

Interests, Values, and Recognition as Different Dimensions in the Efforts on Nuclear Disarmament and Non Proliferation

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Thank you very much for the invitation to this very fascinating workshop, it is my great pleasure and honour to speak to you. I am a philosopher by training so I do not have the same technical level of scientists and jurists. My reflections deal with the strange way in which, in addressing the problem of disarmament, values, interests and the struggle for recognition play a role. In general, wars are a special type of conflict between collectives. Conflicts between collectives are based on conflicts between individuals, they are far more complex than conflicts between individuals because collectives have their own identity which is not reducible to the identities of individuals but clearly it is grounded in them and therefore it may help to begin with a look at power struggles between individuals in order to understand what the basic categories are.

A power struggle can usually be motivated by conflicting interests. Let us imagine that two people see an object, both are interested in having it, they do not share common practices on the distribution of this object so they enter a struggle. But very soon these types of struggles become struggles for recognition. Why? Well, according to the famous American philosopher and psychologist, George Herbert Mead, our identity is not only based on the I, the principle that reflects on the self, i.e., on what is given in our stream of consciousness, but by our awareness of how other people think about us. That is what he calls the “Me”. The “Me” is identity-relevant, the image that I make of the images that other people have of me, and therefore the struggle for recognition is something important. The identity of a person can be threatened if the “Me”, the image I have of the image of other people about me, is nega-

tive. Now, victory and defeat are always information about oneself and sometimes you want to have this information. The struggle for the object is only a pretext in order to enter a struggle for recognition that allows you to acquire information about yourself. This is particularly the case when you have just acquired a new identity. If you have teenage children you know what I mean. In adolescent crises people have to form a new image of themselves and in this process identity struggles are very important and I am convinced that the bellicosity of young nations corresponds exactly to the same phenomenon. A young nation often has to try to define its own collective identity by measuring it with other nations. It is clear that the conflict with others can solve the conflict of opposing self-interpretations. I do not know exactly who I am. The stronger my own self-interpretation is, the less I am in need of struggles of recognition but if I do not have that then I want to enter into such a struggle and the conflict then becomes an end in itself.

In order to make my point clear that struggles for recognition cannot be reduced to struggles for interest I would like to point to what in game theory is called a “chicken” situation. As you know, game theory has classified different types of conflicts according to the payoff matrix. A chicken situation is one in which the worst result is when both parties defect, the third best when one cooperates and the other defects, the best when oneself defects and the other cooperates and the second best when both cooperate. In such a situation, according to the maximization of the own profit it would be very rational to try to cooperate even if the other has defected, because one pays a higher price if one defects oneself. But it is a form of self-respect that leads a person to opt for the defection. Even if it leads to the worst possible outcome, one wants to be in the same position as the other.

At the same time people understand quickly that conflicts have negative consequences, not only on the level of the interests. With regard to the moral situation, one has to respect all human persons, not only oneself, and therefore I have to appeal to values which transcend my point of view and are, in principle, universalisable. That is what distinguishes values from interests. In principle, I can assume that values are valid for everybody. This, on the one hand, can lead to the mitigation of conflicts, because we have now a principle that is shared by several persons but

this is only the case if our values are the same. If we have different values then the power struggle will not be limited but will become even more aggressive. By adding the moral dimension, the other is no longer an opponent, as in a conflict of interests, not even an enemy, as in the struggle of recognition, but he becomes the bearer of evil, and against the bearer of evil particularly drastic measures may be justified.

So it is obvious that in almost all conflicts, even conflicts of interest, there is a tendency to declare that they are conflicts of values, because if it is only my interest why should others care? But if I can appeal to values, I can mobilise public opinion for me, I can perhaps more easily find allies. So I do not deny that in the real life of politics, conflicts of interests, conflicts of values and conflicts of recognition are usually mixed up in a quite complex way but, in principle, I do think that they are three dimensions that are independent of each other and that, if we make a serious effort, we can distinguish between them. Now, what has all this to do with our discussion of the 2010 Review Conference on the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons?

