

Nuclear Disarmament and Demilitarization

Sean MacBride Peace Prize Laureate Lecture

By [Jacqueline Cabasso](#)

Global Research, November 24, 2008

International Peace Bureau (Denmark) 24
November 2008

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [Nuclear War](#)

International Peace Bureau Sean MacBride Peace Prize Laureate Lecture

Jacqueline Cabasso, November 14, 2008, Copenhagen

Indigenous peoples often remind us that we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

In that vein I'd like to especially honor and remember my beloved friend and mentor Janet Bloomfield, Chair of CND and a co-president of IPB, and Mayor Iccho Itoh of Nagasaki, recipient of the Sean MacBride Peace Prize, with Hiroshima Mayor Tadatoshi Akiba and Mayors for Peace in 2006. Both Janet and Mayor Itoh died tragically in April 2007.

I'd also like to honor and recognize the presence here of my personal and professional colleague – my life partner – John Burroughs, executive director of the Lawyers' Committee on Nuclear Policy. I'd like to thank my parents, who are thinking of me today in California, for raising me with the values recognized by this award.

And, of course, I'd like to thank the International Peace Bureau for this amazing honor, which I proudly share with my colleagues at Western States Legal Foundation, the founding mothers and fathers of the Abolition 2000 Global Network to Eliminate Nuclear Weapons, and many others.

Earlier this week I was in Ypres, Belgium – a city that was attacked with chemical weapons and destroyed during World War I, for a meeting of the Mayors for Peace 2020 Vision Campaign Association. On Tuesday, Nov. 11, I had the opportunity to join the mayors delegation at a solemn ceremony held at the Menin Gate marking the 90th anniversary of the armistice that ended World War I — sadly not, “the war to end all wars.” I was slightly shocked to hear on CNN that there are only 12 living veterans of that war, and was reminded of the axiom that those who don't know their history are doomed to repeat it. To remedy this, the people of Ypres hold a memorial ceremony at the Menin Gate every single day. I also thought about the ever more urgent voices of the hibakusha – the remaining survivors of the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki – who are growing increasingly concerned that nuclear weapons will be used again, and that no one will be left to warn about the impending hell on earth. The impassioned plea of the hibakusha, “Never Again!” should inform and inspire our commitment to work for the abolition of nuclear weapons *sooner*, rather than later.

I'd like to begin by quoting from Sean MacBride's 1974 Nobel Peace Prize lecture, entitled *The Imperatives of Survival*.

"It is nearly with a feeling of despair that I come to your beautiful country and city to receive this hardly deserved honor. Despair partly because we are living in a world where war, violence, brutality and ever increasing armament dominate the thinking of humanity; but, more so, because humanity itself gives the appearance of having become numbed or terrified by its own impotence in the face of disaster."

The often-quoted Gramsci line, "pessimism of the intellect; optimism of the will" is one of our mottos at Western States Legal Foundation. This dichotomy pretty much sums up my longevity as a peace activist, along with my strongly held belief that nonviolence is hope; nonviolence is the belief that change is possible.

Shortly after the U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, Mahatma Gandhi said:

"It has been suggested by American friends that the atom bomb will bring in Ahimsa [Non-violence] as nothing else can. It will, if it is meant that its destructive power will so disgust the world that it will turn away from violence for the time being. This is very like a man glutting himself with dainties [sweets] to the point of nausea and turning away from them, only to return with redoubled zeal after the affect of the nausea is well over.

Precisely in the manner will the world return to violence with renewed zeal after the effect of the disgust is worn out.

So far as I can see, the atomic bomb has deadened the finest feeling that has sustained mankind for ages.... The atom bomb brought an empty victory to the allied armies but it resulted for the time being in destroying the soul of Japan. What has happened to the soul of the destroying nation is yet too early to see...."

I think my generation has seen it very clearly. In his 1995 testimony before the International Court of Justice, Hiroshima Mayor Takashi Hiraoka told the Court:

"History is written by the victors. Thus, the heinous massacre that was Hiroshima has been handed down to us as a perfectly justified act of war. As a result, for over 50 years we have never directly confronted the full implications of this terrifying act for the future of the human race."

Looking around the world today, we see the military legacy of the way in which World War II ended. Here are a few examples from 2008.

