

Why Disarmament?

**On the Appointment of Wade Huntley to Director,
Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research
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My name is Jennifer Allen Simons. I am the Director of the Simons Centre for Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Research for the next half hour or so. Thank you for accepting the invitation to celebrate the appointment of Wade Huntley to the position of Director of the Simons Centre. Wade comes to us from the Hiroshima Peace Research Institute and prior to that the Nautilus Institute. He received his Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley. And in the 6 months Wade has been here he has demonstrated to us all, at the Liu Institute, his capabilities for the Centre Director position. Moreover, he has speedily adapted to the Canadian scene and is already consulting with the Department of Foreign Affairs on issues of space weaponization, North Korea and Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

We can be proud of the Simons Centre's accomplishments since its inception in 2002. We have a growing community of scholars in the Centre's UBC Student Policy Research Programme in Peace and Disarmament – with 18 scholarships awarded. We also initiated, and are partnering in a Doctoral and Masters Disarmament Scholarship programme with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs. We had a part in discouraging Canada from participating in the United States ballistic missile defence through several conferences and ongoing outreach activity. We initiated, with Project Ploughshares, and co-convened three conferences on Space Security, in Geneva, twice in partnership with the Canadian government and the U.N., and the third with the governments of China and Russia and the UN. We sponsored and hosted the third meeting of Swedish Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission.

Under Wade's stewardship I have expectations of continuing progress and further development of the Disarmament programme within the four cornerstones of the Simons Centre's mandate - **education, research, advocacy and outreach.**

The Centre now has three Endowments, the Director's position, a Post-Doctoral Scholarship for Research in Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems, and the Simons Centre UBC Student Policy Disarmament Research programme. We are in the process of establishing an International Advisory Council which will meet on an annual basis. My responsibilities now will be co-development of the programme, with Wade, on an annual basis, and oversight. I will also be responsible for the International Advisory Council.

I have Lloyd Axworthy and Frieda Granot to thank for providing me with the opportunity to establish the former programmes of The Simons Foundation in the University setting. This not only grants longevity to the work I have been engaged in since 1985, but also **and primarily**, provides the opportunity to fill a lacuna in University studies: to re-introduce disarmament research and education into the University system from which it essentially disappeared about 15 years ago.

The government of Canada's position is that disarmament and non-proliferation goals are inextricably linked [*copies of the position Canada will take in the upcoming 2005 NPT Review Conference are available on the table*]. Yet in Canadian Universities, disarmament gets short shrift. Seven universities offer courses in arms control and non-proliferation but there is no reference in the course descriptions to disarmament. While there are many courses and programmes on international security, peace-building and conflict resolution, there is essentially nothing in the area of disarmament. The education system, historically, endorses a militarized vision of the world, and perhaps, therefore, **cultivates** unquestioning acceptance of war and the war system.

The university's role is to be a leader in the development of critical consciousness, to be a catalyst in paradigm change. The university can respond to the need to develop educational resources which question the existing structures, norms and values; and to the need to encourage the development of critical capacities to challenge the structures of the war system, and also the need to focus on or - at the very least - give equal attention to, the necessity and reasons for disarmament, and further, disarmament in all its aspects, that is to say, the changed nature of war, prospects for morality , economic, social and sustainability issues.

Why disarmament? Because modern war is wholesale indiscriminant slaughter of innocent civilians. Because indiscriminant slaughter of non-combatants is illegal; Because it is morally destructive; Because the war industry is economically unsustainable and if we continue on this route, University of Sussex Astronomer, John Barrow warns us, our civilization may self-destruct. This was echoed recently by Cambridge Astronomer and President of the Royal Society, Sir Martin Rees, who believes we only have a 50% chance of reaching the end of the 21st century if we do not change our path.

We live in a warrior culture that, historically, has glorified war, despite the fact that the majority of the members of civil society are not interested in being warriors. Our historical milestones, are - for the most part - of accountings of war. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, wars, the number of deaths – and deaths on a mass scale – has grown dramatically.

In the twentieth century alone, over 250 wars have been fought with approximately - and this is a conservative estimate - one hundred and ten million war-related deaths. As Ruth Sivard reminds us “ more than the current total populations of France, Belgium, Netherlands ... Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden.” And since the end of the Second World War the wars “have become more frequent and deadly” - a situation likely to continue as populations expand, resources shrink or are destroyed. (Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures, “Overview”*)

War is increasingly focused on innocent civilian populations. In World War One, **of the over 20 million dead, 5%** were civilians. In World War Two, the **civilian death toll was 50%**. In the Vietnam War the civilian death toll **rose to 90%** and we have reason to believe that during the current Iraq war the civilian death toll is **higher than 90%**. The civilian death toll in both Iraq wars remains secret. War has become, and should thus be designated, a **crime against humanity**.