I want to analyse how this conference is motivated according to the three dimensions that I have just distinguished. Let us begin with the interest dimension. Obviously there are two relevant interests in this discussion: the one is the interest in one's own security; the other interest, as has been said several times this morning, is related to economic advantage. Fundamentally, when you have money, you can use it either for immediate consumption, for investments or for military purposes, the famous triad of butter, factories or cannons. So, in principle, there is an economic interest to lower the armaments as long as the same level of security can be achieved. If we can have the same level of security but with less economic expenses people are likely, even on the basis of egoistic interests, to buy into it. And in fact we have a situation that 189 of the 193 states of the world are signatory powers of the NPT. This shows that they must have understood that a general nuclear arms race could endanger them both on the level of security and on the economic level, otherwise we would not have had this enormous support for the NPT. In general we can state, even if international theorists are not in complete agreement of this point, that the more states have nuclear weapons, the likelier it is that they will be used. The argument was challenged by a

famous article in the 1980s that argued, “more would be better”. The central idea of the article by an international theory scholar – it was written at the end of the Cold War when we had a bipolar system – was that, if you have a plurality of agents then, since the possibilities of alliances are very manifold, it becomes completely unpredictable how a war will end. While in a bipolar system, if one system becomes manifestly stronger than the other there may be an incentive to enter a war, in a multipolar system it is less likely because you cannot predict which alliances will be worked out. Still, even if the argument holds – I do not defend it – it presupposes that the use of nuclear weapons is based on a rational calculus. Unfortunately we know that a lot of wars have been brought about by persons who did not think according to rational egoism but were maniacs. We do not have to look very far back into history to find such people and it is clear that the more states have nuclear weapons, the likelier it is that they fall into the hands of such a maniac and therefore I do think that even on the level of individual interest, there can be a consensus that we should limit the states who own nuclear weapons.

Of course it is not necessary that the users of nuclear weapons are states: they could also be non-state agents like terrorist groups and, of course, also here, the more states produce and own nuclear weapons the likelier it is that such weapons, through persons like Khan in Pakistan, may get to such terrorists, although the non-state agents, too, should argue in favour of a limitation of the powers who hold nuclear weapons. In the case of the terrorist groups, the further problem arises that terrorists usually cannot be easily deterred because they are willing to sacrifice their lives and already Aristotle in his *Politics* writes, if someone is willing to be killed, deterrence does not work anymore. One has argued against that that even terrorists can be deterred if you threaten them with the destruction not of their own lives, which they are willing to wage, but with the destruction of their whole culture but obviously this is not a morally acceptable position. You cannot say, if a terrorist uses a nuclear weapon we will destroy the culture from which he or she comes from, this is not morally debatable.

Nevertheless, even if there are, on the level of interest, arguments pushing towards a restriction of the states that have nuclear weapons and the persons who have potential access to them, the actual system is far

from being ideal, even on the level of the interests. First, the five recognised nuclear-weapon states could start an attack against non-nuclear states. They have not done it – as you all know, the only two uses of nuclear weapons occurred in August of 1945; even when a superpower with nuclear weapons might have used them in order to avoid the defeat in a war like Vietnam or Afghanistan they have not used them – but still there is the fear that government policies may change, that in the future a nuclear state may use these weapons and this creates a safety concern which is legitimate. Second, we have three non-signatory states, namely India, Pakistan and Israel, and we have one state that has withdrawn from the NPT, North Korea. The question is, now: how is a single state protected against the non-signatory or withdrawn states? And furthermore we may have legitimate concerns regarding the compliance of signatory states, Iran being the most important example in the current situation. And in fact those states that have not signed or that are withdrawing often use the security concern as an argument for their non signature or the withdrawal. India has argued with regard to China on the necessity of having an atomic bomb, Pakistan with regard to India, Iraq, Syria and possibly Iran may argue with regard to Israel. This leads, of course, to the problem of compliance with such an agreement. Another big problem, which was also discussed far more competently than I could today, is that the enrichment of uranium for light-water-reactor nuclear power stations is, as it has been called, the Achilles' heel of the whole system. The fact that the NPT, as a third pillar, offers the expansion of the civil use of nuclear force increases the possibility of building nuclear weapons if we do not have a very strict, severe system of control.

