The US Initiative on Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this paper is to examine and critically evaluate a new US initiative called Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND), which was launched in 2018. CEND’s main argument is that in order to achieve nuclear disarmament it is necessary to improve the international security environment considering a geopolitical point of view. The research question here is “Is CEND useful for promoting nuclear disarmament or for providing a pretext for not working for nuclear disarmament?” First, this paper will introduce the US proposals on this initiative to understand clearly and precisely its contents and intentions, and then survey the argument at the Preparatory Committee for the NPT Review Conference in 2019 to understand well the arguments for and against the new initiative. In the third section, two meetings for the CEND held in 2019 will be introduced. The fourth section will precisely analyze the contents of CEND’s arguments using the following four criteria: (i) the relationship between nuclear disarmament and security; (ii) the relationship between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation; (iii) the abandonment of the step-by-step approach; and, (iv) the abandonment of the undertakings of the previous NPT review conferences. The fifth section will consist of an evaluation of the contents of the new initiative by some experts. Finally, this paper will conclude with a critical analysis of the initiative and recommend pursuing nuclear disarmament and security simultaneously.

Introduction
The recent diplomatic policies of the US Trump administration based on an “America First” policy show no interest in nuclear disarmament and no intention to support international law. Recently, the United States withdrew from the INF Treaty and has been reluctant to extend the New START. However, the Trump administration launched a new initiative called Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) whose argument is that to achieve nuclear disarmament it is necessary to improve the international security environment considering a geopolitical point of view.

The purpose of this paper is to examine and critically evaluate this new CEND initiative. The research question is “Is CEND useful for promoting nuclear disarmament or for providing a pretext for not working for nuclear disarmament?” The academic analysis of
the contents of CEND is conducted by using the following four criteria: (i) the relationship between nuclear disarmament and security; (ii) the relationship between nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation; (iii) the abandonment of the step-by-step approach; and, (iv) the abandonment of the undertakings of the previous NPT review conferences.

This paper will conclude with a critical analysis of the initiative and recommend pursuing nuclear disarmament and security simultaneously.

**US Proposals on the New Initiative**

To examine and evaluate CEND, it is first necessary to understand well what the United States explains on this new initiative by introducing two important statements by Christopher Ford and one US working paper.

**The Remarks by Ford at the CNS Conference, March 2018**

Assistant Secretary of State Department Christopher Ford, who is the key person on this initiative, made remarks at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS) Nonproliferation Workshop in March 2018, which is the first introduction of the new initiative, stating as follows (Ford 2018).

I would like to say a few words about how it may still be possible to think about disarmament despite the formidable obstacles that stand in its way.

The feasibility of future progress toward disarmament depends upon the geopolitical condition facing actual or would-be nuclear weapons possessors. Disarmament is an endeavor in which all states have a responsibility. The global strategic environment is worsening. A reassessment of traditional approaches is needed if disarmament policy is to remain intelligibly and defensibly consistent with U.S. national security interests, with the preservation of international peace and security, and indeed with the disarmament vision articulated in the NPT itself.

We have therefore begun to articulate a new approach to disarmament diplomacy designed to seek ways to increase the odds of achieving a peaceful disarmed world by creating more felicitous strategic conditions by focusing upon the very easing of international tensions and strengthening of trust between states. It focuses upon the geopolitical conditions that affect countries’ perceived need to acquire or retain nuclear weapons.

Reasoning that perceived need for nuclear weapons possession is more a result than a cause of challenging strategic situations, it seems to us that we should address trends and circumstances of threat and competition in global affairs than upon the numbers of weapons itself. The nature, content, and direction of the disarmament discourse will need to take their cues from the exigencies of geopolitical conditions on ongoing basis.

The conditions which would need to look in order to facilitate further disarmament movement and – ideally- the eventual achievement of comprehensive elimination are (i) robust and reliable nonproliferation assurances, (ii) successful curtailment of other WMD threats, (iii) verification of disarmament, (iv) stability after zero by non-nuclear deterrence, and (v) alleviation of the range of regional and global tensions.

