

THE ROAD TO PEACE

A Conference Hosted by UNA Kingston University

Date & Time

Friday, 23rd March, 2012

11:00am - 5:00pm

Venue

Kingston University

Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames

Surrey KT1 2EE

UN Reforms and Demilitarisation can Build a Road to Peace

By Vijay Mehta

vijay@vmpeace.org

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. UN successes and failures
3. Obsession with militarisation and damage done by MIC
4. What is the alternative?
5. What reforms are needed for UN to be more effective
6. How the world benefits?
7. What can civil society do?
8. Conclusion

Uniting for Peace

www.unitingforpeace.com



Introduction

Good afternoon and thanks to UN Association Kingston University for inviting me to give a talk at your conference “The Road to Peace”. I am pleased to see so many dedicated change makers who are working to make a difference in our world.

Today, in my presentation, I am going to speak on UN Reforms and Demilitarisation. Also, I will speak about my recent book, “The Economics of Killing” which explores militarisation and out of which 4D for World Peace campaign was born. The 4Ds stand for Disarmament, Demilitarisation, Development and Democracy. Let me speak about the UN Reforms first:

UN successes and failures

UN programmes like the World Food Programme, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), The World Health Organisation and many others have done valuable work in developing countries and it is widely acknowledged. Its history of UN Peacekeeping have also many successes in Cambodia, Mozambique, Haiti and Timor-Leste including long standing troops in Kashmir and Cyprus. However other missions are not so successful like Rwanda, Kivu in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and conflict in north and south Sudan.

At present it is finding difficult to broker a cease fire in Syria and contain the threat of imminent attack of Iran. It has failed powerful countries from militarizing themselves. Today we see start of a new cold war between China and U.S. two of the most powerful countries in the world.

The world has changed and the UN should also reform itself to deal with it. UN is no longer representative of the modern world. India, Brazil, Japan and Germany the emerging giants have no seats in the security council, the chief decision making body. No institution is perfect. The UN was established immediately after the worst war in history. The Charter stated in the preamble,

“We the peoples of the United Nations (are) determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind...”.

In a world that has become ever more complex those ideals have been forgotten. In recent years some major powers, released from the paralysis of the cold war, have embarked on their own campaign of military aggression, ignoring their own promises and the intentions of those who framed the Charter.

On recent occasions leading members of the UN Security Council, which is the body charged with maintaining peace and security, have gone to war without the support of a UN resolution. We now know that those who launched their own pre-emptive attack on Iraq misled the world about an imminent attack.

Further in the talk I will discuss further UN reforms which are needed in today’s complex world. Let me now talk about....

Obsession with militarisation and damage done by MIC

The US obsession with wars and military spending has created a monster – the military-industrial complex – which acts against the interests of people everywhere, including US citizens themselves. My new book, “**The Economics of Killing**” shows how this monster is not only the cause of extreme poverty in the developing world, but of 9/11 and the market crash of 2008. How the world can move away from war economy to a sustainable peace economy based on soft power and co-operation, so we can tackle the biggest threats facing humanity: extreme poverty climate change and warmongering.

US has 4% of world’s population, friendly neighbours like Canada and Mexico, yet spends more than the rest of the world on military: \$700bn pa = 7 x China’s budget.

Obsession with wars and military spending since WW2 has created monster: war economy in which biggest industries have become arms manufacturers alongside civilian output, e.g. Boeing, General Electric, Honeywell, Lockheed Martin and BAE. This monster – MIC – now out of control of governments acts in its own interests and against interests of everyone else. Four examples of damage done by MIC:

Oppression of developing countries

- Puppet governments given arms to oppress and control own people in return for unfettered access to natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals, which keeps poor countries poor.
- Rival factions/ countries are sold arms (‘military balance’) resulting in (civil) wars killing people with cluster bombs, Landmines (110 million buried around the world) and causing environmental damage including stunting, poverty

9/11 and Islamist terrorism

- Rise of Islamist extremism is part of a struggle against imposition of MIC (hypocrisy, disempowerment). Billions of dollars are being spent to militarise US and European countries against terrorism, a threat that barely exists.
- Irony is MIC trained Al Qaeda operatives, Iraqi insurgents and Mujahidin’s at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, USA.

Marginalisation of United Nations and Weakening of World Institutions

- Time and again countries, especially the US and its allies have gone to war without proper UN mandate or authorisation. Like the US invasion of Iraq which side lined the UN as a result .