On January 22, the Guardian (UK) reported on a "radical" manifesto for NATO reform, prepared by top-ranking retired military officers and strategists from the U.S., Germany, Britain, France and the Netherlands. Though not an official government document, authors of the 150-page "blueprint" for restructuring the transatlantic military partnership, "Towards a Grand Strategy for an Uncertain World," include General John Shalikashvili, former NATO commander in Europe.

The document, which reportedly was presented to the Pentagon and to NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, argues that, *"The first use of nuclear weapons must remain in the quiver of escalation as the ultimate instrument to prevent the use of weapons of mass destruction."* And it calls for a shift from consensus decision-making in NATO to majority voting, thus ending national veto power in order to enable swifter action. We don't know if this ominous document was discussed at the most recent NATO summit in Bucharest, but it may well appear on the agenda of NATO's 60th anniversary meetings next year. This story did not appear in the U.S. press.

On May 9, 2008 Russia – with its new President, Dmitri Medvedev, and new Prime Minister, Vladimir Putin presiding – marked the 63rd anniversary of the Soviet defeat of the Nazis with a huge military parade in Red Square, the first such event since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The international CNN television coverage was very strange. On one hand, commentators played up the fact that this was the first such Russian military parade in 18 years. On the other hand, they derided the condition of Russia's military hardware as "obsolete." I wondered if the potential victims of those "outdated" weapons would agree. One commentator noted an exception for Russia's nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles, which he described as the "most terrifying" of all weapons of mass destruction. While the television pundits stressed that Russia does not pose a military threat, I wondered who the intended audience was for this massive display of military might.

The previous day, the International Herald Tribune had reported that the United States plan to install missile interceptors on Polish soil was in danger of falling apart because of Poland's increasing reluctance to accept the deal. This sounded like good news. Perhaps the new Polish government did not want to cooperate with expanding U.S. militarism. Unfortunately, that was not the case. To the contrary, the Polish government was insisting that the United States contribute financially – as much as \$10 billion – to upgrade Poland's armed forces. Why? The Polish defense minister explained that the U.S. missile shield was designed to protect parts of Europe against missiles fired from Iran. But Poland, now part of NATO, apparently felt that it needed Patriot air-defense missiles to defend itself against its old Cold War ally, Russia, which itself feels threatened by the U.S. anti-missile shield.

In August, after a year and a half of stalled talks, the U.S. and Poland suddenly signed the deal against the backdrop of the sudden military conflict between Russia and Georgia. The BBC reported that Russia's deputy chief of general staff, General Anatoly Nogovitsyn had responded angrily at a Moscow press conference, declaring that U.S. plans for a missile base in Poland "cannot go unpunished." Russia is considering arming its Baltic Fleet with nuclear warheads for the first time since the end of the Cold War. On October 2, Russia announced plans to deploy a new nuclear missile next year designed to penetrate anti-missile defenses and will build eight submarines to carry it. According to Colonel-General Vladimir Popovkin, head of armaments for the Russian armed forces, "As long as we are a nuclear power, no hotheads will venture to attack our country." On November 5, President Medvedev announced that Russia would deploy conventionally armed ballistic missiles in Kaliningrad, in order to "neutralize" the perceived threat from U.S. missile interceptors in Poland and radars in the Czech Republic.

Also this year we have experienced sharply rising oil and food prices and food shortages around the world amidst symptoms of an unprecedented global economic collapse, and an inability to cope with natural disasters like the cyclone in Myanmar/Burma and the

earthquake in China – much less global climate change. Yet rather than redirecting resources badly-needed to meet human and ecological needs, trends seem to be going in the opposite direction.

The Encarta Encyclopedia describes militarism as “advocacy of an ever-stronger military as a primary goal of society, even at the cost of other social priorities and liberties.” As disquieting as it may be, this definition accurately describes the trajectory of United States national security policy that the next U.S. President will inherit. And it is reflected in the national security policies of a growing number of other countries.

The United States military dominates the globe through its operation of 10 Unified Combatant Commands, overseeing a network of well over 700 foreign bases in more than 60 countries.

Global operations are coordinated by United States Strategic Command (StratCom) in the state of Nebraska. The Pentagon’s December 2001 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) –contemporaneous with the expansion of StratCom’s mission to integrate conventional with nuclear war planning – underlines the fundamental policy and technological underpinnings for the Bush administration’s aggressive “preventive war” doctrine. The NPR expanded the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. national security policy, including the possible use of nuclear weapons in “immediate, potential, or unexpected contingencies” and called for indefinite retention of a large, modern, and diverse nuclear force. The NPR has served as the primary justification for each subsequent annual nuclear weapons budget request as well as the current “Complex Transformation” plan to modernize the U.S. nuclear weapons laboratories and manufacturing plants.

