

# Denuclearization Planning Groups and Projects on Denuclearization Design

In our book *Designing Denuclearization* I tell about efforts to put nuclear abolition—zero nuclear weapons—on the agenda, some obstacles that have been encountered, and my views how achieving global zero could be hastened.

“Abolition is inconceivable,” I write, “in the absence of a developed and articulated alternative to the nuclear *status quo*.” To devise that alternative—and many other possibilities to be assessed, revised, abandoned, or incorporated into the structure that replaces present-day nuclear stockpiles and policies—there must be men and women dedicated to its crafting, and who organize their systematic and imaginative work to achieve a practical and persuasive result.

Their working could take any form that was congenial. To help us talk about how it could be carried on we speak of Planning Groups and Projects.

That work could be located anywhere: in government, academia, corporations, think tanks, locales, citizen groups.

Only one institution, in my view, is absolutely obligated to create a Denuclearization Planning Group, whatever they might choose to call it: the state. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) requires that every State Party “pursue negotiations in good faith” on “nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and

complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.” [Article VI] All but four countries—India, Israel, North Korea and Pakistan—are States Party. Article VI states explicitly that it is not just the nuclear powers but instead “Each of the Parties to the Treaty” who must “undertake negotiations ... ” And if those negotiations are to be serious—“in good faith”—every government must prepare to contribute. It follows naturally that each must create something akin to a ‘planning group’ to identify its own requirements and to prepare for its negotiations with others. A strong argument can be made that non-signatories have an obligation to join this exercise.

**NPT Article VI**

Each of the Parties to the Treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.

## Denuclearization Planning

Planning groups, even those within governments, can take any of many forms. It might be a sub-department within a Ministry of External Affairs. It could be a special committee directly under the State Council. Or it could be a complex interagency committee drawn from the Foreign Ministry, Defense, Central Intelligence, Atomic, Treasury, and the Prime Minister’s office.

Whatever the form, it would be the focal point of denuclearization policy. It could have more or less independence. Likely it would be the forum for negotiation across agencies, the place where officers representing distinct aims, responsibilities, and intelligence would thrash out their differences.

With luck it would be staffed by creative problem-solvers, who asked ‘how?’ rather than ‘why must we?’

But it would also need to respond to internal skeptics. If the state were a nuclear weapon state, or a state with advanced pre-weapon nuclear skills, sunk costs and career commitments might inveigh against zero as ‘naïve’ and ‘impractical’ and even ‘dangerous’ to national security. Or the internal skeptics might be motivated by nothing more than political opposition to the incumbent government.

## Projects

Getting to zero and staying there—sustainably, with justice and decency, and in a way that provides security and stability—will not prove an easy matter. The customary approach to such a complex problem is to break it into tractable parts. That is what we should expect of denuclearization.

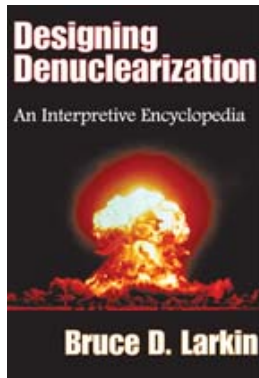
We have already seen this. Nuclear weapon states negotiate reductions, governed by their judgment what is safe. Non-nuclear-weapon states form affinity groups urging that Article VI obligations be faced. Fissile material specialists combine in the International Panel on Fissile Materials, proposing specific measures.

By a lucky coincidence every ‘site’ has its particular concerns, its capabilities, and its unique experience; and these, taken together,

*Designing  
Denuclearization:  
An Interpretive  
Encyclopedia*

**Bruce D. Larkin**  
Professor Emeritus  
Politics  
University of California  
at Santa Cruz

Transaction Publishers  
June 2008  
448 Pages



Global Collaborative on  
**Denuclearization  
Design**

**Bruce D. Larkin**  
Director of Studies

[bruce.larkin@gcdd.net](mailto:bruce.larkin@gcdd.net)  
[larkin@uchicago.edu](mailto:larkin@uchicago.edu)  
1-413-695-0264  
1-360-450-5201  
[www.bruceclarkin.net](http://www.bruceclarkin.net)

[www.gcdd.net](http://www.gcdd.net)

suggest how it could make a fruitful contribution to a global solution. Hence we see 'projects' appropriate to the particulars of each site. Consider these examples.

A city is by definition a complex conurbation characterized by an intense but vulnerable web of infrastructure and transactions. Its population is vulnerable to nuclear attack, as Hiroshima and Nagasaki so vividly demonstrate. And, if an 'important' city, especially one located in a nuclear weapon state, it is probably among the large number of 'countervalue' targets for which another's nuclear weapons can be programmed. It follows that mayors and city councils have an obligation to assess their nuclear vulnerability ... and compare that to the risks entailed in a world of 'conventional' arms.

A group of engineers at a national laboratory, such as Los Alamos, or at Pantex, could focus on the practical requirements of dismantling weapons and warheads. How is the process to be monitored? How are others to be assured that weapons are being dismantled, not slipped into hidden storage? When the warhead itself is taken apart, what is to be done with the resultant fissile material?

Still others, perhaps in academia, will turn to the problem of post-nuclear stability. How are suspicions of cheating best resolved? What methods are most likely to defuse an ordinary conflict between two states, but one that could erupt into large-scale violence? What have we learned about negotiation that will increase the likelihood of pacific settlement of disputes? How can surveillance be applied to better ensure that no state is preparing to 'break out' of zero?

## Projects in Planning Groups

This brief survey is sufficient to show that a 'planning group' need not be lodged at the center of the State. Civic organizations and corporations, for example, can develop whole scenarios to achieve and maintain zero.

A planning group, then, might be a handful of specialists, or a deeply-staffed and well-equipped Centre. In principle, and in practice, a 'project' can be devised and undertaken by a single individual.

## 3 Rules of Thumb for Planners

[1] Best practice is to conduct study, design, and discussion with others *in the open*. There third parties can see the reasons advanced, and judge them. A broader consensus can be built around attractive steps.<sup>1</sup>

[2] A consensus is required for zero: "that the risks and uncertainties under denuclearization are significantly less, and more tractable, than the risk and uncertainties inherent in nuclearism, and that the risks inherent in nuclearism are not tolerable." [*Designing Denuclearization*, p. x]

[3] How much transparency is needed to resolve suspicion of cheating? The 'satisfaction rule': "the verification offered must be sufficient in type and extent, to satisfy any doubting party that another party is in compliance with the agreement." [*Designing Denuclearization*, p. 258].

---

<sup>1</sup> State planning groups, engaged in intense *internal* negotiations as well as contacts with their counterparts in other States, may need to keep 'secrets', at least for a time. After all, they must explore the grounds for agreement and bring agreement to completion. But those claiming need for 'secrets' bear the burden of proof.