

Disarmament and development –the kindest cut of allⁱ

Address by Sir Richard Jolly to the Movement for the Abolition of War
Imperial War Museum, November 13th, 2011

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies, in a final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, from those who are cold and are not clothed.” General Dwight D Eisenhower.

I am glad to be with you all this afternoon –and I thank Bruce Kent and MAW for the invitation.

This afternoon, I want to present three messages:

1. The world is vastly over-spending on military and arms.
2. The world is vastly under-spending on human development and human security– on education, health and all those things and services which contribute to human well-being and the security of people.
3. A shift in budgetary spending from military to human security and human development, nationally and internationally, would bring many benefits. It would not only diminish the resources used for war but it would also increase employment, reduce inflation and increase the levels of the sort of security that matters to people -human security.

These messages apply to the United Kingdom but also to most other countries – developed, emerging and developing.

I will give some evidence for each of these three propositions. But the main change required is a change of perspective, a change of vision or what Barbara Ward once called a *metanoia* – a revolution of the psyche, by which people see with new eyes, understand with new minds and turn their energies to whole new approaches and new ways of living. At a time of cuts and setbacks, in a world of unimagined wealth coexisting with unprecedented inequalities, together with unemployment, poverty and recession on a scale not seen for decades if ever, the need for such a change of perspective and approach is overwhelming.

Barbara Ward herself identified a change of perspective as the main priority for making progress on disarmament. As she put it, “One of the greatest difficulties facing those who wish to see disarmament accepted [as a primary goal of policy] is that the average citizen simply does not believe it is possible, and against this blank wall of unbelief, we have the greatest difficulty in making any effective case.

“We have therefore to insist that far from disarmament being unusual and impossible, it is the normal state of civilized people within their own community. All the procedures proposed for disarmament –elimination of private control over arms, the subsidization of police forces, courts of law, mediation, arbitration and all other methods of settling disputes peacefully – are in fact practised every day inside domestic society. To say that mankind is not capable of this is simply nonsense. Most of the time, this is actually what happens.”ⁱⁱ

“The trouble is that we do not connect this perfectly normal method of human behaviour with any unit larger than the nation state.” And she went on to show how the peaceful settlement of disputes now matched everyday actions and expectations within national communities and increasingly within larger ones - for instance, between France and Germany , as Barbara cited, after centuries of war and fighting over borders.

Although a change of perspective is necessary for major long-run change, moves towards some reductions in military spending are possible immediately. We need not wait. And at every stage of my argument today, I will give examples of such changes which have been made and the benefits which have followed.

I begin with Costa Rica –a country which abolished its army in 1948 and today, 63 years later, still has no army. Of course, it has a police force but of no more than normal size. And at times, it has been threatened with invasion or instability – as when Nicaragua supported invaders in 1955 and in a brief incursion of last year, allegedly based on an error in a Google map! In another recent, revealing incident, the US navy wanted to operate in Costa Rican waters to chase drug smugglers en route to the US. Costa Rica did allow this – but it required special permission of the Costa Rican Parliament, which was only provided one month at a time. Costa Rica’s Constitution which forbids having an army remains intact.

So what has Costa Rica gained by having abolished its army? All of us can go there to see –and should. Costa Rica has been called the Switzerland of Central America. It spends much more on education and health and research and development than any of its Central American neighbours. It has a wealth of fascinating biodiversity –and a wonderful record of conservation. Over recent decades, Costa Rica has doubled forest area in the country. Forests now cover 54% of the land of the country, not surprisingly leading to a great increase in tourism. The UN has established a campus of the University of Peace near San Jose, with international graduate students from around the world. Its mission is to promote the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence among all human beings –click on to the web-site to see how you can apply!

How was it possible to abolish the army in 1948? It’s a long and fascinating story of events and political advances over the 1940s, upset by disputes over which party won the election in 1948 – confusions, rivalries and disputes which resulted in a brief civil war.ⁱⁱⁱ But certainly the vision and leadership of Don Pepe Figueres, who became President in 1948 after the civil war was critical. I had the chance to ask Don Pepe himself about the process when visiting Costa Rica for UNICEF many years ago. Don Pepe stressed that he and his colleagues who led the fight in the civil war were university persons. ‘The last thing we wanted’, he told me, ‘was for another dictator to use the army to take over. So we abolished the army and rewrote the constitution to prevent Costa Rica from even having an army!’

