Report of the 2006 International Student/Young Pugwash Conference

Cairo, Egypt, 9-10 November
Rapporteurs: Adam Breasley and Katie Marvel

Introduction

This report summarizes the proceedings and outcomes of the 4th annual International Student/Young Pugwash (ISYP) Conference, held in Cairo, Egypt from 9 to 10 November 2006. ISYP divided 30 students and young professionals and 2 senior participants from 17 countries into two working groups that met in parallel. Working group A, "Nuclear and Military Threats to Security", consisted of ISYP participants in senior Pugwash working groups 1, 2, and 3. Working group B, "Non-Military Threats to Human Security", was composed of those in senior Pugwash working groups 4, 5, and 6. The working group discussion topics originated in the papers prepared for possible publication in the ISYP Journal www.scienceandworldaffairs.org. This document is the report of the presentations and discussions from both working groups but its content is the sole responsibility of the rapporteurs.

We are grateful for the opportunity to share our thoughts with the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs. It is our hope that this report will enrich the ideas and actions of the entire Pugwash Community.

Working group A

Working Group A addressed nuclear and military threats to security through global and regional WMD proliferation and began with a discussion of the theoretical steps required to denuclearize Israel utilizing WMD Free Zones in the Middle East and Africa. Papers on Turkey’s changing security concerns and commitment to its obligations under international agreements, the Indo-US Nuclear deal and its effect on global and regional security, and the future of the NPT regime were discussed in relation to U.S. military nuclear policy including the war on terror and the changing role of nuclear weapons in U.S. security policy. Papers on the technological culture of war, nuclear testing and uranium mining in Australia, the relevance of the recommendations of the commission on WMD from an African perspective and the relationship between Islam and the West from an Iranian perspective allowed the group to link the regional examples to broader themes.

The definition of security played a central role in the discussions. How do states and the people in them, as well as non-state actors, perceive their security? Do nuclear weapons and WMD play a deterrent role, or do they simply increase threats to security in regions and countries? What role do nuclear weapons play with regard to asymmetric security threats such as terrorism?

During the discussion on the denuclearization of the Middle East, the point was made that if an agreement between Israel and Palestine were reached it would do much to promote cooperative
security agreements by countries in the region and prevent other political interests from delaying the disarmament process. Official diplomatic recognition of Israel by key states in the region may allow discussions on WMD Free Zones to commence.

The group discussed creating a Middle Eastern zone free not only of nuclear weapons, but of all weapons of mass destruction, WMD security issues often transcend state boundaries and can be addressed on a regional level. It was proposed that Japan and Turkey could each play a significant mediating role to create the Zone. A “Track II” initiative modeled after the successful Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) organization, perhaps beginning with co-operation on environmental issues such as water security, would build confidence between actors in the region. It may be possible to promote ratification of the WMD Free Zone treaty in Africa by presenting the benefit such an agreement would have on the continent and relate its importance to the concerns of African citizens.

With regard to the US-India Nuclear deal the U.S. is committing grave proliferation errors to promote its strategic interests in the region. The possible deleterious effect of the deal on security in South Asia is a serious concern. Providing economic and other incentives to halt nuclear and other WMD activities might entice economically suffering countries to pursue a similar route as a bargaining tool. Improving the economic situation in these states would greatly reduce this temptation.

It may be an appropriate time, even within the U.S. military, to push for further strategic nuclear arms reductions. Although significant reductions have been achieved since the Cold War, several U.S. government programs may make further reductions possible. Concerns were raised about plans for a new generation of U.S. nuclear weapons that would require building a new weapons production infrastructure. This would require training another generation of nuclear weapons scientists; here, we hope that Pugwash can continue to stress and promote its founding principle of social responsibility for scientists.

A paper illustrated the Australian history of the British nuclear testing program and its impact on the indigenous nations in Australia. Indigenous Australians continue to be affected by uranium mining on their land and violation of their rights through an undeclared war. We hope that Pugwash will continue to support the renunciation of war, declared and undeclared, as a means of resolving international disputes.

