

# A Future United Nations Parliamentary Assembly at the Intersection of Nuclear Disarmament?

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On September 20th 1963, President John Fitzgerald Kennedy delivered his last speech to the United Nations General Assembly. It would later be recognized and hailed as a visionary strategy of peace. His speech emphasized the urgent need for nuclear disarmament and called for a nuclear test ban treaty with the Soviet Union. The gravity of his speech proved incredibly timely considering the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

Kennedy aimed to end the Cold War with his Soviet counterparts to deny any possibility of nuclear war. Their efforts materialized in the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty signed in Moscow on August 5th, 1963, just one day before the 18th anniversary of the Hiroshima bombing by American forces in 1945. With the resurgence of crowdsourced and right-wing populism, are we condemned to a great rearming of the nuclear club in ways that heed no warnings of Cold War history?

Have our efforts made in the name of nuclear disarmament stalled? One of the most notable pieces of supranational legislation in this area arrived with the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 10th, 1996. The United States, Russia, and China signed the treaty, but never ratified it. India has consistently remained a non-signatory. Arguably, little has been achieved since beyond legislative gestures and performative moonlighting by the Permanent Five as calls for reforming existing nuclear nonproliferation frameworks assume high precedence. To date, the world remains deprived of a comprehensive supranational body dedicated to gainful nuclear disarmament.

With that in mind, do we dare imagine the possibility of a world federal body responsible for the governance of nuclear arms control? Democratization is not typically associated with nuclear

arms control. However, the concept of introducing democratic equity under the auspices of supranational control is as old as atomic warfare itself. The earliest originators of such a supranational body emerged from the advocacy of scientific giants like Albert Einstein and J. Robert Oppenheimer who were instrumental in developing the science that made atomic warfare possible.

They collectively realized the dangers of runaway unilateralism when the realpolitik of nuclear powers is reduced to zero sum ultimatums. However, very little was developed in terms of the mechanics and actual governing dynamics of such a supranational body. Under what supranational authority would it be subordinate? Does the United Nations have the competence and institutional wherewithal for such a task considering its pitfalls?

Subordinating the nuclear arsenals of the world cannot be achieved without benign coercion. One of the greatest obstacles is the United Nations Security Council itself. This is most evidenced when not one nuclear armed nation endorsed, let alone recognized, the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, colloquially known as the Ban Treaty, by the General Assembly in 2017. The basis of the Ban Treaty is the next most logical evolution of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty steeped in Cold War lore.

The latter failed because no specific timeline was adopted to reach a "net-nuclear-zero" objective. A great deal of misplaced trust was afforded to the United States and former Soviet Union under the sweeping assumption that both Cold War heavyweights would disarm and dismantle their nuclear arsenals for purposes of denying the possibility of World War Three in the interest of serving world peace. Little has changed since and renewed fear of a world nuclear conflict is as strong now as it was during the Cold War.

The United Nations Parliamentary Assembly has been proposed as a body subordinate to the General Assembly with the purpose of introducing democratically elected representatives from member states in place of traditional diplomatic appointees. The mere presence of a parliamentary assembly invites comprehensive structural reform of the United Nations through phased evolution.

The argument can be made that a proposed parliamentary assembly was designed to democratize the General Assembly. Time and again, advocates of a parliamentary assembly imagine a General Assembly without haves and have nots.

This inspires three unavoidable questions:

- *Is a proposed parliamentary assembly the next most logical evolution of the General Assembly as member states seek increasing parity with the Security Council to bypass its veto power?*
- *Can the Security Council be reformed by allowing United Nations bodies like a proposed parliamentary assembly to have a permanent seat representing the collective interests of the General Assembly when both are merged to form one body?*

- *Can nuclear arsenals be surrendered to the parliamentary assembly under an ambitious ten-year program to decommission and dismantle nuclear arsenals once placed under supranational control?*

A program dedicated to the incremental abolition of nuclear arsenals by means of supranational oversight is inherently democratic in nature. It is representative of the 95 signatories and 74 states parties that ratified the 2021 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This describes a transformative process that aspires to afford binding authority to the United Nations when tasked with enforcing international law to liberate the human condition from the law of the jungle.

However, are we describing a transformation that is overly ambitious that exceeds the original parameters of a proposed parliamentary assembly? Nuclear arsenals will not be surrendered overnight. It is for that specific reason why advocacy is most urgently needed to combine the General Assembly with a Parliamentary Assembly as a practical albeit working example of United Nations reform in the area of nuclear arms control for purposes of maximizing efficiency in this area while reducing bureaucratic redundancies. An enhanced Parliamentary Assembly will be afforded binding supranational authority to achieve phased nuclear disarmament through Article 109 reform at the General Assembly.

This can be achieved first by introducing the Parliamentary Assembly as a permanent member of the Security Council with an explicit mandate to manage and oversee nuclear disarmament among the Permanent Five while the General Assembly remains an independent body of the United Nations before merging with the Parliamentary Assembly. In the interim, quotas for disarmament can be determined by the General Assembly on an annual basis under the direct supervision of the parliamentary assembly before merging together to form one supranational body.

A nuclear weapons decommissioning facility would effectively fall under the control and authority of the parliamentary assembly operating exclusively in a separate sovereign space outside the dictates of state actors. Effectively, each decommissioning site and facility would be within United Nations territorial sovereignty much like how national embassies exist in host nations.

Reforming the United Nations cannot be achieved without evolving a program dedicated to its comprehensive restructuring. This will be aided by challenging and reimagining our conceptual understanding of sovereignty. Will national state actors maintain a supreme monopoly on the idea of sovereignty considering how nuclear weapons are widely recognized as extensions of state sovereignty? Can a program dedicated to supranational cohesion afford binding authority to the decommissioning of nuclear arsenals as an extension of United Nations authority? A parliamentary assembly represented as a sovereign state actor at the Security Council should and must be the next most logical evolution of the General Assembly.

This further emphasizes why an Article 109 Summit is now urgently required more than ever at the General Assembly to initiate the necessary dialogue on reforming and restructuring the United Nations to circumvent the dead end dictates of the Security Council to uphold

international law through enforceable nuclear disarmament. A world liberated from the scourge of nuclear war is only possible through binding supranational enforcement.