There is a sequel to this – from 1990 when a number of us were in Costa Rica for a North South Roundtable on The Economics of Peace^{iv}. Oscar Arias, then President, talked about the Costa Rican experience, making the point that the opportunity to abolish an army comes not at times of normality but at times when radical change is already afoot. At that very time in Panama next door, the criminal dictator Noriega had just been deposed. Buoyed by the point he had just made in his speech, Oscar Arias wrote an open letter to the new president. This was published in the New York Times – and the new President responded. Panama’s army was abolished in 1990, which was

confirmed by a unanimous vote for constitutional change in 1994 - and Panama joined the 21 countries which today have no army. Abolishing armies is possible!

There's a further point to underline in the experience of Costa Rica and Panama. For most developing countries the real threats today are mostly not from abroad but from coups and rivalries from within – Ivory Coast this year. Equatorial Guinea in 2004 is an example of an attempted coup with outside private support. Even in such countries, reductions in high levels of military spending are possible and desirable. But if full disarmament in such countries is to be possible it will require some sort of guarantee of international support through the UN if their borders are threatened. This is why strengthening support for the UN is part and parcel of the whole effort.

My second example of disarmament took place at the end of the Cold War, when from 1989 to 1996 the United States, the former Soviet Union and that majority of other countries in the world reduced military spending by a quarter to a third. World military spending came down from \$1.37 trillion dollars in 1989 to \$ 950 billions in 1996 –in the US, the former Soviet Union, the UK and in most other countries. Demobilization and resettlement of armed forces occurred in a large number of countries^v.

The benefits to the US and worldwide were remarkable. The impact on economic growth and on US debt was highly positive. The United States experienced the longest period of sustained economic growth in its history. And as regards the national debt, the US actually confounded its right wing sceptics and paid off its entire national debt! The debt clock in Times Square had actually to be stopped! Although there was no peace dividend in the sense that the reductions in military spending were not channelled directly into development, the sustained growth in the US added a dynamism to the world economy from which a number of developing countries benefited.

What a contrast with the last decade!. Wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. Debt rising once more and human development slowing in the US and UK, now reinforced by the cuts.

Although this whole experience was far from complete or perfect, it has some parallels with the disarmament for development which the UN has called for over its whole life. In the UN, many countries have actually proposed major reductions in military spending, with the additional point that a substantial fraction of the money saved should be channelled into development of poorer countries. The first such proposal was by the Government of France in 1955. Participating states would reduce their military spending by a certain agreed upon percentage, which would increase year by year. Reductions would be monitored and the resources released would be paid into a common fund, with a quarter going to development of poorer countries and the rest left for disposal of the country contributing.

Variants of such a 'disarmament for development' proposal have been made in almost every decade of the UN since that time - in 1957 by the Soviet Union, in 1964 by Brazil, which put the focus on using the fund to finance conversion within the arms industry and for economic development. In 1973, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution calling for a 10 per cent one-time reduction by the five permanent members of the Security Council with other countries encouraged to join in. In 1978, at the first Special Session on Disarmament and Development, further proposals were put forward – by Senegal, by France again and by Romania. In the 1980s, there were two subsequent

Special Sessions of the General Assembly on Disarmament and Development, each with proposals for some measure of disarmament with part directed to development^{vi}.

In 1982, an international technical commission was set up chaired by Inga Thorsson, Under-Secretary of State for Sweden and Chairman of the Swedish Disarmament Delegation. This produced the most detailed and careful study of disarmament and development produced to date. Its focus was “to investigate systematically and in depth the range of relationships between the prospects for balanced and sustainable global economic and social development, on the one hand, and disarmament and development on the other, through the reallocations of real resources”. After reviewing a great deal of evidence, the Thorsson report concluded that “the world can either continue to pursue the arms race with characteristic vigour or move consciously and with deliberate speed toward a more stable and balanced social and economic development. It cannot do both.”^{vii}

In spite of the widespread scepticism with which the Thorsson Report was greeted in orthodox circles, actual spending on the military in the year 2000 was close to the lowest projections made in the Thorsson Report –the lowest, neither the median projection, let alone the highest.