The policy of the nuclear weapon states, in particular the U.S., U.K. and France can be characterized as “fewer but newer,” and is increasingly “capacity-based.” These states cling to the notion of “deterrence,” but the “threat” they seek to deter is an unknown and uncertain future.

They claim that reductions in numbers from the insane heights of the Cold War constitute meaningful disarmament, but disarmament is not just about the numbers. Led by the U.S., they are modernizing and qualitatively improving their “enduring” nuclear arsenals – both warheads and delivery systems. StratCom Commander, General Kevin Chilton, told reporters this spring:

“As we look to the future – and I believe we are going to need a nuclear deterrent for this country for the remainder of this century, the 21st century – I think what we need is a modernized nuclear weapon to go with our modernized delivery platforms.”

A September 2008 Department of Defense report on the Air Force’s nuclear mission describes “the importance of nuclear deterrence” this way:

“Though our consistent goal has been to avoid actual weapons use, the nuclear deterrence is ‘used’ every day by assuring friends and allies, dissuading opponents from seeking peer capability to the United States, deterring attacks on the United States and its allies from potential adversaries, and providing the

potential to defeat adversaries if deterrence fails.”

A detailed Air Force “Roadmap,” issued on October 24, 2008, just two weeks before the Presidential election, presents a detailed plan for “reinvigorating the Air Force nuclear enterprise.” The report concludes:

“Because of their immense destructive power, nuclear weapons, as recognized in the 2006 National Security Strategy, deter in a way that simply cannot be duplicated by other weapons. Additionally, the special nature of nuclear weapons demands precise performance across the Air Force nuclear enterprise, with no tolerance for complacency or shortcuts. In short, we will continue to fortify current operations, develop our people, and sustain and modernize current capabilities.”

In his terrible speech of March 2008, presenting France’s aptly-named new nuclear submarine, “*Le Terrible*,” in Cherbourg, French President Nikolai Sarkozy proclaimed: “Our nuclear deterrence protects us from any aggression against our vital interests emanating from a state – wherever it may come from and whatever form it may take.” Reflecting U.S. policy and the “Grand Strategy’s” proposed expansion of NATO’s concept of deterrence, he added: “It cannot be ruled out that an adversary might miscalculate the delimitation of our vital interests or our determination to safeguard them. *In the framework of nuclear deterrence, it would be possible, in that event, to send a nuclear warning that would underscore our resolve.* That would be aimed at reestablishing deterrence.”

Sarkozy explained how France’s nuclear policy will be integrated with UK and NATO security policies.

“Together with the United Kingdom, we have taken a major decision: It is our assessment that there can be no situation in which the vital interests of either of our two nations could be threatened without the vital interests of the other also being threatened.

As for the Atlantic Alliance, its security is also based on nuclear deterrence. British and French nuclear forces contribute to it.”

Only near the end of his speech did Sarkozy get to the subject of disarmament, pledging to reduce the number of French nuclear warheads to fewer than 300, but providing no details or timeline.

France’s nuclear partner, the UK, while also announcing cuts to its arsenal, is proceeding with plans to replace its Trident nuclear weapons system, while pursuing massive development of its Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston. In addition, and without Parliament’s agreement, the British government has endorsed the use of its Menwith Hill radar station for the U.S. missile defense system.

China, the only NPT Nuclear Weapon States to maintain a no first use policy, nevertheless plans to replace its sea-launched ballistic missiles. And China is massively expanding its military budget, which nearly doubled, from \$62.5 billion in 2004, to \$121.9 billion in 2006. To put this in context, in 2006 the United States spent \$54 billion on its nuclear forces alone. That year Russia spent \$70 billion on its military; the United Kingdom spent \$55.4 billion; and

France spent \$54 billion. In 2008, it is estimated that the United States will spend \$711 billion on its military – 48 percent of the world total! All of this is in the name of “national security.”

The recently ratified U.S.-India deal would provide India, a non-NPT party, with nuclear technology and materials that might enable it to further develop its weapons programs. Other non-NPT nuclear weapons states, Israel and Pakistan, are reportedly pursuing similar deals.