As a conclusion, the only approach to disarmament that has any meaningful chance of success is one that takes into account and tries to address the problematic, the worsening, geopolitical conditions of the present day.
**US Working Paper to the NPT Review Conference Preparatory Committee, April 2018**

The United States submitted the working paper titled “Creating the conditions for nuclear disarmament” and explained its content as follows (United States 2018).

The international community has struggled for decades with the problem of how to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons. If we continue to focus on numerical reductions and the immediate abolition of nuclear weapons, without addressing the real underlying security concerns, we will advance neither the cause of disarmament nor the cause of enhanced collective international security.

We offer some following international security conditions that we believe would likely need to be achieved through specific actions and effective measures in order to facilitate the pursuit of a world without nuclear weapons. (i) the complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment by North Korea of its nuclear programme, (ii) ensuring of the verified compliance by Iran with its non-proliferation obligations, (iii) betterment of regional security environment, (iv) confidence in the adherence and compliance to NPT, (v) moratorium on the production of fissile material, (vi) halting the further increase in nuclear arsenals of all states, (vii) improvement of transparency with regard to nuclear policies, plans and doctrines, (viii) capability and capacity to verify any potential reduction, (ix) compliance with treaty obligations, (x) addressing instances of non-compliance, and (xi) non-diversion of peaceful use to nuclear weapons.

**Remarks by Ford at the Conference on Disarmament (CD), March 2019**

Ford made remarks titled “Our Vision for a Constructive, Collaborative Disarmament Discourse” (Ford 2019a) at the Conference on Disarmament in March 2019 and explained the content of Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND), the name of which was slightly changed, stating as follows.

The challenges we all confront today is how to imagine the disarmament enterprise continuing to move forward in a world in which the prevailing security conditions have been worsening, rather than improving. Our new initiative – on “Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament” (CEND) – aims to help the international community find a path forward by setting in motion a “Creating an Environment Working Group” (CEWG) process. Under its auspices, participating countries would work together first to identify a number of key questions or challenges that would need to be overcome along the road to eventual disarmament, and then to explore possible answers to those questions.

**Arguments at the 2019 NPT Review Conference Preparatory Committee**

This meeting was the most appropriate occasion, where the new initiative was most hotly discussed, and the contents of the initiative were precisely and concretely discussed by many states including nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states.
Arguments by the United States

First, the working paper submitted by the United States titled “Operationalizing the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) Initiative” explains its position as follows (United States 2019a).

The U.S. proposes to launch a structured dialogue on Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND), envisioning the following two main goals for this dialogue. The first is to make concrete progress in identifying and addressing the factors in the international security environment that inhibit prospects for further progress in disarmament. The second goal is to establish a more pragmatic approach to disarmament that can contribute to successful outcome at 2020 Review Conference.

The first meeting of the Creating an Environment Working Group (CEWG) Plenary will take place this summer in Washington. The CEWG Plenary will identify a list of issues or questions relating to the international security environment affecting disarmament prospects and establish subgroups to examine and address these factors.

For example, these factors could be structured around three broad areas: (i) measures to modify the security environment to reduce incentives for states to retain, acquire, or increase their holding of nuclear weapons; (ii) institutions and processes nuclear and non-nuclear weapons states can put in place to bolster nonproliferation efforts and build confidence in nuclear disarmament; or (iii) interim measures to reduce the likelihood of war among nuclear-armed states.

Second, the United States made the following two statements in this meeting. In the statement at the general debate, the United States stated “On disarmament, we are developing a new dialogue exploring ways to ameliorate conditions in the security environment that impede progress toward a future safely and sustainably free of nuclear weapons. As shown by our success in cutting the U.S. nuclear arsenal by 88% after the relaxation of Cold War rivalries, disarmament progress depends – as the NPT Preamble acknowledges – upon easing tensions and strengthening trust. Since the favorable conditions that made that progress possible no longer apply, it is time to build a new disarmament discourse that can help meet these challenges” (United States 2019b). In the statement at the Cluster 1 debate, the United States stated “The CEND initiative grew out of an effort to think creatively but realistically about how to move forward on nuclear disarmament. The traditional, numerically-focused ‘step-by-step’ approach to arms control has gone as far as it can under today’s conditions. The dramatic reductions in nuclear arsenals that took place when Cold War tensions eased have largely run their course, and security conditions have become much less favorable” (United States 2019c).