Notwithstanding this experience, in 1998 the arms race began again. This time, it was not even clear who the race was against! But the US, much of Europe, China and India moved into high gear on armaments expenditure, with arms expenditure increasing each year at an average rate of 6% per cent in the US, 2% in the UK and 6% in India and 13% in China. The latest figure of world military expenditure (by SIPRI) is that it has exceeded \$1.5 trillion dollars.

To add to the absurdity and military irrelevance of this waste, let me quote from Jamie Galbraith, the chairman of EPS, an international group of Economists for Peace and Security. Jamie wrote -

“It should now be obvious even to the United States that the actual use of military force is becoming obsolete. It cannot achieve the goals assigned to it. And, it must be added, the security functions that do remain (such as policing the high seas, providing peace-keeping operations, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and countering non-state threats) can be done at far, far lower cost than at present. Most of US military spending, from nuclear weapons to aircraft carriers, is for purposes that were outmoded long ago and in many cases have actually been forgotten.”

Today, there is not much in all this to be optimistic about. But there are two points which members of MAW and others committed to peace and arms reduction should keep firm in mind. Although the big powers have increased their arms expenditures over the last decade or so, this is not true of all developing countries. About three quarters of the developing countries for which we have data, reduced their military spending over the 1990s and did not increase it subsequently. This means at least 40 developing countries have maintained a reduced level of spending over the 20 years since the end of the cold war.

And the desperate priorities of austerity may be opening another window of hope. In a recent survey of US public opinion, a majority of Americans have declared that they

support reducing military spending rather than taking money from public retirement or health programmes. The US government has announced plans for a reduction of military spending by \$450 billion over the next decade –and the right wing tea party has called for a reduction by more than double that amount.

Let me turn to my third example of disarmament and peace-building in practice – Europe since the Second World War. Who would have thought that after more than 5 centuries of entrenched hostility and warfare breaking out at intervals, France and Germany and the United Kingdom would have had over 65 years of internal peace? In spite of the horrors of the first and second world wars -or perhaps because of them and the 60 to 80 million people killed - the heart of Europe now has had structures of peace since 1945. The important point is that much of this is due to the vision and political leadership of some key post- war leaders – Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer, Jean Monnet, Paul-Henri Spaak, and others including indeed Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt. Robert Schuman, the French Foreign Minister, who first proposed the Community in 1950 explicitly stated that his aim was “to make war not only unthinkable but materially impossible” .^{viii}

Let me remind us all of the Schuman Declaration of 1951. Its first four aims were

- to mark the birth of a united Europe
- to make war between member states impossible
- to encourage world peace.
- to transform Europe by a step by step process –building through sectoral supranational communities – leading to the unification of Europe democratically, including both East and West Europe (then) separated by the Iron Curtain.

What vision! What realism! What brilliance to see that peace needed to be built on a united democratic Europe, with integrated economic structures and, in later years, with mechanisms to work towards greater equality within the Union by support for the poorer marginalized countries.

These far seeing leaders realized that the structures of integration within Europe had to be built in such a fashion that competitive rearmament between countries of Europe was no longer possible.

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So what can we learn from these examples about ways to make successful reductions in military activities and spending?

First, disarmament is possible. There are real examples to build on. Moreover, these real examples show the benefits of shifting from reliance on military force and approaches to peaceful approaches to development and human security: Costa Rica and Europe, even the benefits which followed from the ending of the Cold War. I say even because historians still argue and debate how much the stalemate was ensured by the previous build-up of arms and the maintenance of mutual threat. But certainly the costs of armaments and the loss of economic competitiveness was a crucial factor for the ending when it came over the second half of the 1980s. And for the West today, economic pressures and austerity policies are bringing new opportunities for reducing arms and military spending. Those in the Peace movement can and should in my view

welcome this – while not letting up on pressures for the total abandonment of nuclear weapons and other inhuman weapons like cluster bombs and unmanned drones. (Already the number of US drones has increased from 60 in 2003 to over 7000 today).

