

Summary

Panel Discussion, 18.03.2010

„A world free of nuclear weapons? Progress on Obama’s Prague Agenda“

Stefanie Errath

Welcome:

Otmar Höll (oiip)

Moderation:

Christoph Prantner (Der Standard)

Statement:

Glyn Davies (Ambassador – U.S. Mission to International Organisations in Vienna)

Heinz Gärtner (oiip)

Alexander Kmentt (CTBTO)

Markus Kornprobst (Diplomatic Academy of Vienna)

Venue: Festsaal Bundesgymnasium, Wasagasse 10, 1090 Wien

Number of Participants: ca. 180

In cooperation with the U.S Mission to International Organisations in Vienna, the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Akademisches Forum für Außenpolitik (AFA), the Renner Institute and DER STANDARD

Otmar Höll, director of the Austrian Institute for International Affairs (oiip), welcomed the attendants of the panel discussion and started with some introductory remarks about the Progress in Obama's Prague Agenda. Mr. Höll pointed out that Obama's speech offers a great vision. He also commented that Obama's commitment to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons is a long term plan that should be pursued. It is clear to everyone that many steps need to be made to implement this plan. However, this ambitious goal should ultimately create a brighter future for everyone.

Following the introduction, the moderator, **Christoph Prantner**, welcomed the participants and referred to Obama's central message, that America is seeking peace without the use of nuclear weapons and that everyone should have the right to live free from the fear of nuclear weapons.

The aim of this panel discussion was to discuss Obama's ambitious plan that he announced in Prague last year and to question whether there is progress being made and where the problems lie. Mr. **Glyn Davies**, the ambassador of the United States Mission to International Organisations in Vienna, pointed out that the world is increasingly making use of nuclear power and nuclear weapons. There are always two sides to nuclear power, a positive and a negative side. It is important to advance the positive one, the peaceful use of nuclear technology, and simultaneously, to reduce the dangers of nuclear weapons. According to Mr. Davies, Prague was just the beginning of a comprehensive approach that should be adopted in the near future. Obama's goal, to reduce global nuclear dangers, must certainly be achieved. It is not only the United States that should take action and assume responsibility to free the world of nuclear weapons; this must be a global process. One step forward has been made with the negotiations concerning a new START Treaty with Russia, which should be ratified by the U.S. Senate this year. The most important aspect of this new treaty deals with a strategic stability against nuclear proliferation, by showing the world that the leading nuclear powers will reduce their nuclear power. The ambassador stressed that there is a new and delicate problem caused by nuclear power – the increasing threat of nuclear terrorism. Therefore, it is important that the existing treaties, as well as those that haven't been put into action yet (most notably the NPT (Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons) and the CTBT

(Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty)), are strengthened and implemented. Furthermore, the states should work together to improve the nuclear security culture. According to Mr. Davies, currently the situation in Iran is a major problem and a significant instability factor. Almost a year ago the western world, and especially Obama, offered to work together with Iran for a future in civil nuclear programmes for peaceful means. Unfortunately, Iran dismissed the opportunity to secure the means to produce isotopes for medical treatment. The unwillingness of Iran to accept the IAEA proposals demonstrates a big problem for the U.S. and the international community. This is a major problem that must be solved and Iran must be held accountable to the lack of progress in Obama's goal. Mr. Davies suggested to create a framework of civil nuclear proliferation, including an international fuel bank, so the international community can access peaceful power without increasing the risks of proliferation.

According to **Heinz Gärtner**, Security expert at the Austrian Institute for International Affairs, Obama's speech in Prague changed the course from mainly concentrating on the NPT Treaty to the disarmament of the nuclear weapon states. During the Bush administration nobody drew much attention to the topic of disarmament. Obama suggested concrete steps towards disarmament. These steps concern a follow-up treaty to the START Treaty, the ratification of the CTBT, a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) and a fuel bank to secure vulnerable and loose nuclear material. According to Obama, there is a changing atmosphere in which you can draw a link between non-proliferation and disarmament. The simplest link states that if there are fewer nukes, there will be less proliferation. Therefore, it is most important for disarmament to demonstrate that nuclear weapons do not enhance power. In his speech Obama also mentioned that the U.S. will retain a deterrent capability as long as nuclear weapons exist. The question now is: How does disarmament relate to deterrence? Mr. Gärtner summarised some points that combine deterrence and disarmament.

