

**Nuclear Weapons and Human Security:
Ending the Conflict**

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Twenty years ago, in 1982, a world commission led by the Swedish diplomat Inga Thorsson published a report on the relationship between disarmament and development. It set out the security options for governments: more money for arms or more money for economic and social development. The world had to make a choice.

An international conference at the U.N. a few years later developed this theme and found that security would be enhanced by parallel processes of disarmament and development. Progressively lower levels of armaments would allow additional money to be added to economic and social development, and these expenditures would in turn contribute to a more stable international system and reduce the need for arms.

Disarmament, sustainable development, and security: a “dynamic triangular relationship” on which to build the foundation for the post-Cold War world. What has happened to this early call for a “peace dividend”?

Two weeks ago, we got the answer. The International Conference on Financing for Development, in Monterey, was held to mobilize resources to boost the development process. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan went to Monterey to plead for an increase of \$50 billion a year in worldwide official aid – a doubling of present levels. Nations pledged only a quarter of that

amount. Nor is there any sign of significant amounts of money for the sustainable development process coming forward at the Rio Plus Ten Conference in South Africa later this year.

In one month's time, world leaders will gather in New York for a major conference focused on global progress for children and the key role that investment in children can play in building global peace and security. This conference comes 12 years after the World Summit for Children, where leaders expressed concern about the plight of children but put up virtually no cash to solve the problem. Since that 1990 World Summit, at least 130 million children, most of them babies, have died of preventable causes, such as diarrhea, malaria, measles, pneumonia, H.I.V./AIDS and malnutrition.

At the Millennium Summit in 2000, world leaders pledged to cut world poverty levels in half by 2015. In rhetoric and perhaps in good intentions, this is pleasing to the ears. But since half the world lives below the poverty level of \$2 per day, since one billion people will be born between now and 2015, 90 percent of these births in lands already the most disadvantaged, and since the laws and regulations of the international financial and trading organizations are still heavily skewed against the interests of developing countries, the goal is likely to remain elusive.

Despite their pleas of inability to pay for development, governments have spent close to \$10 trillion on armaments since 1990, the benchmark year for the end of the Cold War. This includes some \$40 billion worth of weapons that are shipped internationally each year. Both developed and developing countries shoulder the burden for these enormous expenditures. If one could say that peace had been bought at such a price, perhaps it would be tolerable, but in this period some three dozen wars, internal and external, have been fought each year, 5.5 million people have been killed, and inestimable damage to human habitation has been caused by conflict. It staggers the imagination to envision how many schools, water and sanitation plants, health facilities and environmental clean-up operations could have been built for even one-tenth of the \$10 trillion.

A double standard of immense proportions prevails, in which governments in one breath plead an inability to fund social and environmental needs and in the next breath appropriate huge sums for warfare and its preparation. The very year following the cashless Children's Summit, governments suddenly found \$60 billion to prosecute the Gulf War.

The modern world countenances trillions of dollars pumped into armaments while homelessness, starvation, grinding poverty, and a despoiled environment are the lot of hundreds of millions. In fact, the

weapons industry is the world's number two industry. Roughly 70 percent of this spending is done by the North, but the developing countries themselves are spending unaffordable amounts on weapons at the expense of essential health care, medicines, vaccinations, clean water, sanitation, and the other urgent social needs of large and vulnerable populations. All told, military spending represents 12 percent of all government expenditures at a time when citizens of both developed and developing countries feel sharp cuts in social programs such as health, education, and community improvement.

In all the current attention given to the plight of the poor, little consideration is given to the effect of continuing high military expenditures on the ability of governments to devote sufficient resources to economic and social development. The 1987 Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development asked governments to do studies on the conversion of military industry to civilian production and to publicize the benefits that could be derived from the reallocation of military resources. While U.N. studies have shown that a much higher percentage of jobs are created from investment in civilian production than in military production, which is very capital-intensive, governments as a whole have ignored

sponsoring, let alone publicizing, research to show the economic and social benefits of converting military expenditures to human need.

We should heed the warning of 100 Nobel laureates on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Prize: “If we permit the devastating power of modern weaponry to spread through this combustible human landscape, we invite a conflagration that can engulf both rich and poor.” A new awakening to the issue must be achieved now.

The powerful role of nuclear weapons, the most heinous of all the weapons humankind has invented, in the disarmament/development equation must be emphasized. They are the subject of the conference which brings us together today. Unfortunately, nuclear weapons and the topic of the Non-Proliferation Treaty seem to have fallen off the humanitarian priority list. Even here at the U.N. – where core work is done on the integrated agenda for human security – the focus is on, as one official put it to me, “actual and imminently potential crises.” It is as if Hiroshima and Nagasaki are but blips in history and the fact that 5,000 nuclear weapons are still kept today on high-alert status, meaning they could be fired on 15 minutes’ notice, is of little concern.

When the President of the International Court of Justice called nuclear weapons “the ultimate evil,” his words were ignored in the nuclear weapons

states, which continue to hold that nuclear weapons play an essential role in military doctrines. Nuclear retentionists hide the brutalities of nuclear weapons behind a veil of generalities, platitudes and obfuscation. One of the favourite phrases of nuclear proponents is “unintended collateral damage”: any civilian deaths from a nuclear bomb are unfortunate but unintended. Such phrases make a mockery of language. The very nature of the nuclear weapons is to kill *massively*. With their colossal power and capacity for slaughter and destruction, nuclear weapons make no distinction between combatants and non-combatants or between military installations and civilian communities; moreover, the radiation released by these weapons cannot be confined to specific military targets. Nuclear weapons are inhuman tools for mass slaughter and destruction. They stand indicted in the court of world opinion.