Opinions of Other Nuclear-Weapon States

First, the opinion of Russia is as follows (Russian Federation 2019).

The process of reducing and limiting nuclear weapons should be based on a step by step approach and the principle of equal and indivisible security. It cannot be conducted in isolation from realities and without establishing prerequisites contributing to gradual steps towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.
Second, the opinion of China is as follows (China 2019).

It is more important to underline the conductive role that the consistent nuclear disarmament progress could play in improving international security environment. It is necessary to take fair and reasonable nuclear disarmament steps of gradual reduction towards a downward balance. The three pillars of NPT, i.e. nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy are complementing each other and should not be partially neglected.

Third, the opinion of the United Kingdom is as follows (United Kingdom 2019).

We believe that further progress towards a world without nuclear weapons can only be made through gradual multilateral disarmament within existing international frameworks, negotiated using a step-by-step approach which takes into account the wider global security context.

Lastly, the opinion of France is as follows (France 2019).

France will continue its present resolute and determined action in favour of realistic and gradual next steps in nuclear disarmament.

**Opinions of Non-Nuclear-Weapon States**

The European Union states that the EU strongly supports all three pillars of the NPT and would continue to promote comprehensive, balanced and full implementation of the 2010 Review Conference Action Plan (European Union 2019).

Japan states that in order to sustain and strengthen the Treaty, it is necessary to make balanced and concrete progress in all three of its pillars. We should renew our commitment to the 2010 Action Plan and other measures agreed in 1995 and 2000. It is necessary to engage in efforts to rebuild trust among states. In this regard, we hope that the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament (CEND) approach proposed by the United States can provide opportunities for constructive and interactive work involving many stakeholders (Japan 2019).

Germany states that the wisdom of this treaty lies in its careful balance of priorities; nuclear disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear technology. That balance is the basis for its almost universal acceptance. The 2010 Action Plan provides an ample menu to re-engage on nuclear disarmament. Such re-engagement must be measured against the background of a challenging security environment. But the challenges in the security environment must not prevent us from seeking further reduction and from reducing the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines, strategies, and policies (Germany 2019).

Australia states that patience, pragmatism, and practicality – a “progressive approach” – is the most sustainable, realistic way forward on disarmament. The dialogue proposed by the United States on “Creating the Environment for Nuclear Disarmament” is a useful initiative that can be taken forward in parallel with other elements of the progressive approach (Australia 2019).

The Netherlands states that progress on disarmament and improving the international security environment go hand in hand. Work on both has to continue simultaneously, to ensure that they strengthen and accelerate each other (Netherlands 2019).
The New Agenda Coalition states that the NAC is proposing specific, action-oriented recommendations to be made to the Review Conference, and as a starting point, reiterates the validity of all commitments and undertakings entered into at the 1995, 2000 and 2010 Review Conferences (New Agenda Coalition 2019).

Ireland states that despite the grave existential threat posed by nuclear weapons, some states have argued that the present environment is not conducive to disarmament, and that pursuing the elimination of nuclear weapons is not realistic at this time. Ireland fully aligns with the Secretary-General’s view that disarmament is more essential in a deteriorated security environment. We equally believe that it is unrealistic to wait for, or expect, a perfect security environment to emerge; no such utopia exists, and if such conditions were necessary for progress, we would never be able to agree or achieve anything, including the Treaty currently under consideration (Ireland 2019).

Sweden states that next year, at the Review Conference, we have to re-affirm the importance of the Treaty and the validity of its previous commitments. Progress has to be made in all three pillars. Disarmament as a discipline should not reduce itself to playing role of a passive observer awaiting the arrival of better times. There are things we should do in the short and medium term which by themselves would contribute to a more conductive security environment. Let us take guidance from the agreed outcomes from 1995, 2000, and 2010. These disarmament commitments represent an *aquis* to be implemented through practical measures (Sweden 2019).

