

## **A conversation with Carl Robichaud on October 14, 2014**

### **Participants**

- Carl Robichaud – Program Officer, International Peace and Security Program, the Carnegie Corporation of New York
- Nick Beckstead – Research Analyst, the Open Philanthropy Project

**Note:** These notes were compiled by the Open Philanthropy Project and give an overview of the major points made by Mr. Robichaud.

### **Summary**

The Open Philanthropy Project spoke with Mr. Robichaud of the Carnegie Corporation as part of its investigation into nuclear weapons policy. Conversation topics included nuclear risks, philanthropic activity in the nuclear sector, and opportunities for future philanthropic involvement in nuclear research and advocacy.

### **Nuclear risks**

While a major nuclear exchange poses an obvious global catastrophic risk, even a single nuclear terrorist event would have a massive effect on geopolitical relationships and global trade flows. If a nuclear device went off in an American city, the social and political response would likely be greater than the response following 9/11. Policymakers and scholars may underestimate the risk of a single nuclear event.

A nuclear war, however, poses a greater threat to civilization. For each pair of countries with a deterrence relationship, there is a risk of nuclear war. This has a cumulative effect – each additional deterrence relationship increases the overall risk of a relationship breaking down and nuclear conflict breaking out.

Most Americans do not view nuclear weapons as a major issue or concern. There is a mistaken perception that since the end of the Cold War nuclear weapons have not posed a significant threat. Millennials and those unfamiliar with the technical aspects of nuclear policy have generally not been interested in nuclear issues.

### **Current philanthropic activity**

A few foundations are funding work on nuclear issues (figures below are estimates):

- **The Carnegie Corporation of New York** – provides approximately \$10 million annually to nuclear issues

- **The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation** – also provides approximately \$10 million annually to nuclear issues
- **Ploughshares Fund** – gives \$4-5 million to nuclear related projects annually, in addition to more modest spending on operational work.
- **The Stanton Foundation** – funds scholarships and fellowships and endows academic chairs;

The Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) has an annual budget of around \$18 million dollars, which primarily goes towards operations; some money is provided to partner organizations through contracts (NTI no longer provides grants, but these contracts are comparable). There are a few smaller foundations that are also funding some projects. In general, nuclear issues are underfunded compared to other issues of great concern.

### **The Carnegie Corporation's work on nuclear policy**

The Carnegie Corporation funds:

- Policy relevant research and dissemination
- Track II diplomacy (focused on Iran and North Korea)
- Training the next generation of nuclear policy experts

The Carnegie Corporation does not fund any direct political advocacy. Some of its grants focus on stopping nuclear proliferation in particular countries (such as Iran and North Korea) while others fund efforts to develop a global system that can detect and deter nuclear proliferation.

### **Philanthropic successes in the nuclear sector**

Because governments tend to address nuclear concerns from narrow, national perspectives, they can misestimate some of the repercussions of their actions. The non-governmental sector, supported by philanthropy, is often able to offer more independent analysis. Over the last fifty years, philanthropy has played an influential role in several nuclear policy advances, such as:

- **Establishing of a theory of deterrence** – in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, research at universities, non-governmental organizations, and think tanks lead to theories of deterrence that have been influential in U.S. nuclear policy and has been adopted elsewhere.
- **The Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program** – this program continues to provide funding and support to secure and clean up nuclear materials in the former U.S.S.R. The program was initiated in the non-governmental sector, largely based on research and pilot projects funded by the MacArthur Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, and the Ford Foundation. Senator Nunn, who sat on the board of the Carnegie Corporation,

was influential in getting the bill through Congress in the early 1990s. The program has been very successful in securing nuclear materials. This program's funding has been the most cost-effective money spent on U.S. national security. Without philanthropic efforts the program would have been implemented much later, if implemented at all.

- **Public opposition to the nuclear arms race** – the civil society and philanthropic sectors helped lead the opposition to the nuclear arms race in the 1980s and educated the public on different arms reduction measures.
- **The New START treaty (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)** – this treaty reduced deployed warheads in the U.S. and Russia to around 1700 each and secured further reductions. The philanthropic sector played an important role in creating political pressure, educating the public about the treaty, and garnering bipartisan support and the endorsement of defense luminaries.