What is to be done? The answer is clear to ordinary people. We need to fundamentally redefine security. We must put universal human security and ecological sustainability at the heart of conflict resolution and prevention. We must divest precious resources from militarism and invest them instead in this new security paradigm.

The pursuit of nuclear energy has become a leading cause of conflict around the world due to the inherently dual use nature of the nuclear fuel cycle. We simply must phase out and move beyond nuclear power, as well as fossil fuels, if we are to achieve a world of human and ecological security.

I would like to highlight one bright spot in this rather dismal picture. I want to commend Germany for demonstrating bold leadership by establishing an International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). At the invitation of the German government, representatives from countries met in Berlin this April to foster and promote the development of renewable energy worldwide, in response to the growing demand for energy and the necessity to address global warming. By promoting a cooperative approach to the development of clean renewable solar, tidal and wind power, IRENA provides a positive vision and a practical way forward for this energy “revolution.”

In her 1976 book, *The Game of Disarmament*, Alva Myrdal, a Swedish minister of disarmament and winner of the 1982 Nobel Peace Prize asked:

“How can we let the nationalistic security needs as defined and exaggerated by military and other vested interests misguide our societies? How can we allow secretiveness and falsifications of reality to motivate the continued arms race, with all the dangers and burdens thereof? The common man should demand honest accountability of the policymakers. He has the right to question their ethics.”

But at this moment in history, it seems that the common man and woman are largely unaware of the terrible price they have already paid for nuclear weapons and the nuclear dangers that are growing again. There is an urgent need for public education. Whether conducted formally, in schools and universities, or informally, in town halls and village squares, this education should promulgate a paradigm shift in the way security is commonly understood. Security must no longer be defined in terms of “national” security based on military might. It should be redefined in terms of universal “human” security and sustainable environmental policies and practices.

This approach requires breaking the silences of history, emphasizing critical thinking, truth telling, good faith and reconciliation. In the field of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation it means facing the inextricable link between nuclear weapons and nuclear power; grappling with the relationship between nuclear and conventional military power; confronting the gross economic disparities between the wealthy elites and the vast majority

of the human family, identifying and challenging those who benefit from nuclear weapons and militarism; and preparing for peace instead of war by teaching and reinforcing the importance of nonviolent conflict resolution at every level of society.

We need to find new and creative ways to:

- Promote the values, embodied in the United Nations Charter, of multilateralism, cooperation and diplomacy. It might be useful, in this context, to recall the Preamble to the United Nations Charter, which introduces the Charter as a collaboration between civil society and the governments of the world – almost as a “bottom up” initiative. It begins:

“We the Peoples of the United Nations, Determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war....”

- Stress the importance of *good faith* adherence to international law; keep your promises; work cooperatively with other nations to achieve objectives;
- Promote proactive conflict *prevention*, by anticipating sources of conflict, such as competition for energy resources, and working to address them through creative and practical means, such as IRENA;
- Promote a culture of peace, underscoring the values of nonviolence, tolerance, cooperation, democracy and critical thinking;
- Promote the redirection of resources to meet human needs and ensure ecological sustainability.

How will this paradigm shift come about? I don’t see it coming from the top. At best, elite initiatives like the Shultz-Kissinger editorials in the Wall Street Journal and British Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett’s call for cuts in the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals, are appeals for “responsible” arms control in a world that seems to be spinning out of control. But they remain fundamentally rooted in the national security status quo.

One rather disquieting view of security without nuclear weapons was offered last year by Robert Einhorn, a Clinton administration nuclear policy expert and arms control advocate. “We should be putting far more effort into developing more effective conventional weapons,” he said. *“It’s hard to imagine a president using nuclear weapons under almost any circumstance, but no one doubts our willingness to use conventional weapons.”* This statement, unfortunately, is all too true. But an even more overpowering conventional military threat surely is not the desired outcome of the nuclear disarmament process. Moreover, how practical would that approach be?

How would countries with fewer economic resources – especially those on the “enemies” list – respond? Wouldn’t they have an incentive to maintain or acquire nuclear weapons to counter overwhelming conventional military superiority? And wouldn’t that, in turn, even further entrench U.S. determination to retain and modernize its own nuclear arsenal, thus pushing the “ultimate” elimination of nuclear weapons ever farther into the future? *This conundrum is a challenge we cannot afford to ignore.*

As Gandhi observed:

'The moral to be legitimately drawn from the supreme tragedy of the bomb is that it will not be destroyed by counter-bombs even as violence cannot be by counter-violence. Mankind has to get out of violence only through non-violence. Hatred can be overcome only by love. Counter-hatred only increases the surface as well as the depth of hatred...."