The Non-Aligned Movement States Parties state that the Group reiterates its call for the full implementation of the 13 practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts to implement Article VI of the Treaty, particularly an unequivocal undertaking by NWS to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals (South Africa 2019).

Iran states that during the 2020 Review Conference, we should strongly reject such US concepts as the CCND that aims to create conditionality for nuclear disarmament obligations under article VI and to reinterpret its provisions as well as the nuclear disarmament-related obligations agreed upon at the previous Conferences (Iran 2019).

The Group of Arab States state that balance of the three pillars should be restored to the review process. Excessive attention should not be paid to any one pillar of the Treaty to the detriment of any other. It is necessary to correct the imbalance that has emerged over the past few years as a result of neglecting the nuclear disarmament pillar in favor of the non-proliferation pillar (Arab States 2019).

The working paper submitted under the Chair’s own responsibility “Recommendations by the Chair to the 2020 NPT Review Conference” recommends to reaffirm commitment to the Treaty and its full and urgent implementation and the continued validity of the commitments and undertakings of past review conferences, and to reconfirm that the full, non-discriminatory and balanced implementation of the three pillars of the Treaty remains essential for promoting its credibility and effectiveness and in realizing its objectives (Chairman of Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference 2019).
The Meetings of the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament Working Group (CEWG)

The First Plenary Meeting of the CEWG, July 2019, Washington, D.C.

The first plenary meeting of the Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament Working Group (CEWG) under the auspices of CEND was held on July 2 and 3, 2019 in Washington, D.C. with 97 participants from 42 states.

Ford explained that in order to explore how to come up with more “effective measures” to bring about the “easing of tension and strengthening of trust in order to facilitate” disarmament they will be dividing the Plenary into three groups. The first subgroup deals with “reducing perceived incentives for states to retain, acquire, or increase their holdings of nuclear weapons.” The second subgroup deals with multilateral and other types of institutions and processes to bolster nonproliferation efforts and build confidence in, and further advance, nuclear disarmament.” The third subgroup deals with “interim measures to address risks associated with nuclear weapons and to reduce the likelihood of war among nuclear-armed states.”

He also mentioned that “we hope this will feed into the NPT review process and expect to present some kind of progress report on subgroup work at the 2020 Review Conference, but this effort will obviously extend beyond 2020 and be more encompassing than the NPT” (Ford 2019b).

The participating states are (i) as five nuclear-weapon states, the United States, the Russian Federation, China, the United Kingdom and France; (ii) as three nuclear-armed states outside of the NPT, India, Pakistan and Israel; (iii) as eleven members of NATO and nuclear aligned states with the United States, Canada, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Rumania, Spain, Turkey, Japan, Republic of Korea and Australia; and as the other 19 countries, Algeria, Argentina, Austria, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Finland, Indonesia, Ireland, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, and United Arab Emirates.

The Second Meeting of the CEWG, November 2019, London

The second meeting of the CEWG was held from November 20 to 22, 2019 in London with 62 participants from 31 states and they agreed to pursue a two-year program of work. Ford made the approach and purposes of this initiative clear, stating “the conceptual foundation of this approach is the insight that disarmament can and will move forward only to the degree that the international community is able to address the security issues that underlie states’ rationales for retaining nuclear weapons. The objective of CEND is thus two-fold: to identify the questions that need to be asked to this end, and to start doing the work of trying to answer them” (Ford 2019c).

The Main Issues of the Initiative of the CEND

In order to evaluate the new initiative, some criteria to judge its usefulness, legitimacy, and validity should be determined. The following four criteria are used for that purpose.
Relationship between Nuclear Disarmament and Security

The central issue of this initiative is the relationship between nuclear disarmament and security. The most important message of the new initiative of the CEND is “in order to move disarmament forward, it is necessary to improve the security environment under which states want to acquire or maintain nuclear weapons.” As a result, it argues that “the traditional approach which takes the step-by-step approach focused on the reduction of nuclear weapons should be abandoned.” It asks to shift the focus of effort from nuclear disarmament to the geopolitical security environment surrounding nuclear weapons. The main purpose of this initiative is to improve the geopolitical security environment rather than to pursue nuclear disarmament.