## **Opportunities for further philanthropic investment**

### **Advocacy**

Advocacy efforts in the nuclear sector are underfunded. The Carnegie Corporation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Stanton Foundation do not fund advocacy. Ploughshares Fund supports advocacy, primarily focusing on Iran and the nuclear budget. As a whole, the nuclear sector has a strong research capacity, but a fairly weak advocacy capacity. Many experts in the nuclear sector have struggled to generate interest in nuclear issues and to apply effective pressure to policymakers.

A more established advocacy and communications strategy could help make nuclear policy a more salient issue. This would involve refining the messages nuclear nonproliferation groups promote and broadening their reach to target untapped audiences. This sort of campaign could revitalize the space, but it is currently not a priority of the current philanthropic players.

There are certain nuclear debates that the public will never weigh in on because a large degree of technical sophistication is necessary to understand the issues. However, it is possible to break complicated problems into more decipherable issues. Identifying issues that the public can contribute to and crafting clear messages are important skills. The nuclear sector as a whole is underinvesting in this kind of work.

Generating public engagement was integral to the success of the New START treaty. Public opinion will likely be influential in the future as well. It is important to build an advocacy infrastructure to ensure that organizations can engage the public when the right moment occurs. It is also important to design targeted advocacy campaigns. It is easier to mobilize people if there is a clear and achievable goal. Some civil society campaigns that have focused on eliminating nuclear weapons

have struggled because their goal seems large, abstract, and unattainable in any realistic timeframe.

### *Iran nuclear deal*

Ploughshares Fund has done a good job breaking down the complexities of the Iran nuclear deal into decipherable issues and communicating them with the public. Because the Iran nuclear deal already has a high degree of public salience, advocacy campaigns could help sway the debate. Furthermore, it is possible to break up the long-term goal of preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons into smaller, more achievable milestones. If a deal is reached, advocacy groups could campaign to ensure that Congress approves the deal.

### *Nuclear budget*

Ploughshares Fund is also funding advocacy work on the nuclear budget. The U.S. government is currently making decisions about whether to buy the next generation of nuclear submarines and bombers. This debate is largely occurring without public interest or oversight.

### *Nuclear terrorism*

A small advocacy campaign in certain vulnerable countries, such as India, Pakistan, or South Africa, could be effective in increasing awareness of the risk of nuclear terrorism. Public engagement on this issue could spur governments to better secure fissile materials.

### *The risk of nuclear war in South Asia*

South Asia poses the greatest risk of nuclear war. A group could perhaps design an advocacy campaign in South Asia to reduce this risk. This would need to involve officials who are still operating in India and Pakistan because security matters are very classified and there is less tolerance for non-governmental organizations openly questioning national policy. However, it might be possible to build a culture that would support a more open debate of security matters and could then identify practical steps that would reduce the likelihood of war between India and Pakistan. Michael Krepon, Co-founder and Senior Associate at the Stimson Center, and Dr. George Perkovich, Vice President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace have experience working on South Asian nuclear issues.

### *Advocacy challenges*

Many of the most pressing issues regarding nuclear policy are not dependent on U.S. policy change. For example, President Obama has stated that he would like to reduce the number of nuclear weapons and the alert level in the U.S. This is not feasible unless Russia agrees to do the same, and President Putin is firmly opposed.

Even the best run U.S. advocacy campaign is not going to influence President Putin, and Russia not especially sensitive to public opinion and advocacy campaigns in general.

### **Overseas policy research**

There is little funding available for overseas policy research. In part this is because there is not a culture of independent research in many of the relevant countries like India, China, Russia, and South Africa. Especially in countries with a strong anti-colonial heritage, there is also a strong opposition to what can be seen as outside meddling, especially when it comes to security issues.

The Carnegie Corporation has charter restrictions that make it difficult to fund research overseas. The MacArthur Foundation is not restricted in this way, but does not usually fund overseas research. Ploughshares Fund does not fund overseas. The Hewlett Foundation used to fund overseas, but it is no longer involved in nuclear issues.