It is true that most of these dead were killed by conventional weapons, though it strains credulity to accept carpet bombings of German cities, the firebombing of Tokyo and the use of napalm as conventional . It is true that the manufacture and sale of arms – both official and black – is booming. And that the industrialized powers, particularly the US are obstacles to controlling this trade. It is true that there are over 50 million Kalashnikov rifles in circulation, and those weapons like “Metal Storm”, which shoots forty-thousand rounds a minute, are promoted to replace banned landmines which remain in use by some countries. And it is believed that depleted uranium weapons are responsible for the increase in cancers, unexplainable illnesses and birth defects in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. However, I intend to focus my comments on our relatively newly developed capacity for total destruction, and for the most part, on nuclear weapons.

Former Stanford Professor, Robert North, quoting Konrad **Lorenz**, makes the point that with technologic aids man has been transformed from a “basically harmless omnivorous creature lacking in natural weapons with which to kill his prey” to the largest-scale, most systematic and effective killer on the planet.” (Robert North, *The World that Could Be*,54-5).

I believe that neither violence, nor aggression, are **innate** in humans, but rather, are culturally driven. And because of scientific and technological developments and industrialization, it is morally easier for humans to kill. It is increasingly rare for the killer to face off with his opponent. The missile operator, in his nuclear missile silo in a Kansas cornfield, when obeying the order to fire the missile, is completely alienated from the slaughter of his hundreds of thousands of would-be victims. Even the arena for combat soldiers on the ground , is cleared by missiles, bombs or grenades.

Currently, - and more so in the future, if space is weaponized, wars are, and will be, conducted by isolated warriors pushing buttons to activate the guidance systems to send the loaded missiles to kill and destroy. The so-called “warrior” - no longer with drawn sword and face-to-face with his enemy - has become like some Marxist conception – alienated from the product, an instrument of the technological apparatus – a component in the industrialization of death by mass destruction **with consequential moral disintegration**. Adolph Eichmann – one such component part of the Nazi machine – was said to be sickened by the mass killings in the concentrations camps. However, his energies were entirely taken up with the staggering job of organizing and administering the transportation of 6 million Jews to the camp’s gas chambers. His primary motivating force, according to Hannah Arendt, was his pride in obeying orders and doing his duty and “was troubled by no questions of conscience.”(Eichmann in Jerusalem, 48-9,131)

Robert McNamara told me that during Cuban missile crisis - the most dangerous period in American history - when he was U.S. Secretary of Defence, his group at the Pentagon, too, were unconnected with the human reality. In reflecting on his past, he realized that there was no conception of the consequences to the people of the United States. The Pentagon group were, in a sense, isolated in a capsule and as though involved in some strategic game .

General Lee Butler, former Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command tells the story of his responsibility for the “nuclear button.” Butler says that when faced with the operations panel for cities in the Soviet Union, targeted by multiple warhead missiles designed to annihilate vast areas, he was absolutely horrified to realize he had the responsibility for ordering the deaths of millions of people . But he did not resign from his position!

The technological sophistication and killing power of weapons since the Second World War has reached the state where the weapons endanger the lives of everyone on this planet. The problem is that for each technological development another technology is designed to replace the last. When a military technology is perceived as a threat, another technological device is created to counter this threat. For example, the United States failure to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles, results in the development of ballistic missile defence – a stepping stone to space weapons - as a counter, which then fuels an arms race by states who view the missile defence as both shield and sword. Consequently the weaponry is spiraling out of control at enormous potential human, social and economic cost.

When viewed from a social and economic standpoint, disarmament makes economic sense. The 1980 Brandt Commission Report states that more than “51% of spending in research is devoted to defence, atomic and space research.” while less than 1% [of research funding was] devoted to ... the needs of the developing world.” There is no reason to believe that this ratio has changed for the better, because of the late 1970s nuclear arms race. And in the 1980s, the US Strategic Defense Initiative, or “Star Wars continuing in this era as Ballistic Missile Defense development and space weapons research. (Brandt Report ; *North-South: A Programme for Survival*, 197-8)

In the industrialized countries, annual expenditures for defense average over 500-billion dollars a year. Research, development and procurement represents about one-third of this figure. And in newly industrializing countries military spending is increasing. In the United States, the nuclear arsenal, alone, has cost in the neighbourhood of 7 trillion dollars. The average life-cycle cost for each nuclear weapon is around one hundred million dollars.” (Greg Mello, Los Alamos Study Group, April 12.05).

The possession of nuclear weapons has not prevented war. Since the development of nuclear weapons and growth of nuclear arsenals, war has become more frequent and more cruel.

Yet Russia and the United States’ nuclear weapons are still deployed and on launch-on-warning status, creating the danger of accidental launch or nuclear conflagration. Furthermore, North Korea, after legally obtaining nuclear technology as party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, has set a precedent by withdrawing from the Treaty. And with between sixty and seventy other countries with the technology and knowledge to produce nuclear weapons, the situation is far more dangerous than during the Cold War when the United States and the Soviet Union were engaged in maintaining strategic stability.