As a theoretical basis, the United States often refers to paragraph 12 of the Preamble of the NPT which stipulates that “desiring to further the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between states in order to facilitate the cessation of the manufacture of nuclear weapons, the liquidation of all their existing stockpiles, and the elimination from national arsenals of nuclear weapons and the means of their delivery pursuant to a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”

As the factual evidence of this reasoning, Ford always refers to the situation in the 1980s and 1990s when nuclear disarmament made excellent progress. They say that nuclear disarmament was possible because the security environment during this time had improved significantly.

However, this argument needs precise logical analysis, because the meaning of “nuclear disarmament” is different in the two cases. In the first part that corresponds to the preambular paragraph 12, nuclear disarmament means the total elimination of nuclear weapons “pursuant to a treaty of general and complete disarmament.” On the other hand, nuclear disarmament in the 1980s and 1990s means “reduction of nuclear weapons.”

It is true that in the case of the final stage of nuclear disarmament, that is, the total elimination of nuclear weapons, we need the easing of international tension and the strengthening of trust between states, but in the case of nuclear reduction as happened in the 1980s and 1990s the easing of tension or strengthening of trust was not necessarily needed. In fact, the first half of Article 6, which stipulates the obligation to pursue negotiations on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, corresponds to preambular paragraph 9, which declares the intention to achieve at the earliest possible date the cessation of the nuclear arms race and to undertake effective measures in the direction of nuclear disarmament.

Against Ford’s statement that the nuclear disarmament of the 1980s and 1990s became possible because of the eased tension and strengthened trust, George Perkovich emphasizes the domestic elements, responding that domestic change in the Soviet Union in the mid-1980s significantly improved the security environment (Perkovich 2019). Thomas Countryman criticizes Ford’s argument because the initiative of the United States ignores the history, stating that there were other times when we had important steps forward on nuclear disarmament despite high tension with the Soviet Union and with Russia (Kurokawa 2019).
China believes that, under current circumstances, it is ever more important to underline the conductive role that the consistent nuclear disarmament progress could play in improving the international security environment. The Netherlands argues that progress on disarmament and improving the international security environment go hand in hand, and work on both has to continue simultaneously, to ensure that they strengthen and accelerate each other. Ireland states that some states have argued that the present environment is not conducive to disarmament, and that pursuing the elimination of nuclear weapons is not realistic at this time. Ireland fully aligns with the Secretary-General’s view that disarmament is more essential in a deteriorated security environment. Sweden warns that disarmament should not reduce itself to playing the role of passive observer awaiting the arrival of better times, and recommends taking short and medium-term measures.

Lyndon Burford, Oliver Meier, and Nick Ritchie criticize the initiative, stating that the conditions framework ignores that nuclear disarmament is not only dependent on the general state of world affairs but, due to the increased transparency, verification, and technical and political cooperation that would necessarily be involved in any serious disarmament progress, disarmament should itself make a major contribution to the lessening of risks and international enmity (Burford, Meier, and Ritchie 2019).

At the stage of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, a completely different security environment will be needed, and as Brad Roberts suggests the collective security regime which is strengthened by reforming the Security Council (Roberts 2019, 25), it is necessary to create a new security environment. However, at the stages before this final point, we should not wait for a new security environment, but pursue concrete nuclear disarmament measures toward the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. The progress in nuclear disarmament and the progress in security environment are interdependent and the progress in one area will help the progress in the other. It is absolutely necessary to take measures for progress in both areas simultaneously.

Relationship between Nuclear Disarmament and Nuclear Non-Proliferation

The working paper submitted by the United States at the 2017 Preparatory Committee explains the US understanding of the content and structure of the NPT as follows (United States 2017).