Second, reductions in the military can open the way to better development. Costa Rica in comparison with many other developing countries is certainly one clear example. So also is Japan. Japan still spends less than 1% of its national resources on the military – but this has not held back its economic prowess, including its leadership in technology and cutting edge production. In contrast, the US is still spending about 4.3 % of its resources on the military – and the UK 2.5% and France 2.3%. These levels can be compared with Germany 1.3% - the same as Sweden, Norway, Canada and Finland. And note, all of these countries are well ahead of the UK in human development.

Third, cuts in military spending can bring wider benefits to people, the economy, and to sustainable development . Military cuts can expand employment, raise living standards, reduce poverty, ease inflation and, if the resources are rightly targeted, increase human security, the security that matters for the lives of ordinary people.

If it is all so clear, why so little action? Why have the many excellent and far-seeing proposals for disarmament and development have so rarely been taken seriously?

I would give at least four reasons:

1. Many of the proposals for disarmament were made during the cold war, when the rivalries were very deep and each side was committed to a strategy of mutual threat, fearing that any reductions -even from the vast overkill of 30,000 accumulated nuclear weapons - would be taken as a sign of weakness. But even since the cold war, the US and NATO have retained a dominating role in blocking disarmament and providing only token support for development, with development support being infinitesimal in comparison to their funding for the military.
2. Second, as the overkill of accumulated nuclear weapons still shows, the arms manufacturing industry is an enormously strong interest group in most developed countries, backed by a strong PR lobby which skilfully suggests that any measure to reduce armaments will lose jobs, cut exports, reduce growth and weaken the economy - as well as increase insecurity. President Eisenhower warned against this “industrial-military complex”. Today it should be called technical-industrial-military complex, but it is no less strong and probably today even better organized. And it is many ways stronger and less under government control than the military itself.
3. Third in many developing countries, the army rules -and uses its power to maintain itself in control, sometimes only too visibly, sometimes more discretely behind the scenes.
4. But while these reasons are strong, there is a fourth explanation for limited action on disarmament. In most countries, the public are too unaware of what it costs to maintain a big military and what could be gained if military spending was slashed. Too few politicians or other leaders have the boldness and the vision to stand up and mobilize support for alternatives.

If these are the foundations of interest and misguided logic which keep militaries and arms-spending in place, they are also the points on which to focus in a strategy of

change. They explain why action has been so limited. But they also underline the boldness and vision of those leaders who have thought differently and brought change: Don Pepe Figueres and Oscar Arias of Costa Rica. Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet and others in post-war Europe. They have stood up for peace and pursued alternatives. They led Costa Rica and Panama to get rid of their armies. They laid the foundations to build structures against war within Europe's borders.

Conclusions for action:

Let me end by drawing four conclusions for action. Though in every case, governments need to act, I emphasize that none of the actions require governments to be convinced before something can be done. Individuals, non-government organizations, religious groups and research institutes can give a lead, even before governments are ready and willing. This has always been the way of fundamental change – and it will be so again.

1. Country-by-country action needs to be the focus. A starting point is to make a county-specific assessment of what could be gained by reducing military spending along with the opportunities for action. Research workers, NGOs and UNDP offices can all help with this. The gains from measures of disarmament need to be assessed in specific terms, in order to put to rest frequently misunderstood fears that disarmament will necessarily lead to increased unemployment –a myth which careful studies have frequently shown to be false. Producing a major international advocacy document on the lines of *World Military and Social Expenditures*^x would be a wonderful start.
2. Second, human security for each country needs to be advanced with clear policies and strategy, new priorities and support with specific actions. The focus needs to be on the real and daily causes of insecurity among a country's population –and what needs to be done to remove or diminish them. Resources freed up by measures of disarmament can contribute to this. National action needs to be supported regionally and internationally –with the focus not on military force but on soft power, shifting the focus to prevention and negotiation and reliance on international action to ensure peace and stability.
3. The international agencies, including the World Bank, should consider how best to allocate more resources to support for the process of demobilizing soldiers from the armed forces and restructuring from reductions in military spending. Retraining soldiers and stimulating employment in peaceful occupations is often a critical condition for action. Agencies and governments should look again at the broader proposals for international action made in *A more secure world: Our shared responsibility* -the report of the High Level Panel set up by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. This put forward the concept of a comprehensive system of international collective security, focused on six major threats: economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation; inter-state conflict; internal conflict, including civil war, genocide, and other large scale atrocities; nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons; terrorism; and transnational organized crime. Some actions have been taken –but many more need to be considered, nationally and regionally even if they are not yet acceptable internationally. The UN's Regional Commissions could hold a series of annual meetings to explore possibilities for new measures