In the words of George Kennan, a distinguished American diplomat, who originated the U.S. “containment” policy towards the Soviet Union:

“ . . . the readiness to use nuclear weapons against other human beings -- against people we do not know, whom we have never seen, and whose guilt or innocence it is not for us to establish -- and, in doing so, to place in jeopardy the natural structure upon which all civilization rests, as though the safety and perceived interests of our own generation were more important than everything

that has taken place or could take place in civilization: this is nothing less than a presumption, a blasphemy, an indignity -- an indignity of monstrous dimensions -- offered to God!"

Nuclear weapons contravene every aspect of humanitarian law. They are morally bankrupt. They have cost the world trillions of dollars. They have ruined environments where testing has taken place. They have produced not security but insecurity. They reverse what the United Nations stands for.

Why then is there not a world uproar at the retention today of 31,000 nuclear weapons, at the conduct of the nuclear weapons states which are, at one and the same time, the permanent members of the Security Council and the world's chief arms traders, at a powerful military alliance enfolded many allied states under a nuclear umbrella, at new plans for shifting the posture of nuclear weapons from deterrence to war-fighting, at the proliferation of nuclear weapons to other states, at the "Doomsday Clock" of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists now moved to seven minutes to midnight?

The nuclear powers would not be able to so blithely carry on with their nuclear weapons programs if world consciousness, raised to a new recognition of this evil, demanded abolition. But world consciousness has

been dulled. We have lived with the bomb so long that it has insinuated itself into our thinking.

The attitudes that sustain deadly nuclear arsenals did not fall with the Berlin Wall. Yet for decades the world has been undergoing dramatic change. This new world is surging ahead and does not wait for those who fall behind on the learning curve – this was one of the key lessons of the terrorist attacks of September 11.

While the world was caught up in the Cold War, a global society emerged. In this society, states are no longer the only – or even the primary – members. Changes in technology have resulted in a shift in power from governments to groups and individuals. As September 11 brutally reminded us, some new actors want to use their new-found power toward selfish and violent ends. The terrorists drew our attention to our increased vulnerability, for this is the case when a small group of minimally armed individuals can wreck havoc against the most powerful nation. Now, adding to the nuclear threat that looms above, we are faced with a thriving illicit arms and drug trade, numerous civil conflicts, an AIDS epidemic, famine and pending environmental disaster. These are the perils that are now commonplace existence for much of humanity.

The opportunity opened by the end of the Cold War has been squandered. The nuclear retentionists appear to have succeeded in sowing doubts that disarmament goals are unfeasible. They get away with this intellectual corruption because neither the political order, the media, nor the public has yet summoned up the wrath to denounce the retentionists for the deceit, charlatanry, greed, and power they represent.

Given the pessimistic climate, we might be tempted to despair that we will ever be heard, but that would be the wrong reaction. We are being heard, and the proponents of the status quo are being forced to invent the most preposterous reasons to justify their slavish adherence to weapons that impose an unacceptable cost on humanity.

The time leading up to the 2005 NPT Review is a tremendous opportunity to inject renewed energy into the nuclear weapons debate. The sheer force of this energy must penetrate the consciences of decision-makers in the powerful states and thus transfer the nuclear abolition debate into a whole new field of action. We must rise up above the dominant mindset blocking advancement and infuse the societal and political processes with a dynamic of action.

So formidable are the obstacles to total nuclear disarmament that it is virtually impossible for any one country or any one organization by itself to

effect a change in the policies of the nuclear weapons states. New coalitions to build and exude strength are necessary. This was, in fact, a principle that the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI) was built upon. MPI's unique mission is to influence and assist middle power governments to encourage and educate the nuclear weapons states to commit to immediate practical steps to reduce nuclear dangers and commence negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons. This same principle animated the New Agenda countries which, in a very short period, have achieved remarkable progress.

The new diplomacy of nuclear disarmament that I envision would have a grand coalition of like-minded governments and civil society leaders. Such a powerful combination – linking governments and grass roots movements – could not only dint but pierce the nuclear states' self-serving, protective armour. By their actions at the NPT 2000 Review, these states, powerful as they are, proved that they are not impervious to the organized voices of the world community.

A model for such a coalition is the "Ottawa Process," in which like-minded governments, in this case led by Canada, and highly knowledgeable, dedicated NGOs formed a working partnership. The partnership worked because both wanted the same goal – the elimination of the pernicious evil of landmines. Some say that the Ottawa Process is not transferable to

nuclear weapons because these weapons are central to NWS doctrines whereas landmines are not. I do not agree. In fact, the World Court Project pioneered some aspects of the Ottawa Process. The Partial Test Ban Treaty Amendment Conference, which led the way to the full Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, was driven by a coalition led by Parliamentarians for Global Action. The treaty establishing an International Criminal Court is another example of spontaneous coalitions producing action.

At present there are many non-governmental organizations working in the nuclear disarmament field. Abolition 2000 has tried to erect a huge umbrella over them. But many of the disarmament groups have sub-sets of goals and that makes liaison and joint action difficult. Some are concerned with funding their own domain. All this is understandable, but the nuclear weapons problem is so severe that NGOs need to gravitate around one clear goal in order to have the impact they are capable of. That goal should be to have governments end their doctrine of nuclear deterrence and negotiate the elimination of nuclear arsenals.

NGOs who work in the different fields of security – disarmament, development, environment, human rights – need to learn more about one another's work. While it is true that maintaining detailed knowledge in each field is time-consuming, we must find ways to work together. We need to

concentrate on the central ideas that can unite us all. These ideas can be simply expressed:

- Human security everywhere is threatened by disjointed government priorities that feed militarism and starve the poor.
- God's planet is threatened by the proliferation of nuclear weapons.
- Time is running out before the confluence of economic and social problems produces a massive conflagration.

We can – and we must – work together on these interlocking themes. By working together we can build the conditions for true human security.