Still, one has to recognise that there have been states in the last decades that have willingly given up their nuclear programmes. South Africa is the most famous case but also Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan gave up the nuclear weapons that they themselves had not created but had inherited from the Soviet Union. Also Libya has been brought to give up its nuclear program. So it seems that even on the level of interest some states may be willing to give up their weapons. Clearly the situation changed radically in 2006, we already discussed this, with India gaining recognition as a nuclear power by the United States. This was the first time in the regime of the NPT when one of the five nuclear powers more

or less acknowledged the right of another power to own nuclear weapons, and we will discuss in a moment whether there is any moral justification for that.

Security and economic interests may lead people to accept the NPT and even to give up weapons that they have. But we have seen before that conflicts cannot be simply reduced to that, they have to do with what I call “struggles for recognition”, which is very close to what this morning had been called “prestige”. And the justice problem of the NPT is why are there some states that are more equal than others, to paraphrase Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. Why are there five states that are recognised as nuclear-weapon states? Of course, this is linked to the UN Charter of 1945 and this has to do with the outcome of the Second World War. People were willing in 1945 to recognise that the UN could only function and forge some form of consensus on security and other issues with few permanent members of the Security Council with veto right. If we have too many powers with veto right we will have even less binding resolutions of the Security Council. If, at that time, we would have abolished completely the veto right we would have had very very quickly a Third World War because the Soviet Union would have been outvoted by the other four members, she would not have recognised the Security Council resolutions, the Security Council would have been obliged to enforce its legally binding resolutions in order to avoid loss of face – and therefore, realistically, there was no other possibility than having a veto right for the five victor powers. But even if this made a certain sense in 1945, one has to recognise that we will not be able to maintain the status quo of 1945 forever, and it is interesting that, in a certain sense, the Bush Administration showed this conviction when in 2003 it refused the necessity of having a Security Council Resolution for going to war against Iraq. Part of the informal argument was that it is absurd that a country like France can stop the coalition of the willing. Now, the argument is not completely absurd – why should France be able to do it? – but once you begin with such discussions, the whole Pandora box opens up again and people will ask: why should India not be a member of that club if we think that the status quo is no longer valid? One can argue that the different treatment of India and Pakistan had some moral justification, even if I do not want to defend the decision of the Bush Administration to recognise India as

a nuclear power. The two main arguments are that the legitimacy of the United Nations will depend on giving the large states that have a huge population a different status from tiny states. It is simply not fair that a country with more than a billion persons has the same say in international organisations as Liechtenstein, so the fact that India, relatively soon, will become the most populous state in the world makes it a very natural candidate to gain a special recognition in the international system. Furthermore, one has to recognise that India has been relatively good in avoiding the proliferation of nuclear weapons, while Pakistan has an abysmal record. So, the differential treatment of India and Pakistan could be more or less excused on this ground. Again, I do not want to defend it, I am only trying to explain why it has happened.

Now, we see that we have other countries that have backed out from the regime that we have had until now. North Korea and Iran are the two main examples, and they are driven by different concerns. In the case of North Korea, the main reason is the paranoid security need. North Korea knows that it is not very loved either by its own population or by the rest of the world and they think that the nuclear bomb can give them a greater amount of security. I detest the North Korean regime but I do not think that it is an aggressive regime towards the outside anymore. They know that it would be suicidal to attack South Korea, they want to oppress their own population but it is extremely unlikely that North Korea would use their nuclear bombs to attack another country. Nobody would accept that and they know that, despite the paranoid structures of the system.

Iran seems to be driven by other motives, such as the desire to be recognised as a middle power, and this is linked to the desire also to be on equal terms with Israel, which is not an official nuclear power but, as everybody knows, has nuclear weapons. Of course, if Iran gets nuclear weapons it is very likely that this will cause a new arms race in the region, because Iran is not much loved not only by Israel but also by its Arab neighbours. So there are good reasons to try to avoid a nuclear Iran.