And, he explained how social transformation will come from the bottom up.

"We have to make truth and non-violence not matters for mere individual practice, but for practice by groups and communities and nations.... [Before] general disarmament... commences... some nation will have to dare to disarm herself and take large risks. The level of non-violence in that nation, if that event happily comes to pass, will naturally have risen so high as to command universal respect. Her judgment will be unerring, her decisions firm, her capacity for heroic self-sacrifice will be great, and she will want to live as much for other nations as for herself."

I've always thought that one of my strengths is a high tolerance for ambiguity. This requires an ability to hold contradictory truths at the same time. What's called for is a straightforward, *unambiguous demand* for the global abolition of nuclear weapons. This suggests the need for *immediate negotiations* and a *timebound framework*. We need to expose and challenge the hypocrisy and contradictions inherent in the dominant narratives: while we're committed to the *ultimate* elimination of nuclear weapons, we must maintain the safety and *reliability* of our *enduring* stockpile; and, while we're committed to a world without nuclear weapons (*someday*), as long as nuclear weapons exist, we will maintain a *robust* deterrent. (*In other words, it's regrettable, but as long as nuclear weapons exist... nuclear weapons will exist!*)

Non-governmental organizations are by definition not governments, and we should not confuse our role with that of governments. Our job is not to cut deals with governments or to ask for what we think we can get. Our job is to speak truth to power and to ask for what we really want.

Our demand, however, must be coupled with a clear-eyed recognition of the central role nuclear weapons continue to play in the National Security State, firmly in place since 1945, and a much deeper understanding of the powerful forces that have successfully perpetuated the nuclear weapons enterprise *despite* the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War nearly 20 years ago. And we must offer an *alternative view of security*, defined in universal human and environmentally sustainable terms, to replace the 20th century concept of "national" security, ensured through overwhelming military might.

In his famous 1963 speech, Martin Luther King, Jr. declared: "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

The election of Barack Obama as U.S. President indicates that a major step has been taken in achieving King's dream – a major step that gives us great hope. Dr. King, however, did not stop at the dream. In his less well known, but perhaps even more important speech, "Beyond Vietnam; A Call to Conscience," delivered April 4, 1967, exactly one year before his tragic assassination, King broke new ground, stating

"I am convinced that if we are to get on the right side of the world revolution, we as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism are incapable of being conquered.

A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies... A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth...

A true revolution of values will lay hand on the world order and say of war, '[t]his way of settling differences is not just'.... A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

America, the richest and most powerful nation in the world, can well lead the way in this revolution of values. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to prevent us from reordering our priorities so that the pursuit of peace will take precedence over the pursuit of war. There is nothing except a tragic death wish to keep us from molding a recalcitrant status quo with bruised hands until we have fashioned it into a brotherhood."

Hopefully, we are well on our way to achieving the dream. Now we must move "beyond Vietnam."

With the global economy in collapse and the worldwide surge of hope in response to the election of Barak Obama as U.S. President, the time is ripe for another massive surge of public opinion – from the bottom up – calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. But this time, we must understand that demanding nuclear disarmament is not enough, and that we can't achieve it alone. This time we must insist that nuclear disarmament serve as the leading edge of a global trend towards demilitarization and redirection of military expenditures to meet human needs and save the environment.

On November 12, the Mayor of Ghent, Belgium presided over a joyful tree-planting ceremony to inaugurate a new "peace forest" near a country road just outside the city. School children carrying brightly colored paper cranes filled Hiroshima-Nagasakistraat, following behind a funky marching band. Posters bearing the articles of the International Declaration of Human Rights were mounted on poles along the side of the road. At the end, a new article (Article XXXI) had been proposed by the City of Ghent. It says: "All people worldwide have the duty to strive together for a (nuclear) weapon free world."

Thanks again to IPB for this great honor. I look forward to working with you for peace and justice in a nuclear free world.

The original source of this article is International Peace Bureau (Denmark)
Copyright © [Jacqueline Cabasso](#), International Peace Bureau (Denmark), 2008

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Jacqueline Cabasso](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca