sides could get together and talk off the record.

The unprecedented NPT Review Conference action plan across all 3 pillars agreed last May, is a direct result of that process. Those of us in the room who were present know how difficult that was to negotiate, how much time was debating whether the Non Nuclear Weapons States had “legitimate concerns”. This week’s P5 conference in Paris was the first step by the NPT Nuclear Weapons States to take action along the path that the Action Plans set out and the Paris communiqué clearly acknowledges this fact.

Unfortunately while many Non-Nuclear Weapon States will accept that they too have responsibility for taking forward the NPT Action Plans, to date we have seen very little practical progress towards that end. But this may come in time and I certainly hope so.

Personally, what perhaps concerns me more is the tendency of too many to fail to engage on this new agenda, to take the Nuclear Weapons States’ commitment at face value and then to hold us to it. Instead we see a return to other, older agenda’s where countries seek to deploy “moral power” against the military and political power of the Nuclear Weapons States.

A prime example of this is the pressure for a Nuclear Weapons Convention. The United Kingdom’s position on this is well known. My personal view is that I fail to see how an NWC would add to the international norm already established by the NPT.

International norms, be they those established 40 years ago in the realm of WMD or that which will be established by the ATT are not panaceas. They will not in or by themselves make the world a better or a safer place.

We only need to look at the norms we establish in the domestic environment to observe this. Most of our countries have laws to prevent people driving to fast on the roads and yet these laws are broken many times per day and this in a society with the full panoply of the police and justice system. International society has no such apparatus. States like people will still transgress against the norm.

So in international society's legal norms should be seen for what they are: a codification of the general view of acceptable behaviour a mechanism for applying pressure on those who transgress.

We already have well established norms on WMD. Those who choose not to follow them pay a price for so doing, even if they have not signed up to them. It would in my view be quite misguided and a considerable waste of effort to pursue new norms in the field of WMD, energy that would be better directed in engaging with the newly revitalised process we already have.

So what should be the approach? In a word engagement. The NWS need to continue down the path set out by the NPT Action Plans. If they fail to do this in good faith they will prompt the return to moral versus military power politics I have just referred to. The Non-Nuclear Weapons States also need to engage on the Action Plans to fulfil their part of the bargain. If they do not they will provide the excuse for the Nuclear Weapon States to delay and slow down progress towards their own targets.

We should also always bear in mind that Disarmament, including nuclear disarmament, carries considerable uncertainty and risk. In European history we have managed to get the calculation wrong on average every 20 years and found ourselves in armed conflict.

There are nonetheless good reasons for nuclear reduction that go beyond the moral arguments. Some of you may have caught Gen Rupert Smith's masterful presentation to the UK parliament several weeks ago in which he commented (and I paraphrase) that in today's world the structures of how we thought about security and defence - where we have been able to identify the threat in advance, prepare against it, buy the right equipment, train our forces and so forth - are gone. As he explained we live in a very unfamiliar world, a world of profound change in politico-military thinking and moreover one where government finances are under great pressure. A situation that creates fear and uncertainty because we can't quantify the risk, but where we know that we cannot simply cover it by greater expenditure.

So in conclusion the lesson that I would suggest needs to be drawn from the Arms Trade Treaty process is that both governments and Civil Society need to adopt a new mindset in their approach to multilateral arms control and disarmament, one that better reflects the extraordinary interdependence and interconnectivity of our modern global society. An approach that is guided not by deploying the tools of power politics, be they moral or economic, but by an effort to understand interests and values of our interlocutors and how we can harness those to achieve our aims. The detail of how to do that I must leave to my successors, but the change in mindset is the first step along that road. The progress achieved with the ATT over the past 4 years gives a guide to how that might be done.

Thank you

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