The core provisions of the Treaty are those that deal with non-proliferation (articles I-III), peaceful uses of nuclear energy (article IV) and disarmament (article VI). These are sometimes mistakenly portrayed as competing interests, and the “bargain” of the Treaty as a collection of trade-offs among these supposedly competing interests. Such descriptions are oversimplified and misleading, and fundamentally misrepresent the structure and benefits of the Treaty. Fundamentally, as its name suggests, the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation is a treaty about non-proliferation. The maintenance of a strong non-proliferation regime benefits also non-nuclear-weapon states, and indeed all parties, by helping create conditions that might permit nuclear disarmament. Disarmament would be unimaginable without strong non-proliferation guarantees.

The working paper submitted by the United States at 2018 Preparatory Committee emphasizes that the implementation of non-proliferation measures, such as de-nuclearization of North Korea, prevention of proliferation by Iran, the universal
adherence to and compliance of the Treaty are indispensable to create an international security environment in order to pursue a world without nuclear weapons. It follows that according to the US interpretation, the three pillars of the NPT do not have the same status, but the pillar of non-proliferation is situated higher than the pillars of nuclear disarmament and peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

However, many states emphasize the balanced and equal treatment of three pillars. China argues that the three pillars of NPT, i.e. nuclear disarmament, nuclear non-proliferation and peaceful uses of nuclear energy are complementing each other and should not be partially neglected. The European Union, Japan, and Germany emphasize that the three pillars should be implemented in a balanced manner. The Group of Arab States explains that it is necessary to correct the imbalance that has emerged over the past few years as a result of neglecting the nuclear disarmament pillar in favor of the non-proliferation pillar.

Paul Meyer explains that the three “pillars” of the NPT should be implemented in a balanced fashion, and a radical re-prioritization of the NPT on the part of key states is needed. He lists, as problems of the NPT, the failure of the nuclear-weapon states to fulfill their nuclear disarmament commitment, the withdrawal from the INF Treaty, the extension of New Start, the Iranian Nuclear Agreement, North Korea nuclear issue, and the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, and universalization of the Treaty (Meyer 2019).

It is right to argue that the central purpose of the NPT is non-proliferation and the obligations of Articles 1 and 2 should legally be implemented as soon as the Treaty enters into force. However, as it is clear from the process of treaty negotiation, if the Treaty had provided for only non-proliferation, so many states would not have joined the Treaty. The Treaty is discriminatory in the sense that only five nuclear-weapon states are permitted to have nuclear weapons. When the obligations of nuclear disarmament and the assistance in peaceful uses of nuclear energy were added, the Treaty was accepted as keeping the balance of obligations between the nuclear-weapon states and non-nuclear-weapon states. Then, the Treaty as a whole acquires its legitimacy and effectiveness. That is the reason why the balanced implementation of three pillars is necessary.

**Abandonment of the Step-By-Step Approach**

The US new initiative starts from the comprehensive abandonment of the step-by-step approach which has been the mainstream of nuclear disarmament supported for a long time not only by the nuclear-weapon states but also by many non-nuclear-weapon states including nuclear aligned states of the United States. The abandonment also means to deny a progressive approach.

Russia, the United Kingdom and France have strongly supported the step-by-step approach. The non-nuclear-weapon states which are nuclear allies with the United States, following the US intension, has proposed the building blocks approach, which has been submitted by the 12 states organizing the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Initiative (NPDI). Sweden has proposed a stepping stones approach, and the New Agenda Coalition has proposed taking forward a nuclear disarmament approach. They are all progressive approaches including the step-by-step approach.
Meyer criticizes the US abandonment, stating that to abandon the step-by-step approach and measurable benchmarks in order to embrace the vague and subjective criteria of the new environment discourse will be a difficult policy pill to swallow for those allies who have doggedly supported the mainstream, NPT-centric prescription for achieving nuclear disarmament. This movement of the policy goalposts also will complicate prospects for success at the 2020 NPT Review Conference (Meyer 2018, 10).

