

Conquering the Nuclear Peril

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In 1944 a great experiment was launched — the United Nations — in the tremulous hope that the thought of war can be abolished from the minds of men. Another experiment was going on at that time — for harnessing the secrets of the atom to military power. The first nuclear bombs were dropped in 1945. The U.N. Charter could not obviously refer to nuclear weapons, but the General Assembly has unequivocally declared that the use of such weapons is a crime against humanity. The five permanent members of U.N., who have a monopoly of nuclear weapons, claim a kind of legitimacy for possession of such weapons. But to the peoples of the world, nuclear weapons

are in themselves as unmitigated evil and their use or threat of use by anyone is impermissible in any circumstances.

It is true that no nuclear weapons have been actually used since 1945. The proponents of the theory of balance of terror take credit for this nuclear peace. It is at best a grey peace, precarious and unstable. Production of nuclear weapons is going on. They are becoming increasingly sophisticated. Each improvement in accuracy and mobility makes present agreements so much more fragile.

Existing compacts deny to non-nuclear-weapons States the right to conduct experiments even for peaceful purposes, while placing no restraint on the nuclear-weapons powers in the matter of multiplying their arsenals. This is a discrimination to which we have objected. Much is made of the danger of horizontal proliferation. But the dangers of present stockpiles, their vertical proliferation and the risk of catastrophe by error or design are slurred over. How can one nation or five nations be considered more responsible than the rest? Basic problems of sovereignty and human survival are involved.

The two great powers have recently agreed to resume discussions on nuclear weapons. This is a good development and we welcome it. We want these negotiations not to be confined to ways of dealing with only the consequences of improvements in capacity and delivery systems. They must ultimately address themselves to the basic objective, which is the elimination of all nuclear weapons, as recognised in their statement. Credible and reassuring first steps would be a freeze on further production and deployment of nuclear weapons as well as fissile material for weapons purposes.

This has to be followed by nuclear-weapons powers embarking on physical reduction of stockpiles. Furthermore, the discussions and agreements should be more than bilateral; they must apply to all possessors of nuclear weapons. Otherwise the peril remains open.

The actual prospect of nuclear weapons being used remains where national security is based on the premise of "stability" through extended deterrence or through the building up of counter-force capabilities or a multi-layered network of defence systems. Every refinement of deterrence, like "flexible response" and "limited" and "winnable" war scenarios, assumes that the use of these weapons can be controlled by increasing their technological sophistication. The qualitative arms race is thus built into the arms control approach. That kind of arms control is in reality no control.

The dangers have increased of computer errors, systems failures, accidents, and misjudgements at lower echelons to whom responsibility is inevitably delegated. There is, besides, the new danger of nuclear terrorism and blackmail.

Sophisticated weapons are being transferred not merely between members of military alliances but also outside. Global justifications are advanced. This leads to several new local and regional tensions which, sooner or later, are bound to result in physical conflict. This is not mere speculation. It has immediate relevance to the situation in our region.

Arms race and international tension are inseparable companions. Over the years there has been a heightening of tension all over the world. All multilateral activity is getting increasingly snarled in bloc rigidities and

polemics. There is a spurt in proxy wars and many regions are affected by turmoil directly and indirectly. Therefore, the initiation of a dialogue between the major powers, though welcome, does not by itself free smaller and vulnerable states from the competitive attention of the big powers. Along with the dialogue, there must also be a genuine effort not to view all relationships in terms of the global strategic balance and "spheres of influence".

Military spending is rapidly nearing the staggering figure of \$ 1000 million annually. It continues to rise while the world economy hovers between uncertain recovery and a relapse into deeper recession. This vast military expenditure, apart from causing dissonances in the economies of the leading military powers, has aggravated the problems of global economic recovery and development. Many developing countries face the stark prospect of economic collapse and social upheaval.

Technological advances are inexorably widening economic disparities among nations. The policies of powerful governments are further accentuating these disparities, building up tensions which bode ill for relations amongst countries. Force cannot find answers to these problems. Vision and statesmanship demand a cooperative approach and constructive measures to reduce and remove disparities and ensure a better life for all.

A new and unfortunate development is the undermining of the various multilateral agencies in the U.N. system. These agencies have played a notable part in assisting poorer countries in the last four decades. If they are weakened, the ideals of the United Nations, indeed the very basis of international cooperation, would be shaken. A campaign has to be launched in the capitals of the world to reverse this unfortunate trend.

The threat of first strike is now being used to justify new kinds of arms races. The probability of climatic catastrophe renders the first strike meaningless. The Nuclear Winter hypothesis, which is being increasingly accepted, shows that even a first strike would spell a holocaust as much for the aggressor as for the victims. It underlines the indivisibility of peace and the urgency of disarmament.

Another matter of concern is the idea of deep strike, according to which conventional weapons could be used for striking at targets at distances up to 300 k.m. It is claimed that this would lessen the resort to nuclear weapons at an early stage of war in Europe. The delivery systems for the conventional deep strike weapons are indistinguishable from those of nuclear weapons. By blurring the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons the possibility of a nuclear war is increased and the control of nuclear arms made more difficult.

In May last, our six nations called upon nuclear-weapons powers to halt the arms race and put into effect a programme for the cessation of the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. It was endorsed by many parliaments and national groups and evoked positive response from one nuclear-weapons power. Today, we also ask the powerful to prevent an arms race in Outer Space and to embark on a comprehensive treaty to ban the testing of all nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Palme mentioned that the U.N. Charter gave the right to every nation to defend itself. We are gathered here today defending ourselves not with weapons but with words. We will not defend ourselves with war, we will defend ourselves by building a public opinion against war.

The survival of the human race depends on the demilitarisation of the global surface and on keeping Outer Space free of weapons. We must strengthen the defences of peace in man's inner space as well-- his mind, soul and spirit. Mahatma Gandhi, who was alive when Hiroshima took place, declared so perceptively: "The bomb will not be destroyed by counter-bombs, even as violence cannot be by counter-violence". Let us work to strengthen humanity's faith in itself and its capacity to conquer the peril which has come out of its own technology.

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