to reduce military spending and restructure economies to alternative production, especially in ways which would increase human security and reduce poverty and inequality.

4. Reductions in military spending need to be made part of restructuring for economic and social recovery in the UK, Europe, the US and other countries today. In the West, there is already a public mood for reductions of military interventions. The withdrawal of US troops in Iraq is already well underway, as in Libya with NATO involvements. In Afghanistan, the generals are ever more convinced of the need for negotiations. All this presents a real opportunity for more fundamental rethinking and action – not only of the role and size of the military but of alternative measures to move towards national and international measures of human security. These are the alternatives we need to press for.

'The most unkindest cut of all' is how Mark Anthony denounced the hacking down of Caesar in that great speech which begins -'Friends, Romans, Countrymen, Lend me your ears'. Mark Anthony played on two senses of the word unkind – inhuman and unnatural. Disarmament and development, as the kindest cut of all, are the opposite – deeply human and ultimately natural. Disarmament and development correspond to the best of humanity and the deepest ethics and traditions of civilized behaviour and relationships. They mark the way forward which all should seek in the 21st century.

For more general reading :

United Nations, *The Relationship between Disarmament and Development in the current international context* (New York, UN) 2004

Mary Kaldor, *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention* (London, Polity Press) 2007

Bertrand G Ramcharan, *Preventive Diplomacy at the UN* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press) 2008

Mac Graham, Richard Jolly and Chris Smith (eds) *Disarmament and World Development*(Oxford, Pergamon) 1986

United Nations

ⁱ I am grateful to Ricardo Santos at the IDS for help with the data and powerpoint for this paper. I am also grateful for comments and additions from Professors James Galbraith and Michael Intriligator, Chair and Vice-Chair of Economists for Peace. I have also received useful comments and suggestions from a number of others, including Carlos Alvarado, Alison Jolly, Emmanuel Rukundo and Andy Sumner. None are of course responsible for any errors which remain.

ⁱⁱ Barbara Ward, 1971 speech to UN conference on disarmament. I am grateful to Bruce Kent for drawing my attention to this wonderful statement.

ⁱⁱⁱ A brief but excellent analysis will be found by Solveig Aas and Tord Hoivik, Demilitarization in Costa Rica: A Farewell to Arms? in *Disarmament and World Development*(ed Mac Graham et al) (Oxford, Pergamon Press) 1986 (second edition) pp173-181

^{iv} NorthSouth Roundtable, *The Economics of Peace*, (Islamabad NorthSouth Roundtable) 1990

^v United Nations, *The Relationship between Disarmament and Development in the current international context* (New York,,UN) 2004, para 50

^{vi} A summary of these resolutions can be found in Richard Jolly et al, *UN Contributions to Development Thinking and Practice* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press) 2004 p 241

^{vii} UN, *The relationship between Disarmament and Development* (New York, UN, 1982) hereafter referred to as the Thorsson Report.

^{viii} In 1951, the Treaty of Paris was signed by France and Germany, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg and the Netherlands. This led on to two other communities and in 1967 to the European Economic Community which in turn has grown to become the 27 member European Union.

^{ix} This highly acclaimed and authoritative document was produced each year from 1974-1996 by Ruth Leger Sivard, mostly working from her house in an upstairs study on a shoe -string budget. Before she created this brilliant publication, Ruth Sivard had been a high-ranking economist for the US State Department and the Arms Control and Disarmament Administration. It is time for a new initiative to produce a new series of this important and accessible publication.