To abandon the step-by-step approach which has been supported by many states means not to conduct negotiations for nuclear disarmament until a new security environment suited for nuclear disarmament is created. It means the abandonment of the efforts necessary in order to implement the obligations under Article 6 of the NPT. This will be extremely difficult for not only non-nuclear-weapon states but also for other nuclear-weapon states to accept.

Abandonment of the Undertakings of the Previous NPT Review Conferences

The new US initiative also denies and abandons the traditional way of nuclear disarmament negotiation by abandoning the undertakings agreed by consensus at the previous NPT review conferences which have been held every 5 years. The undertakings of the previous conferences in principle oblige every state party to behave accordingly. In particular, the undertakings agreed in 1995, 2000, and 2010 include important concrete measures for nuclear disarmament which should be implemented in short or medium terms. At the 2019 Preparatory Committee, almost all non-nuclear-weapon states, including the European Union, Japan, Germany, the New Agenda Coalition, Sweden, and the Group of Non-Aligned States, expressed that the undertakings were valid and strongly asked the nuclear-weapon states to implement them as soon as possible.

Tariq Rauf sharply criticizes the CEND, stating that the CEND is based on a tabula rasa approach, casting aside the various measures agreed by consensus at the 1995, 2000, and 2010 NPT Review Conferences, thus starting from a clean slate. Thus, the CEND/CEWG as presently formulated is serving the cause of “creating conditions to never disarm” (Rauf 2019).

The new US initiative which intends to abandon the undertakings agreed by consensus at the previous NPT Review Conferences seems to be very difficult for the non-nuclear-weapon states that want to make progress in nuclear disarmament through the development at the NPT process, to accept.

Evaluation of the Initiative of the CEND

Some experts have examined and evaluated the CEND initiative from various perspectives. Commentary from some of these experts is provided below:

A highly evaluated opinion, by Rizwana Abbasi, states as follows (Abbasi 2019).

The contemporary global environment has created a disarmament crisis thereby challenging the relevance of the existing nuclear non-proliferation mechanisms. The CEND can play a leading role by initiating dialogue on managing states’ bilateral conflicts, fostering peace for CBMs, and mitigating growing asymmetries and managing their threat perceptions that in turn would preserve arms control culture. Thereby the CEND could make non-
proliferation regimes consistent to current realities and create an environment for global nuclear disarmament.

Brad Roberts, examining the next steps for US policy which seeks to take a longer view of the next big steps in policy development, states, “Dr. Ford’s attempt to focus the international community on a better understanding of the necessary conditions should serve us well” (Roberts 2019, 25).

Heather Williams who is one of the facilitators of three subgroups states as follows (Williams 2020).

New forum, such as CEND and “stepping stones”, serve a practical purpose of generating new ideas for promoting nuclear disarmament and reducing nuclear risk. These compliment rather than compete with the existing fora. CEND is unique for two main reasons. First, its participants include six NGO experts, all five NPT nuclear-weapon states (NWS), and also nuclear possessors outside the NPT, unlike the NPT review process. Secondly, CEND is exceptional for its informality, in contrast to the NPT review process and the CD, encouraging creative thinking and a problem-solving approach. Ultimately, the global order must adapt to meet the geopolitical and technological challenges of the 21 century. CEND is but one initiative of many to achieve just that.

Thomas Countryman comments on both the negative and positive sides of the CEND as follows (Kurokawa 2019).

The negative side is that an important part of creating the environment for nuclear disarmament is to try to achieve nuclear disarmament, but I think for some in the administration, talking about creating an environment is the excuse for doing nothing at all. The positive side is that this forum provides something that has been lacking in arms control discussions in the world and this is a place to speak less formally, more creatively, more confidentially about some of the real conceptual obstacles that we face.

Paul Meyer strongly criticizes the CEND, stating that by proposing that the agreed NPT benchmarks on nuclear disarmament should be ignored in favor of developing a new list of conditions that would facilitate an eventual disarmament progress, the United States is raising the bar on such progress and linking it to transformation in the international security landscape far removed from NPT-specified obligations (Meyer 2018, 11). He also mentions that this is just saying “when the lion lays down with the lamb, and milk and honey flow, we might hope to see some disarmament” (Meyer 2019).