Now, I personally think that the new policy of President Obama is correct. We only have a chance to maintain the small numbers of nuclear states if steps are done towards more equality. The three parts of the NPT must be seen as a unit: only if there is obvious willingness to reduce

the nuclear warheads is it likely that people will be willing to try to renounce their own desire to possess more and, therefore, it is extremely psychologically important that we have a continuation of disarmament through START, through the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, through the Fissile Material Cut Off Treaty and so on. Even more important than concrete agreements on various issues is the style of policy. Psychology plays an enormous role in politics, perhaps a greater role than it should but this role is a fact, and clearly the politics of the Bush Administration were not very enticing to the rest of the world. The 2002 National Security Strategy Report was a scandalous document. It was a scandalous document because, in flagrant violation of the Charter of the United Nations, it threatened the use of nuclear weapons even outside of defence situations, even in the case that a state would try to achieve not superiority, but parity with the United States. Every attempt not only to surpass but even to equal the military power of the United States would legitimate the use of pre-emptive force. The document avoided the term "preventive war", but it was fundamentally a legitimization of preventive war, which has been, for good reasons, banned by international law, the main argument being that it is not only difficult but mostly impossible to distinguish preventive war from aggressive war. Fundamentally every aggressive war can be presented as a form of preventive war.

So, the recognition level seems to push even against economic and security interests, towards subversion of the NPT. Therefore our last hope is on the values level, and here the idea is that we need a security guaranteed for the whole planet, that we must avoid wars and nuclear terrorism, that we should use the money that will be gained by disarmament for fighting climate change, mass poverty and so on. The fear that, for example, nuclear attacks by terrorists will lead to the collapse of the rule of law as we know it, even in the countries that are still bulwarks of the rule of law, is a very justified fear. What we have seen in America after September 11, 2001 was quite a threat to the traditional understanding of liberalism, although these attacks were terrible but still quite limited. Imagine that we have a nuclear attack on a major American city, and I would not wage much that democracy and division of powers would stay for a very long time, even in a country with such a strong democratic and liberal tradition as the United States, not

to speak of other countries. So there are, on the value level, strong arguments to try to work in the direction of disarmament. But one has to recognise that also on the level of values and even of right values there are advantages of nuclear weapons. In the bipolar world, this was General Burns' argument this morning, the deterrence with mutually assured destruction (MAD) was probably one factor that avoided a Third World War. We had regional wars but, after an era of very very bloody wars between 1914 and 1945, we were able to avoid the eruption of a hot world war, and it is not unlikely that this was facilitated by the existence of MAD. However, MAD, as we saw before, functions most plausibly in some type of bipolar system. In a multipolar system things become different and one can argue that, since the bipolar system has collapsed and the American hegemony will not last very long, it is extremely important to try to move away from the idea of MAD.

Nevertheless we have to recognise that, as much as we have the desire to limit the nuclear arsenals, it is very unlikely that we can get completely rid of them in any short term. We cannot have too few of them either because the marginal utility of a nuclear weapon would increase in the moment in which only very few would be there. This of course is not to be understood as something against limitation: we have to reduce the amount dramatically.

Now, if we accept the idea that, probably, in the middle term we will have few states with relatively few, much less than today, nuclear weapons, the question remains: how can we increase the security of the other nations? The problem here is enforcement, both against non members and members who have violated the NPT. Without addressing this issue it is naïve to believe that people will be willing to sacrifice their security needs. And, clearly, the way to go is with economic sanctions. However, it is also clear that the Security Council can only operate if one of the five veto powers does not use its veto right and if it gets the three-fifths necessary in order to have a binding resolution. As long as the veto power will be used in order to make the Security Council powerless in front of possible defections, I am not too optimistic that we will be able to come to a real, radical diminution of atomic weapons. It is clear that disarmament needs control mechanisms and, of course, the IAEA has done great things in achieving this and we will have to build up more and

more trust in these international institutions. Now, how does trust develop among states? There are various factors that contribute to that. Clearly speaking with each other, trying to understand the point of view of the other are decisive aspects; crucial is forging both common values and common interests. I personally think that globalisation has, even if it is driven often by purely egoistic forces, the very positive side effect that it makes the interests of the states more and more interdependent. Therefore, the naïve idea that capitalism as such must lead to war is in many aspects counteracted by the globalisation process. There are still forces that may benefit from war but they are not the driving forces of an economy and my hope – and this is what Mariano Grondona will do in his talk – is that, in the long term, we will be able to build up the only long-term solution to the security problem of humankind, namely a multi-layered federal state in which there is a central authority that is able to guarantee security to its members. But we will not see it, it will be a process of many generations. Still we should not lose this idea from our minds. Thank you for your attention.