Nuclear weapons are weapons of terror – intended to invoke terror - and transform the traditional conception of war. Nuclear weapons are not weapons in a conventional sense where one side becomes the victor and the other the defeated. The balance of power during the Cold War was maintained through a form of state terrorism - the fear of mutually assured destruction. The acronym for mutually assured destruction – and certainly an appropriate one - is **MAD** - illuminating the fact that a nuclear war is both suicide and genocide.

Weapons of mass destruction in the hands of terrorists are currently acknowledged to be the greatest danger we face. The Bush Administration has been actively developing counter measures – some unilateral and dangerous to all - and others, like the Proliferation Security Initiative which allows interception of vessels in ports and on the high seas to search for weapons of mass destruction; and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 which requires countries to develop and enforce domestic laws to prohibit individuals from acquisition, manufacture, possession, transfer of nuclear, chemical or biological weapons or their means of delivery. These measures for countering proliferation, though worthy, are directed at non-state actors and are not disarmament measures nor moves for nuclear weapons states to fulfill their disarmament obligations to eliminate their arsenals and this double standard is part of the problem.

Unfortunately, from the disarmament perspective, the power of the United Nations is vested in the victors of World War II - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, the nuclear powers, with the largest military purses. Regrettably, they hold the world in nuclear

hostage because they are unwilling to fulfill their disarmament commitments under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. And, the United States, for one, is currently hindering progress in most areas of arms control and disarmament initiatives – nuclear weapons, biological weapons, Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty - all around the issue of verification and compliance which requires international inspection of facilities. The Bush Administration refuses to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and has cut funding. The powerful gun lobby has scuttled U.S. support for a small arms and light weapons convention. The United States also refuses to sign the landmine treaty because it still has use for landmines.

All weapons - small arms and light weapons, nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, in fact, continue to proliferate – both vertically and horizontally. Research and development of new weapons systems continues including – new strategic battlefield nuclear weapons and to space weapons.

Most – if not all – of the positive actions concerned with peace, freedom, justice and human dignity, have risen – like the phoenix - from the ashes of war, from abominable acts of carnage and destruction. International Humanitarian Law emerged from the 1899 Hague Appeal for Peace Conference, at the end of an appallingly war-torn century.

The League of Nations and Permanent International Court of Justice emerged from the bloodbath of World War One. The United Nations, the International Court of Justice and the Nuremberg Charter were the response to the carnage of World War Two.

Dismayingly, none of these worthy actions resulted in the end of war or the reduction or elimination of weapons – in the fact the reverse has occurred, with more than enough weaponry to incinerate us all.

Humanitarian Law is an **oxymoronic** concept. It does not pronounce war itself **inhumane**. Humanitarian Law is war law - rules for the conduct of war and treatment of prisoners merely imposing legal restraints on the warrior, on the methods of killing. In a world with the nuclear capacity for total destruction, the United States signed the Genocide Convention with a reservation that it did not apply to nuclear weapons though “genocide” is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “deliberate extermination of a people or a nation”. I find it ironic that under the Geneva Protocols – the modern rules of warfare - it is illegal to attack a nuclear power plant. Yet there is neither a law against using a nuclear weapon nor a ban on the missile that delivers the weapon. It is possible therefore that, while North Korea could not launch an attack on the nuclear power plant 20 miles up the Hudson River from New York, it could insist that the survival of its state is at risk, and legally launch a nuclear attack on New York.

The signatories of the League of Nations Covenant were obligated “not to resort to war.” The signatories to the UN Charter were – to quote the Charter - “determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” Moreover, the Nuremberg Charter became a precedent for the *ad hoc* The Hague and Arusha Tribunals, the Special Court for Sierra Leone and for the permanent International Criminal Court which were established to prosecute the perpetrators of genocide and crimes against humanity. But despairingly, no serious actions have been taken to **rid the world of the killing tools**. In fact, France ratified the International Criminal Court Convention with an “Interpretative Declaration” which stated that “the provisions of article 8...

relate solely to conventional weapons and can neither regulate nor prohibit the possible use of nuclear weapons.” (thanks John Burroughs, LCNP , July 5th,2000),

My intention is not to focus on the failure of these praiseworthy developments but, rather, to raise the question that if the only serious attempts towards a world without war emerge from – to quote the UN Charter, “the scourge of war,” – following this historical precedent of good arising from the evil - do we have to wait for a nuclear attack on the United States or other permanent member state on the UN Security Council to secure a treaty banning nuclear weapons and their delivery systems?

In an age where a world war involving weapons of mass destruction could eliminate the entire human species, it is essential that we do not continue, like lemmings on this self-destructive course. For this reason, disarmament education is an invaluable tool for change.

Thank you very much.

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