2008 financial collapse and current crisis

- Over \$1 trillion is spent on wars in Iraq and Afghanistan which US couldn’t afford and which plunged US and West into debt. Britain itself is experiencing the human and economic cost of Afghanistan today.
- Over a trillion of Chinese cash barred from investment in US MIC created conditions for 2008 banking crisis (at present China has bought \$1.6 trillion in US bond and securities and US trade deficit with China is running at \$300 billion)

The world is over-armed and peace is under-funded. Military spending continues to rise and more high tech weapons are being increasingly produced. They are flooding markets around the world. They are destabilising societies. They feed the flames of civil wars and terror. Around the world, gun violence is the number one cause of civilian casualties.

What is the alternative?

Hard not to see US as drug addict, obsessed with habit that is self-destructive and threat to others: 'hole in Daddy's arm where all the money goes'.

If we do nothing, MIC monster will continue to grow along fault lines of today's world. New cold war. It will result in growth of China MIC and threat to neighbours (Korea, Burma, Vietnam, Japan). It will start a new Cold War between US and China which will result in US/Chinese rivalry over new resources (lithium, coltan). This will encourage growth of cyber wars or information warfare. MIC is also a source of threat to rivalry between India and Pakistan supplying them with armaments. USA gives aid to Israel who is threatening to attack Iran and the Palestinian and Israeli relations in Middle East region are on a knife edge. World today looks like world 100 years ago on eve of WW1.

The good news is: this doesn't have to be like that. There is an alternative: peace economy instead of war economy. Instead of fighting one another, world powers can choose to co-operate in own interests and interests of rest of the world by focusing on 4Ds: disarmament, demilitarisation, development and democracy and through 5 principles:

- 1 Gradually dismantle MIC. Shift workers from war industry into 'green collar' jobs – renewable, waste management, pollution control, carbon capture: cleaning up world instead of despoiling it
- 2 Share green technology innovation by export to developing countries so they escape smoke-stack stage (hundred years of burning coal which UK and USA did in their industrialisation phase)
- 3 Close down corruption loopholes – the \$43 billion BAE Al-Yamama arms deal to Saudi Arabia in which BAE paid \$400 million in fines for false accounting and misleading statements in UK over giving bribes to Prince Bandar bin Sultan, son of Saudi defence Minister. Tony Blair shut down the enquiry started by Serious Fraud Office (SFO) in 2006 on grounds of National Security.
- 4 Adopt Chinese model (lifted 600 million people out of poverty, despite corruption): protected growth of state champions in developing countries. Western governments should stop offering aid programmes with strings attached like forcing them to buy armaments. Aid should be given without any strings attached transferring money from destruction to constructive development. Examples: Wanhua Industrial Group, Chinese automaker Changan etc.
- 5 Reform UN to play better leadership role in new global economy . The reassertion of the primacy of international law under the Charter, in support of the Geneva Conventions and other treaties of the 20th century, is the most important action required from the UN and its supporters.

What reforms are needed for UN to be more effective

The areas needing reform are Security Council, General Assembly and Peacekeeping .

The essential include:

1. Deal with the five permanent members of the Security Council and their excessive power.
2. Widen the membership of the Security Council to make it more representative.

3. Tackle the veto – which puts all major reforms under the control of the existing permanent members.
4. Change the way in which the SC orders military action in order to control the process.
5. Work for General Assembly regaining its powers and develop the ‘responsibility to protect’, a concept supported by the discussions at the UN General Assembly in September 2005.
6. Reforms of the International Peace and Security structure.

Former Secretary General Kofi Annan famously called the UN “the only fire brigade in the world that has to acquire a fire engine after the fire has started.” Even when peacekeeping is the most appropriate protection tool, the UN must always overcome significant challenges to deploy and support each new mission. UN is supposed to keep peace in the whole of the world with a two year tiny peacekeeping budget for 2010-2011 for \$7.1 billion. This is less than the half of the cost of the 2012 London Olympics, or about the same amount spent by US citizens on cut flowers and potted plants every year. Both McDonald’s and Coca Cola employ more people worldwide than the entire UN system.

The UN peacekeeping reforms should include:

- Clear, achievable mandates for peacekeeping and peace-building missions, matched by the adequate resources.
- Regular and rigorous oversight of peacekeeping missions to ensure effectiveness on the ground.
- More emphasis on peace-building and conflict prevention in those countries where insecurity remains high.
- Support for the UN’s review of international civilian capacity.
- Ensuring the review of the UN’s Peace Building Commission in strategic and country-focused.
- Consideration of the UN Regular and Peacekeeping Budgets to take into account the current economic climate and the need to pursue good budget discipline, and more modernised cost-share calculations to secure value for money.

The bottom line in future peace keeping is that more efforts and resources should be spent on soft power, such as dialogue, diplomacy and reconciliation to end conflicts instead of military options.

How the world benefits

Across the world, the MIC has handed power to that 1% of humanity whose material desires can never be sated, who act as economists say they should, who murder, torture and steal in exchange for billions in a Swiss bank account, for a fourth yacht or a tenth palace.