These points were:

- Nuclear weapons should strictly be seen as retaliation against a nuclear attack.

- Nuclear weapons should not be used against states without nuclear weapons. Nuclear weapon states should commit themselves to “negative security assurances”.
- Nuclear weapons should be retained only for a second strike. There should not be a first use policy.
- If the United States is going to follow a policy of deterrence it cannot rely on strategic missile defence to intercept large numbers of long-range missiles.
- The number of target countries should be reduced.
- There should be a reliance on conventional deterrence.
- Everyone should recognise that nuclear weapons are useless to fight with and to win a war. They don't increase the possibilities.

Alexander Kmentt, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), referred to two questions. The first one questioned why the CTBT is so important and the second one concerned the development and the progress since last year. The CTBT's aim is to ban nuclear testing everywhere on the planet and to obstruct the development of nuclear weapons. Therefore the CTBT is a mainstay for the Verification Regime and it furthers global disarmament. For the CTBT to include all 44 States that are listed in the Treaty, it must be signed and ratified by them. Nine countries are still missing, among them also the United States. Mr. Kmentt believes that on the basis of Obama's speech in Prague, the U.S. signature and ratification is not far away. He also stated that this would be a big improvement for the CTBT and could maybe encourage the other states to sign this treaty. Without the CTBT it would be hard for the NPT to maintain its ground. Mr. Kmentt also pointed out that there is progress in the right direction but Obama would need more support from the international community free the world from nuclear weapons and achieve greater security against nuclear weapons or nuclear terrorism. On this note, he thinks that a multilateral approach must be implemented to strengthen the CTBT.

The last speaker, **Markus Kornprobst** from the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, reflected on how to make a state refrain from using nuclear weapons. There are two ways of doing it. The first step is coercion and the second one is dissuasion. Obama's speech in Prague is primarily about dissuasion. It is about strengthening

the legitimacy of the NPT and proposing concrete steps. According to Kornprobst, Obama changed a lot with his speech in Prague, because he engaged actors who are normally not so easy to engage. Mr. Kornprobst also referred to relations between states based on the example of North Korea and the USA. How do relations change and what is crucial to them changing? Using an example, he applied the Habitus theory of Bourdieu. Bourdieu stated that everyone takes action because you are used to do so, because you were socialised to do something. If someone comes and changes this pattern, like Obama did with his view of a world without nuclear weapons, you will get a new habitus that gains acceptance. Returning to his example, North Korea versus the USA, Kornprobst questioned how these parties reflect on themselves and on others. As might be expected, the USA as well as North Korea see themselves as peace and security keepers. The second question concerning how they see each other resulted in them both thinking that the other one is a proliferator and an instability factor. Now, if you want to change these views, it will be necessary to try to change things fundamentally. According to Mr. Kornprobst you need the human capacity, like Obama has, to change things around and this progress must be supported in a coherent way by other parties.

After all the lecturers had held their speeches there was time for a panel discussion in which the audience was invited to participate. Someone raised the special topic of India. India signed a new nuclear treaty with the United States on 02.03.2006 which led to harsh criticism. Due to this new treaty the IAEA has a supervisory capacity over the civil part of India's nuclear programme. In return, the U.S. ended all the bilateral sanctions against India. Many critics oppose this model because India now has a legal status as a nuclear power, although it has not yet signed the NPT. Mr. Gärtner mentioned the idea of India becoming a bad role model, but in time when it signs the CTBT, it could also become a good role model.

A further question concerned the topic of a nuclear weapons convention. Kmentt stated that he is not very much in favour of the concept of the nuclear weapons convention, but instead of a non-proliferation nuclear regime. The goal should be to try to consolidate it, which means to strengthen the NPT, start negotiations and bring the CTBT into force. In Kmentt's view, maintaining the focus on a nuclear weapons convention would leave a lot of unfinished business and create the same political

problems that are already present in the NP Regime, as well as leading them into a new process. It would be better to consolidate the NP Regime and to fill the loopholes. Following that, a nuclear weapons convention could be ascertained. At this stage, however, it is not a good idea.

It was generally agreed that Obama's speech in Prague was a good and a necessary sign that everybody should be aware of nuclear power problems. There will of course be a long progress needed to reach the desired target, but everyone should be committed to this progress. In order to achieve this goal it will be important to strengthen the NPT, to increase disarmament and to further the peaceful use and dealing with nuclear power.