The process of implementing the recommendations of the Blix Commission on WMD in an African context is constrained by various factors. Implementation problems include the porous nature of African borders, more urgent priorities put on economic, violence, and health problems in African countries, and the growth of terrorist cells within Africa. It was noted that biological weapons present a unique problem for the already compromised African continent with a limited capacity and resources to respond to an attack.

Politically motivated rhetoric can escalate security threats. During the senior conference we heard much talk about the Clash of Civilizations, particularly with regard to Islam and the West. A United Nations (and religious leader) led Track II program can promote Dialogue among Civilizations as a new paradigm in international relations.
The technological culture of war is given its ultimate expression in the development of nuclear weapons. Pugwash, with its continuing emphasis on fostering a culture of dialogue and mutual goodwill by promoting the social responsibility of scientists can foster a new technological culture of peace.

**Working group B**

Fundamental to the discussion in Working Group B and in keeping with the spirit of the Russell-Einstein manifesto, was a willingness to reject conventional models and to learn to think in a new way. Defining security without reference to a military apparatus requires not only a redefinition of the traditional concept of security, but also an ability to search for connections and subtleties rather than simple cause-and-effect explanations. The working group attempted to tackle the complexity of human security through a wide ranging series of presentations and discussions representing a diverse set of backgrounds and views.

The presentations started with a discussion on the international criminal responsibility for abuse of power, which considered the ways in which those responsible for crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide may be subject to prosecution. The International Criminal Court, supported by 102 countries, has provided a mechanism for holding those who abuse their positions of power accountable. The need to raise awareness of the international framework for criminal prosecution among victims, potential aggressors, and among the international community as a whole was stressed during the discussions.

A presentation on the security of internally displaced persons emphasized the precarious security situation of those who have been displaced within their own country, arguing that many governments fail to protect these extremely vulnerable segments of their own populations. Recently this issue has led to a serious challenge to the notion of state sovereignty in the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect as put forward and reaffirmed by the United Nations. Each state has the responsibility to prevent conflicts, protect its citizens, and rebuild after disasters; if it is unwilling or unable to do so, it will then abrogate its sovereignty, transferring responsibility to the international community. Questions regarding the implementation and possible abuse of this principle still remain, and it is as yet unclear how or whether to implement it in real terms.

The group discussed a prepared statement about the role of credibility in approaches to democratization in the Middle East that compared the aggressive policies of the United States, including "democratic warfare" and the "Greater Middle East" initiative, with the European-Mediterranean partnership initiative, finding both incomplete and unsatisfactory approaches to democratization. The EU's attempt at partnership suffers from credibility issues, as the EU appears to fear and distrust the outcomes of democratic elections in the Middle East. Any democratization attempt necessarily raises questions of ownership and partnership, as well as the need to inject credibility, transparency, and legitimacy into the process. Discussions centered around themes of transparency and credibility in international and local organizations, as well as the effectiveness of policy implementation at different levels.
Additional presentations focused on country-specific issues and initiatives. The group discussed the issue of opium cultivation in Afghanistan, outlining the historical and contemporary factors that have made the country the world’s leading supplier of opiates. The opium economy poses a security threat on local, regional and international levels. Opium cultivation provides a funding source for Al Qaeda and the Taliban; it encourages corruption and warlordism in government and it destabilizes buyer countries through addiction and its attendant problems. Licensing of the crop for medicinal purposes can help to control the flow of opium from the country and to combat these threats; however, only an improved ground security situation will help eradicate the problem.

On a different track, discussions dealt with the youth perspective on food security and human security in developing countries explained some of the health and nutrition threats faced by the population of India. The problem is interconnected with unemployment and economic security and can be alleviated by creating specific job programs for Indians under the age of 25.