Al Qaeda is the manifestation of the anger and humiliation of people living under puppet regimes.

As diffusion of knowledge devolves power from the elite to the masses, the grip of the MIC will finally end: not with a bang but in a peaceful murmur of prosperity.

The developing world does not need hand-outs from industrialised nations. All it needs is a level playing field and leaders who place their country's interest over personal wealth. (Give a man a fish and you feed him for one meal, teach him to fish and he is set for life)

A democratic, sustainably developing and demilitarised world is good for everyone

- End to hideously costly and destructive wars and instead spend our energy, ingenuity and resources into tackling three biggest challenges: extreme poverty, climate change and warmongering.
- By ending extreme poverty we make world a safer place for everyone as well as a better place
- By addressing climate change, we ensure preservation of environment

The message is simple, “NO” to the Military Industrial Complex and “YES” to wellbeing of all. “NO” to extreme poverty, “YES” to economic equality; “NO” to weapons and violence, “YES” to peace and a safer world. All we are asking for is a call for justice in a nonviolent peaceful way.

The beginning of the 21st Century, is a defining moment in history, a challenge to all of us, not to buy the false narrative of the Military Industrial Complex, because of which we had the horrors and the bloodshed in the 20th Century wars in which 160 million people died. However, the history is full of examples in which disputes have been settled by dialogue, diplomacy and understanding of each other instead of resorting to war. Nonviolence and peaceful means have achieved miracles. Some examples are Indian Independence Movement, the Civil Rights Movement in the US, Good Friday Agreement, Northern Ireland Peace Process, the recent Orange revolution in Ukraine, Velvet revolution in Czech Republic, Rose revolution in Georgia in Europe, and the reunification of Germany are a few examples where non violent revolutions have taken place instead of bloodshed.

Let us diminish the role of military in international relations. There is no need for global military spending which is 1.6 trillion in 2010. There is no need for Military Industrial Complex to look for excuses to continue perpetual wars. When there is no visible enemy, do we need Trident submarine replacement at a cost of \$100 billion, V-22 Osprey jets costing \$100 million a plane. What we do require is to change war economy to peace economy in which world powers can choose to cooperate and focus on 4Ds.

The Road to Peace should include five useful ways to build a safer world:

1. Conflict resolution through education for sustainable development
2. Equality of women and men
3. Eradication of poverty
4. Respect for Human Rights and cultural diversity
5. Promotion of Democracy, accountability & reforms of the United Nation

What can civil society do?

Our hope for abolition of war and demilitarisation lies with us-Citizen Power, when people are convinced that war is not necessary then we will not need to change the policies of the Government .

Here is a list of action points – things that we can all do to oppose wars, militarism and promote UN.

- Before anything – study the problem.
- Write to your MP, key decision makers and government ministers.
- Write letters to world leaders and the editor of newspapers.
- Educate the public and hold meetings and run workshops.
- Call a TV or radio talk show.
- Contact your Peace Organization, local interfaith group to discuss the issue.
- Make paper cranes to send to decision makers (they have become a symbol of disarmament).
- Join Uniting for Peace, or UNA for promoting United Nations .
- Attend a “Dialogue with decision-makers”.
- Promote complete and general disarmament for an end to wars and militarism.
- Speak truth to power. Our elected officials are making the daily decisions to fund new weapons programmes. Build a relationship with your local and national elected officials by writing letters, making phone calls, and setting up lobby visits to put an end to it Arms Trade .

Conclusion :

UN, for all its faults, offers a greater hope for preserving peace. The future of the UN lies in it as a major contributor of people and ideas. UN should mobilize international civil society and global public opinion to carry forward a vision for a just and fairer world. Its strength is evident from the fact that when the United Nations passes a resolution, it is seen as speaking for humanity as a whole, thus giving it unique legitimacy and support for an action to be taken by a country. 193 member states should embark on a reform agenda for security council which will make UN accountable, transparent and democratic decision making body, an organisation fit for successfully facing challenges and threats of 21st Century.

Today’s conference is a opportunity to move forward the debate against the military mindset, to start and activate a political discussion to change the system for a safer planet, leading to the Road to Peace .

Thank you for listening.

This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com

Vijay Mehta is president of Mehta Centre (www.vmpeace.org), Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org), Chair of Uniting for Peace (Action for UN Renewal and World Disarmament Campaign). He is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future, Arms No More, and The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century.

He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum charity held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Aftak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

The Sunday Times described him as a 'longstanding activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment', who along with his daughter, Renu Mehta, has set a precedent for striving to change the world. (The Sunday Times, 1 February 2009). Vijay Mehta's new book **"The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World"** will be published by Pluto Press later in early 2012.