Tariq Rauf also totally denies the initiative, stating “I have rather uncharitably (but accurately) characterized CEND/CEWG as being “based on dreaming of butterflies and unicorns to appear magically and sprinkle fairy dust leading to an uncharted new world of nuclear arms control” (Rauf 2019).

Sharon Squassoni criticizes the initiative, saying “Ford’s signature initiative, ‘Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament,’ is a process that could last forever, and is probably meant to, since its designer believes that nuclear weapons bestow security rather than create risks. Unfortunately, the Trump narrative of great power competition and resurgence of American power leaves little room for serious arms control progress” (Squassoni 2020).

Lindon Burford, Oliver Meier, and Nick Ritchie state “It highlights the barriers to disarmament, rather than exploring ways to make progress. It, therefore, serves primarily
the interests of the nuclear weapon countries, which are reluctant to give up their nuclear weapons” (Burford, Meier, and Ritchie 2019). Daryl Kimball also expresses the concern, stating “Dialogue between nuclear-armed and non-nuclear-weapon states on disarmament can be useful, but the US initiative titled ‘Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament’ must not be allowed to distract from the Trump administration’s lack of political will to engage in common-sense nuclear arms control and risk reduction dialogue with key nuclear actors” (Kimball 2019, 3).

**Conclusion**

As the substantial discussion at the working groups of the CEND has just started, it will take some time to come to the initiative’s conclusion. The US motivations for launching this new initiative seem to be the following two reasons. The first is the adoption and movement towards entry into force of the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The Treaty was initiated and negotiated only by the non-nuclear-weapon states that supported the humanitarian approach with no participation of the nuclear-weapon states and states under the nuclear umbrella. The United States has strongly opposed this treaty, stating that it did not take into account the security aspect and would jeopardize the NPT regime. The United States feels that it is necessary to respond to the Treaty not only by denying its merit but also by introducing a new positive initiative. It is, in a sense, a logical response to emphasize the security aspect of these issues.

The second is the coming meeting of the 2020 NPT Review Conference which will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ratification of the NPT. For the last 5 years no treaty has been concluded on nuclear disarmament but there has been a vigorous nuclear arms race among nuclear-weapon states. Under these circumstances the United States seems to feel the need to demonstrate that the United States is seriously working hard for nuclear disarmament.

However, the principal arguments for the new initiative of Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament are: (i) to concentrate the argument only on security circumstances which may help make progress in nuclear disarmament; (ii) to give priority to nuclear non-proliferation rather than nuclear disarmament; (iii) to abandon the traditional step-by-step approach; and (iv) to abandon the undertakings agreed by consensus at the previous NPT review conferences.

As many non-nuclear-weapon states and many experts in the nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament issues strongly criticize the initiative, it seems difficult to imagine that the logic of the new initiative would be generally accepted. A logical argument is that the new initiative should discuss nuclear disarmament issues directly in parallel with the dialogue about security issues for creating circumstances. The logic that it will focus only on the security aspects with no dialogue on nuclear disarmament issues seems unconvincing.

Generally speaking, when you consider how to promote and strengthen international peace and security, the following four elements are indispensable; (i) strengthening the norms of the prohibition of use of force; (ii) strengthening the mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of international disputes; (iii) strengthening the collective measures to secure compliance and to prevent violation; and (iv)
making progress in disarmament. These four elements are inter-dependent, and the progress in one area would help progress in other areas. In the context of this paper, nuclear disarmament and security are inter-dependent. That is the main reason why nuclear disarmament and security must be pursued simultaneously.

There is a possibility that this initiative is just to dish up an excuse to demonstrate that the United States is working hard for nuclear disarmament, even though its real intension is never to discuss or negotiate nuclear disarmament until the security environment for it is improved. The recent diplomatic policies of the Trump administration, based on an “America First” policy, which show no interest in nuclear disarmament and no intention to support international institutions and international law, seem to strengthen such a doubt. Accordingly, it is expected that the new initiative will have dialogue on both nuclear disarmament and security.

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Notes on Contributor

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