

In the months following the illegal invasion of Iraq, the official Australian Government position (spin) has been Anglo-value-based, and moulded around the notion of protests giving comfort to terrorists. Beyond the PR spin is the simple truth that the world mass protests have delivered a new power to the UN, should its member states recognise the opportunity.

We have got to seize the initiative and outline as a nation our ideals for a peaceful and prosperous future. The role of the established media outlets will be to challenge their reliance on the press release journalism that dominates our popular media opinion.

We the people of Australia must command all our tiers of government to discuss reform. If we are serious about protecting the future of humanity from the legacies of the 20th century it will take sacrifice and a commitment to peaceful non-violent protest. It will take electoral reform and mass rejection of political parties dedicated to the status quo. The very way we interact with government must change. We have a long way to go in building a democracy that is truly representative of us and by us, the people of Australia. The 20th century has left us with an inheritance of conflict and arms proliferation that, left unchecked, can only end in the annihilation of humanity. If nationalism and personal wealth were the defining principals of the 20th century then peace and security must dominate the 21st.

Peace and security policy in 2004 and beyond will have to deal both with the dirty laundry of the 20th century; unquestioning acceptance of huge accumulated arsenals and of the use of force as an arbiter of human conflict and with new challenges, such as internal conflicts arising from social, economic, demographic, and environmental pressures. These problems are intertwined.

While the particular causes of war and arms races may, one day, become history, the leftover military equipment now makes for such ready availability of arms of all calibers that recourse to violent measures in conflict resolution is far too easy. In order to avoid the likelihood of endless skirmishes and wars in the coming century, governments, governmental institutions, Trade Unions and community groups will need to find renewed vigor to pursue demilitarisation, conflict prevention, more inspired global institution building, and greater grassroots engagement.

During the Cold War years, the recognition grew that traditional security policies building national or allied military muscle often yielded deep insecurity. A series of independent international commissions (UN), headed by world leaders, prompted a fundamental rethinking of security.

Out of these efforts evolved two closely linked concepts. One is 'common security' the view that in order for one state to be secure, its opponents must also feel secure. The other is 'comprehensive security' the notion that non-military

factors such as social inequity, poverty, environmental degradation, and migratory pressures are at least as important as military ones in determining the potential for conflict. Questions have been raised as to whether many sources of conflict today are at all amenable to military solutions, a perspective currently being discussed under the philosophical idea of 'human security'.

The years since the end of the Cold War have seen a reduction in military spending; in production, trade, and deployment of arms; and in the size of armed forces. Yet progress has been highly uneven across the world. Substantial arsenals remain in place, there is no letup in the drive toward more sophisticated weaponry, and business is booming for both new and 'surplus' weapons.

A key task in the 21st century will be to establish effective restraints based on three principles, contrasting sharply with the approaches underlying past and present policies: disarmament (as opposed to arms control); universal constraints on arms (as opposed to non-proliferation); and war prevention (as opposed to regulating warfare).

Disarmament

The world has moved back to the nuclear brink, disarmament is needed as never before. There are still a few internationally accepted norms to curb the production, possession, or trade of arms. Several decades of arms control efforts have yielded mostly weak numerical limits on certain weapons, and no limits at all on many others.

In the current big-power confrontations and armed conflicts between states, The opportunity for far-reaching disarmament seems so far from the table I despair. De-nuclearisation, the establishment of a timetable to phase out and eventually eliminate all nuclear arms is one of the pressing tasks facing the world today. The nuclear 'haves' not only insist that they will retain their arsenals indefinitely, they continue to pursue a modernisation programmes, and their existing arsenals remain on hair-trigger alert. The stakes are rising: India and Pakistan have joined the nuclear club, Add China and Nth Korea to the list and it is overly optimistic to assume that others will not be tempted as well. The Stalinist rhetoric coming from Nth Korea indicates that a nuclear power is capable of starting a nuclear war intentionally; other dangers lurk, among them accidental (or otherwise) launchings of missiles and theft of nuclear weapons, or related materials and technology, by terrorists or non-nuclear states.

Are you ready for the lies on the need for more & more weapons?

Rejecting Militarism

Within this decade, we will need to aim for an even more ambitious goal: establishing a procedure against the trading of arms altogether, so that such transfers are no longer seen as routine commercial transactions but rather as highly unusual events. In this century we must, therefore ban the production of all war machines.

