

Forum IV: 2021 World Conference against A and H Bombs

A Nuclear Free Peaceful Asia: The Role of Peace Movements

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It is for a reason that the US, Russia and the Western world have adjusted their geopolitics and geo-economics to Asia in what is labelled the 'Pivot to Asia'. Asia is a center for resources, an engine of some growth for the failed neo liberal growth, one major and several rising powers, but it is also the center for the most unresolved inter state disputes, frozen wars and tensions over sea lanes, nuclearization, all kinds of terrorisms and more. Each of these are the inter-connected dangers that can lead to a nuclear flash point/ accident and escalation. The consequences at a time of global warming and pandemics will be close to extinction.

The unresolved conflicts between states with nuclear missiles in Asia are: (i) North and South Korea dispute (ii) India vs Pakistan (iii) India vs China (iv) US containment of China (v) Russian Far East tensions with the US.

This makes Asia a dangerous site for both nuclear and violent interstate conflicts. Unlike during the Cold War and confrontation between US and Russia there is (i) There is no understanding for peace treaties between these conflicting parties. (ii) There is no equivalent to any disarmament treaty like the SALT, START, INF as there was between Russia and US/NATO (iii) There is no 'hotline' of direct communication between leaders of confronting states. (iv) There is no commitment to 'no first use' of nuclear weapons.

On the contrary these states face: (i) Rise of chauvinist right wing nationalism with deepening of national security states. (ii) Polarization of society into right wing often racist/ communal communities versus the minorities/ pro peace civil society actors (iii) The centrist mass of society has shifted in favor of majoritarianism and accept hegemonic construction of an 'enemy other' in exchange for dreams of economic well being.

This means: (i) aggressive nationalisms that risk wars and militarist policies. (ii) Civil society is under pressure as states suppress dissent, and alternative ideas.

In these circumstances what can peace/social movements do?

1. Build on the legacy of the international peace and anti-nuclear movements.
2. Advocate the success, like TPNW and get other smaller states to sign it.
3. Build broad coalitions with social movements.
4. This coalition with climate and ecological movement is especially important as many places are facing dramatic climate shifts.
5. Build new arguments and advocacy, to show the impact link between nuclear impact/ militarization and climate.
6. The anti-nuclear campaign should align itself with the SDGs.
7. The anti-nuclear movement must use new social media methods.

The demands of the Asian civil society should include:

1. There is a need to develop an Asian Security System separate from the interference of external powers. Popularise the idea of declaring the Indian Ocean and South China Seas as 'Zones of Peace' free of foreign military bases by any country. Call for opposing US sanctions on North Korea and Iran.
2. Call for NATO to decrease defence spending.
3. Call on all states to sign and ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).
4. Promote steps to (a) extend the Bangkok Treaty (Southeast Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone) to incorporate Bangladesh; (b) encourage Nepal to emulate Mongolia by moving towards declaring itself a Single State Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (SSNWFZ). Representative bodies of parliamentarians from some Asian (and European) countries should visit Bangladesh and Nepal to pursue these efforts.
5. (a) Reject the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) wherein the US can forcibly board merchant ships on mere suspicion of carrying material that can claim however loosely to be related to possible production of WMDs. (b) Oppose BMDs and TMDs.
6. Call on the US to normalise political relations and arrange an unconditional peace treaty with N. Korea.
7. Have a demilitarized zones in Asian conflict prone areas.
8. Call for peaceful navigation in Indo-Pacific.