A Nordic-Canadian nuclear-weapon-free zone

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US Department of State **Photo**

The Canadian Coast Guard Ship Louis S. St-Laurent in August 2011, part of a Canada-United States joint mission to map the continental shelf in the Arctic Ocean.

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If we are truly to move to a nuclear-weapon-free world, we need to replace competitive arms races with the notion of common security.

This will take time, but the strategy the InterAction Council of Former Heads of State and Government has recommended in its Hiroshima Declaration is to move on short-, medium-, and long-term benchmarks simultaneously.

As part of that approach, the InterAction Council recommended that the Arctic Council should begin to discuss security issues within its mandate and that a possible nuclear-weapons-free zone in the Arctic should be one of the items examined.

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which brought the world so close to nuclear annihilation. That crisis was precipitated by the Soviet Union placing nuclear-armed nuclear annihilation. That crisis was precipitated by the Soviet Union placing nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba: the 1967 Treaty of Tlatelolco for Latin America, whose protocols have been ratified by all five nuclear weapon states, ensures that Latin America and the Caribbean will never again be subjected to such nuclear brinksmanship.

The InterAction Council suggested for its medium-term strategy that the Arctic might be a worthy candidate for similar nuclear-weapon-free status. But it recognized that the Arctic is not Latin America in that two nuclear weapon states, the US and Russia, are part of the region. So a nuclearweapon-free Arctic necessitates major changes in the existing nuclear weapons postures of the two nuclear superpowers. That is the bad news.

The good news is that the Arctic is an excellent place to begin implementing a philosophy of common security since progress towards that end has been so rapid since the end of the Cold War. Rather than nuclear-armed anti-aircraft missiles deployed under NORAD to strike Russian bombers flying down from the high Arctic—which was the northern defence policy when I first arrived to work in Ottawa in 1967—today, the Canadian chief of the defence staff hosted fellow northern chiefs of defence (including Russians) at Goose Bay last April to discuss cooperative support measures for emergency management.

This is a positive sign which I hope will become a regular event. The Arctic Council announced the new Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement in 2011 and is currently working on a similar formal undertaking on possible oil spills. Currently, Canada, Russia, and the United States cooperate trilaterally in the air and sea search and rescue exercises, and Canada must make urgent investment in equipment and training to ensure that we can meet our obligations in the new Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement. Moving to Global Zero requires Russia as an enthusiastic partner and the place to start is in the Arctic.

The Canadian Pugwash Group in 2007 took the lead in issuing a call for an Arctic nuclear-weaponfree zone comprising the territory and waters north of the Arctic Circle. This idea is strongly supported by Arctic residents themselves. A recent poll by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation shows that nearly 80 per cent of respondents from across Canada and the Nordic states

back an Arctic nuclear-weapon-free zone.
However, as Pugwash noted, such a zone would impact Russia's nuclear capability far more than the US, because the Russian nuclear submarine fleet is stationed in the Kola Peninsula.
One way to avoid the complexities of dealing directly and immediately with Russian and US nuclear weapons in the Arctic is to concentrate first on a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone. During the Cold War, Finland consistently advocated for this. In the late 1980s a Nordic senior officials' group examined the concept. In 1993, the Nordic Council recommended establishing such a zone. In 2010, a draft law on an Icelandic nuclear weapon-free zone was submitted to the parliament of Iceland.

Denmark, of course, like Canada, Iceland, and Norway, is a member of NATO, an alliance that relies on a nuclear deterrent. A NATO debate about its nuclear strategy, therefore, is a precondition to any nuclear-weapon-free zone, but I am optimistic that this debate is underway. NATO's May 2012 Deterrence and Defence Posture Review stated "the alliance is resolved to seek a safer world for all and to create the conditions for a world without nuclear weapons."

With this principle now established, it is not a bridge too far for NATO to commit to a no-first-use doctrine and to withdraw all tactical nuclear weapons from Europe, as the InterAction Council has recommended. With that accomplished, it should be possible to accommodate Iceland, Denmark and Norway, none of whom allow the storing of nuclear weapons during peacetime, if they wish to declare a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Finland and Sweden, members of the Nordic Council but not NATO, should also be members.

Like the Nordic countries, Canada does not allow nuclear weapons on our territory. So six Arctic countries already fulfill the conditions necessary for a nuclear-weapon-free zone. Recognizing this, Larry Bagnell, a Member of Parliament from Yukon, in 2011 proposed a Canadian nuclear-weapon-free zone as a private members bill.

Once the Nordic countries and Canada create a nuclear-weapon-free zone, the US and Russia could be invited to eventually join. At a minimum, a Nordic-Canadian nuclear-weapon-free zone, valuable in itself, would also ensure that the Arctic dimension would at least be considered in future Russian and US arms control and disarmament negotiations.

Thus, in applying the framework of the Hiroshima Declaration, there are many short-term steps that can be taken in the Arctic to enhance confidence and build concrete cooperation around areas like search and rescue capabilities. Medium-term, the creation of a Nordic nuclear-weapon-free zone, on the way to an Arctic nuclear-weapon-free zone, would be a real benchmark towards the goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world.

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