The potential of knowledge systems was illustrated by a presentation on an integrated approach to land management for the mitigation of health hazards, through a framework based on the use of GIS technology. "Smart map" methods can be used to identify and investigate potential threats, but there is a need to integrate these methods within a wider multidisciplinary framework. Indigenous knowledge, in combination with relevant technology and science can help to address issues of human security. The African Institute for Mathematical Sciences is a good example of a successful capacity building project in South Africa used to train highly qualified researchers through its pan-African focus, innovative teaching methods, and especially its reliance on free and open source software and educational materials.

It is important to understand the psychology of societies at war which affects the political and social identity in conflict situations. It is very easy for combatant groups to demonize "the Other" with devastating consequences. This is illustrated by the lack of trust and good faith in negotiations, particularly between Israel and Palestine.

The working group B papers illustrated four basic themes. First, participants were concerned about the availability of information- who controls it, who may access is, and how we, as individuals and ISYP members, can raise the awareness of important issues. We believe it is a vital objective in conflict situations to raise awareness of both sides’ concerns, constraints, and limitations, as well as to focus on awareness of one's own responsibilities and opportunities. Second, we are concerned with issues of legitimacy: how do institutions achieve the credibility and trust necessary to effectively implement international law? In order to increase the legitimacy and credibility of international norms and organizations, the objective must be to provide a framework for effective, transparent implementation. Third, how can the international community implement policies without succumbing to traditional dynamics of power and colonization? Often the international community appears to apply arbitrary and inconsistent standards to conflict management, ensuring civilians are lost in the struggle. To this end, we must work to secure civilians and the democratic process and to bring abuses and double standards to the forefront of the discussion. The relationship between state security and the security of citizens is interdependent, encompassing economic, agricultural, community, and personal security. The objective is to develop an integrated framework to address this fundamental complexity.
Proposed solutions relating to all four themes focused on training, education, and awareness. Proposals included a training course for young media professionals “the tastemakers of the future” as well as programs to identify and train those who can liaise between government and grassroots to serve as agents of change.

Conclusion: ISYP Statement, Cairo 2006

In a world where the risks and threats to the survival of humankind continue to remain great, not least from the breakdown in traditional arms control and renewed proliferation threats, it is important to remember our humanity and not to be motivated by fear.

Recalling the 2005 ISYP Vision Statement Mission Possible: Engaging a New Generation, the challenges faced by future generations will not be solved only through diplomacy and the traditional political channels of negotiations. Youth has a tremendous potential to address these challenges. However, new and concerted approaches are required for the realization of a prosperous, equitable and a peaceful future.

Increased dialogue, among and with the youth, and an understanding of the complexity of conflict and fragility of peace are necessary tools to exploit this potential. Young people should embrace the idea that the responsibility to protect can also be exercised at individual level.

Raising awareness, creating expertise and engaging in dialogue are the means to enhance the potential of a peaceful future. Contributing to this end, young people can initiate novel programs which are both creative and feasible. In this area organizations such as ISYP play an important role.

Conference participants

Juan Pablo Pardo-Guerra, Mexico/UK
Benjamin Rusek, USA
Irma Van der Molen, Netherlands
Nagappan Parasuraman, India
Rian Leith, South Africa
Wakana Mukai, Japan
Karim Kadry, Egypt
Arthur Petersen, Netherlands
Christine Rovner, USA
Antoinette Hildering, Netherlands
Ulrike Wunderle, Germany
Sebnem Udum, Turkey
Eli Lipetz, Canada
Katherine Marvel, UK
Aleksandra Dzisiów-Szuszczykiewicz, Poland
Hussein Karakra, Palestine
Almotaz Abadi, Palestine
Joelien Pretorius, South Africa
Adam Breasley, Australia
Immaculate Motsi, South Africa
Moeed Khan, Pakistan
Noam Rahamim, Israel
Zohar Navot, Israel
László Csicsmann, Hungary
Alan Mc Gowan, USA
Peter Bebawy, Egypt
Nermine Mounir, Egypt
Kareem Madkour, Egypt
Salma Nagy, Egypt
Inas Ezz, Egypt