While investing in foreign projects may yield larger returns, Mr. Robichaud would not recommend that a new funder begin its work by funding overseas policy research. Given the political and social complexities, it is much more difficult to develop an effective giving strategy. For example, it is hard to imagine doing any sort of advocacy or policy work in Russia given the current political climate.

However, it is possible to overcome these challenges and fund overseas work successfully. Dr. Peter Jones, Associate Professor at the University of Ottawa, has led track II dialogues in South Asia and the Middle East. The Stimson Center funds fellowships for young Indian and Pakistani scholars to come to the U.S., where they are encouraged to collaborate.

### **Improving existing policies**

Designing sound nuclear policies is a necessary precursor to developing any sort of advocacy campaign. Some current nuclear policies could be improved.

#### *Technological change and deterrence*

As new technologies and weapons become available they threaten to undermine deterrence relationships and increase nuclear risks. For example, development or deployment of anti-ballistic missiles may destabilize deterrence relationships by allowing one side to think it has an advantage in striking first. The same can be said of potentially disruptive technologies like cyberweapons, hypersonic strike, space and anti-space weapons, automated weapons, synthetic bioweapons, and the like. Further research on the relationship between technological change and deterrence is needed to ensure that nuclear policies can anticipate and adapt to new technologies. Individual governments consider these issues, but usually only from

their national perspectives. An independent analysis could assess the risks globally, and understand how these systems interact in potentially destabilizing ways. Research of this sort has led to actionable insights in the past.

The Carnegie Corporation is currently providing a small amount of funding for this type of research and hopes to provide more funding in the future. It put out a request for proposals on this topic in late 2014 and will fund the first round of proposals in fall of 2015. There is likely room for significantly more funding on this issue.

### *Nuclear de-alert policy*

The Carnegie Corporation is funding part of the Natural Resources Defense Council's (NRDC) nuclear program. The NRDC is working on nuclear de-alert issues and believes that both the U.S. and Russia could lower their nuclear alert levels without increasing national security concerns. It is conducting scenario planning of the U.S.-Russia relationship and running workshops in order to develop a better nuclear de-alert policy.

### *Insider threat policy*

When it comes to the risk of nuclear terrorism, virtually all of the most serious incidents of theft or diversion have involved insiders. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences is trying to develop a better policy to address the insider threat challenge in the nuclear sector. The Academy is running workshops with experts on insider threat in these other domains in order to improve policy in the nuclear sphere.

### *Encouraging collaboration*

More communication and collaboration between countries could result in better-designed nuclear policies. For example, China, Japan, and South Korea all have centers of excellence on nuclear security, but until recently they do not communicate with each other; Carnegie Corporation funds workshops that bring these groups together. The primary goal of this project is to foster relationships between nuclear experts in different countries and encourage people to share information and think in new ways. Improving the functioning of these centers is a secondary goal of the project.

## **Increasing capacity at the International Atomic Energy Agency**

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) conducts nuclear governance in order to prevent the military use of nuclear technology and to keep nuclear technology civilian. The IAEA is an important but neglected institution. Its annual safeguards budget is about \$150 million, which is not nearly enough funding to monitor all nuclear activity.

One of the IAEA's major functions is to conduct safeguard assessments. Most countries have signed agreements with the IAEA. These agreements dictate that countries will declare their nuclear material and facilities. Under the standard safeguards agreement, the IAEA in practice serves an accounting function and monitors the declared materials and facilities. In 1993, an Additional Protocol was introduced that gives the IAEA more investigative power to identify undeclared materials. However, many states have not accepted this additional protocol. If Iran had an Additional Protocol in place, the U.S. and other countries could be more confident that the Iran nuclear program is intended for peaceful purposes.

Philanthropies can help support the IAEA and build its capacity in multiple ways including:

- Fund open source analysis on topics that would be of use to the IAEA
- Hold workshops where IAEA staff can learn how to utilize new tools and approaches, such as geospatial analytics and big data analysis (the Carnegie Corporation put on a workshop between IAEA staff and innovators from other sectors in December)
- Support the Vienna Center for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation, which serves as research and training center for the IAEA
- Sponsor dialogues within the IAEA to reduce politicization

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