I believe it is time to rethink the utility of large standing military forces and to advance the norm that possession of an offensively armed military is unacceptable. Countries that face no obvious external adversaries may want to cut their militaries radically and to refocus remaining resources on purely defensive tasks; indeed, some may want to reconsider whether they need an army at all (NZ). Unilateral measures by individual countries could create some badly-needed momentum, but far-reaching progress would depend on a more systematic, multilateral approach.

In order to be just and effective, constraints on armaments need to apply to all states equally. This contrasts with the non-proliferation policies that are currently under far too much influence by Western nations and is at the core of our current world war crisis the idea of allowing a select (and self-appointed) group of countries to hold on to certain kinds of weapons denied to all other states reeks of hypocrisy and will not stand the test of time. How many people must die at the maintenance of this imbalance in geopolitics?

This kind of lopsided approach to security is not only unacceptable from the perspective of universality; it is also unworkable in the long run. As long as one country or group of countries has access to a weapon, others will want to acquire it as well.

Human Security, Human Rights

Far-reaching disarmament, universally applied constraints on armaments, and vigorous conflict prevention efforts will go a long way toward addressing the more traditional aspects of a peace policy. But to be successful, these steps will need to be taken now, begun now questioned now!

Conflict prevention is not only about positioning peace keepers between would-be attackers and their intended victims but also, more fundamentally, about recognising and ameliorating the underlying pressures that lead to violent disputes in the first place. At the core, the shift toward prevention calls for policies that are geared to strengthening the fabric of society and improving its governance.

Central to such policies are goals like fair distribution of wealth and balancing of the interests of different population groups; adequate job creation; poverty eradication; and the preservation or restoration of ecosystems. These are urgent requirements in a world in which the simultaneous presence of tremendous economic growth and widespread inequity is driving environmental destruction, breeding explosive social conditions, and fuelling ethnic antagonisms.

Human rights, too, are of growing importance in a globalising world, as decision-making processes affect larger and larger numbers of individuals and communities in more and more profound ways.

Considerable expectations for achieving and safeguarding the global community are being pinned on the United Nations, whose various departments and agencies are involved in activities crucial to the welfare of people. Yet the U.N. receives scant resources and commands little political power. sixty years after its founding, the organisation that was set up to prevent recurring war is increasingly in danger of being circumvented by unilateral action, and has languished in financial crisis for several years now.

To that end, reform is as essential as the funding it requires. The Security Council, for instance, is increasingly anachronistic in its composition and central workings. Discussions have been held for years and there is no shortage of good reform proposals. There is also no consensus on the details. Because security policy will increasingly need to move beyond military issues in the next century and concern itself with the social, economic, demographic, and environmental pressures that are at the root of most conflicts, the United Nations system as a whole will be critical to success. But like the Security Council, it needs reforming. One of the most important challenges is to make the U.N. less an organisation of government representatives and more one of the 'peoples of the United Nations,' as the U.N. Charter puts it.

At the World Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995, it was widely recognised that social conditions are closely linked to issues of peace. But the summits rhetoric has so far proved stronger than actual government policy commitments. Only with strong community involvement will it be possible to translate rhetorical pledges into reality.

Impatient with the failure of governments to promote conflict prevention and peace building, the community is playing a more and more assertive role on local, national, and international levels. In an age in which peace and security concerns are focused more on local matters than on interstate or international matters, it is only sensible that civil society should be an active participant in building a peaceful world.

This new grassroots growth of activists as a vanguard of change; opens traditionally quiet (and often secretive and slow-moving) diplomacy to far greater scrutiny. It mobilises public opinion and frequently takes the initiative from the big powers, putting them into the unaccustomed position of having to catch up. 'Soft power', as it is also called, is based on the notion that human security, not state security, should be the organising principle of peace policy; it regards military force as having less relevance and it emphasises the power of ideas, and new concepts, over the power of weapons.

The 20th century was the century of warfare. The 21st must be the century of demilitarisation and conflict prevention.

South African Archbishop and Nobel Prize recipient Desmond Tutu pointed out in a speech to an ANC Youth Conference that slavery and its millennium of normalcy once seemed like an immutable reality and yet was abolished. Why not war? Indeed Desmond, we have no choice do we?

As a free nation within a world of suffering we now have the responsibility to ensure that our government re-enters the global debate on a platform of total cessation of war and the culture of violence that has disabled humanity forever.

The question remains, can we overcome ourselves?