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'Let's agree on a time-bound action plan for the phased elimination of nuclear weapons'

OP-ED

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In an article for *Le Monde*, the former Swedish prime minister and the president of the Strategic Foresight Group call for a paradigm shift in international security, based on UN Resolution 1722 calling for disarmament.

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The biggest question of our time is whether we should surrender before the pessimism of the inevitability of war or construct a future of hope where wars are made history. When Ukraine, the Middle East and Sudan are being ravaged, when East Asia lives in the shadow of bloodshed, when algorithms are taking over the control of lethal weapons from humans, when the arms control regime lies in tatters, when 2,800 nuclear warheads are on hair-trigger alert, where can we find a vision of another future?

On 20 December 1961, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted Resolution 1722 (XVI) calling for general and complete disarmament, including the dismantling of the military infrastructure of the individual nation states, based on the joint statement of the governments of the USSR and the United States.

The joint statement was negotiated by John McCloy, the special envoy of President John Kennedy, and Valerian Zorin, the special envoy of USSR leader Nikita Khrushchev. McCloy and Zorin were not monks or wide-eyed dreamers. McCloy had been assistant secretary of war, a banker, a top lawyer and one of the founders of the CIA.

Column ['Today, many Western experts are ready to admit that for Washington, the war in Ukraine is not existential'](#)

Blueprint or our common security

Zorin was a former deputy foreign minister and an apparatchik of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. They were the toughest realists that one could encounter in Washington DC and Moscow in the 1960s. They met secretly at the height of the Cold War, commencing their negotiations soon after the construction of the Berlin Wall began and a year before the Cuban Missile Crisis took place. They could have succeeded had President Kennedy not been assassinated within two years of the passing of the resolution 1722.

But the UNGA Resolution 1722 (XVI) remains on the record of the United Nations providing us a blueprint for our common security. Its realization will require an alternative collective security framework.

First, we need to agree on a time-bound action plan for the phased elimination of nuclear weapons. It does not require any new treaty. It only needs the implementation of Article VI of the NPT and universal ratification of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

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Artificial intelligence and cybertechnology

Until nuclear weapons are completely abolished, we need in the short term a framework for nuclear risk reduction initiated by the P5 countries and adopted by all existing and aspiring nuclear weapon states. In a joint statement on 3 January 2022, the leaders of P5 countries have all expressed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and should not be fought." The next natural step is to declare "No first use" doctrine.

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Second, we need a global convention prohibiting the deployment of artificial intelligence, cyber-technology and other emerging technologies for controlling nuclear weapons, lethal autonomous weapons and bioweapons.

Third, we need a strong verification regime to impede the irresponsible use of AI in the nuclear domain. Perhaps, the International Atomic Energy Agency can establish a special facility to set standards, oversee verification in all countries and build the capacity of responsible experts.

Misuse of veto

Fourth, we need a gradual decrease in military expenditure from \$2.2 trillion, which is more than double the level at the end of the Cold War, and divert the saved funds toward addressing global challenges.

Fifth, we need to invoke Article 109 of the UN Charter to review the United Nations Security Council with regards to its composition, the misuse of veto resulting in the paralysis of the council and the relationship between the UNSC and the UNGA. Unless the UNSC proves to be a reliable instrument of our collective security, nation states will be tempted to possess lethal weapons.

Sixth, we need a robust conflict resolution and prevention mechanism, especially with regards to situations where the big powers are involved in a direct or indirect conflict and where Chapter VI of the UN charter is ineffective.

Seventh, it is high time to develop a comprehensive framework of collective security. The UN Summit for the Future, in September 2024, provides an opportunity to prepare a bold Pact for the Future, built on sustainable peace.

Reagan and Gorbachev

The proposed agenda is ambitious. It is not in the nature of nation states to renounce power. It will be essential for the global civil society and countries that realize that they will be unwilling victims of a catastrophic war, to form a coalition to present a comprehensive framework for collective security. The Nuclear Freeze Movement led by researcher Randall Forsberg in the US and the Semipalatinsk Movement led by poet Olzhas Suleimenov in Kazakhstan in the 1980s forced Reagan and Gorbachev to commit never to wage a nuclear war.

Some may argue that this is not a time for peace as they must first punish their rivals. But can we wait for someone to detonate a tactical nuclear weapon, killing a few million people, in Ukraine or Finland by an Avangard missile, or in Kansas or California by a Hwasong missile, to wake up from our slumber? We are at a stage when two roads diverge in a wood, and we take the one less traveled by, it will make all the difference.

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