

A New Security:

Using gender to enable a human security framework in issues of disarmament

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*prepared for the United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs conference
“Mounting Challenges to Peace and Security and Disarmament Today”*

*29 July 2004
Sapporo, Japan*

“Disarmament and gender equality are global public goods whose benefits are shared by all and monopolized by no one. In the UN system, both are cross-cutting issues, for what office or department of the United Nations does not stand to gain by progress in gender equality or disarmament? When women move forward, and when disarmament moves forward, the world moves forward. Unfortunately, the same applies in reverse; setbacks in these areas impose costs for all.”

-Jayantha Dhanapala, former Under-Secretary-General for the Department for Disarmament Affairs, November 2002

“As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world.”

-Virginia Woolf

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For sixty years, nuclear weapons have plagued our civilization. The use and threat of use of nuclear weapons continues to hold the whole planet at risk.

For more than fifty years, delegates to the United Nations have pledged to eliminate these genocidal, ecocidal, and suicidal weapons.¹

For thirty four years, the majority of nuclear powers have consistently failed to live up to their obligation to “pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control.”²

For thirteen years, the world has been free of the 50-year-long cold war wherein the two most powerful nuclear states held the entire planet hostage in pursuit of a MAD theory of security.³

For four years, hopes for nuclear disarmament have been diminishing as yet another diplomatic achievement goes unfulfilled from the lack of political will to implement the Final Document of the NPT Review Conference.

Sixty years after the dawn of the atomic age, hundreds of billions of dollars and millions of deaths later,⁴ and still the Damocles sword of nuclear devastation looms over us all.

¹ Sources of the Global Disarmament Norm include: the UN Charter (Articles 11 and 47); NPT Preamble and Article VI; NPT Review Conference Agreements; 1996 International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion; UNGA disarmament resolutions; UNSC presidential statements, resolutions; preambles of other weapons of mass destruction treaties, including the four Nuclear Weapon Free Zone treaties.

² As stated in Article VI of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, entered-into-force in 1970.

³ The nuclear arms race that epitomized the cold war between the United States and Russia was predicated on the theory of Mutually Assured Destruction. MAD theory reasoned that if one superpower were to launch a nuclear attack on the other, the overwhelming nuclear arsenals of both countries would ensure that both would be obliterated.

Today, the crisis is mounting. The plague of proliferation- both horizontal and vertical- is not only a detriment to our health, our environment and our future, but it also creates a lack of faith in multilateral processes, carrying significant implications for the international security regime as a whole. If we are to reinvigorate the international community with faith in multilateral fora and make real progress in disarming the world of nuclear weapons, a radical change in thinking is required.

Many activists, analysts, UN staffers – and even some governments ⁵ have begun to advocate for shifting the disarmament and security debate away from national security and toward a framework predicated on human security. A human security approach, as recognized by the Canadian government, offers “an alternative way of seeing the world, taking people as its point of reference, rather than focusing exclusively on the security of territory or governments.”⁶

Employing gender as a tool of analysis in discussing disarmament, peace and security can help facilitate this shift in our collective thinking. A gendered perspective of human security enables a more nuanced understanding of the perspectives of those involved in conflicts - including victims, perpetrators and decision-makers. Understanding the motives of key actors will in turn facilitate mediation before the conflicts can erupt and can decrease our dependence on military solutions to conflicts.

The first section of this presentation will briefly summarize the basics of a “gendered analysis,” explaining the merits of using gender as a tool of analysis. The second section will then elaborate

⁴ While the two nuclear bombs dropped on Japan killed over 150,000 with thousands more stricken ill in their after-effects, still many thousands more have died or become sick from other aspects of the nuclear age, including nuclear testing and uranium mining. In addition, the cold war (with the nuclear arms race at its heart) claimed over 27 million lives in the 315 armed conflicts that took place at its periphery; the casualties of the heartless “proxy wars” such as those that took place in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Korea, the Congo, Nicaragua, etc, should be included in the death toll of the nuclear age.

⁵ Since 1999, the Canadian government, for instance, has been instrumental in situating a human security framework as its foundation for foreign policy.

⁶ Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World. Dept of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Canada, Ottawa. 1999.

on what a “human security” framework entails, and how it differs from that of a national security approach to issues. Finally, the presentation will examine how gender facilitates this paradigmatic shift, and how such a shift can impel real progress in the field of disarmament.

Using Gender as a Tool of Analysis

“Gender” is defined as the result of the process by which women and men appropriate characteristics and behavior that are considered to be attributable to one sex or the other. While biological differences cannot be denied, the term gender does not allude to the basic physical differences of the sexes, but rather the characteristics of each socialized sex, the implications for power of each and the relationship between the two.

Since the socialization of the person into one or the other gender begins at birth (i.e., “it’s a boy!” shouts the doctor who then dresses the newborn in the appropriate blue attire), gender is inextricably linked to one’s identity. Such an intimate component of one’s identity is therefore a good place to start when one is attempting to analyze why people go to war, why they behave the way they do in times of war and after a conflict has died down. Gender analysis gives us a deeper understanding of violent behavior - including the pursuit of weapons both large and small - which can in turn help clarify the challenges and opportunities for peace and disarmament.

While wars are often waged by governments, people carry them out, generally good people with very defined gendered behavior, acting in accordance to what they believe is appropriate for their gender.

Violence, for instance, is often linked to the masculine identity. In countries all over the world- from the United States to the Democratic Republic of the Congo- many men distill a sense of manhood through the possession of weapons. Men have been socialized to assume the role of “protectors” and “defenders” and often seek to maintain this role through the possession of

weapons. Likewise, “caretaker” and “nurturer” roles are often perceived as female characteristics to be assumed and learned by women as caretakers of their families and communities.

Again, it is important to note that “masculine” and “feminine” are not the sole characteristics of men and women, respectively. Women, for instance, when placed in positions of power usually held by men, feel the need to appear as “masculine” as possible.⁷ Even the feminine role of “caretaker” does not exempt women from participating in conflict; in fact, the nurturing role played by women often encourages their sons and husbands to become the “protector” of the family by picking up arms, thereby nurturing her sons’ development into manhood.⁸ In this way, socialized roles of gender can often fuel conflict.⁹

Understanding gender as a process of socialization enables an understanding of how and why women and men participate in and experience peace and war differently. It enables us to understand why people pick up arms in the first place. And if we can understand why they pick them up, we are better situated to figure out how to put them down.

What is a human security framework?

National leaders, in contrast to local or municipal leaders, are charged with securing the continued existence of their State, not necessarily those of the humans that reside within its borders. The Independent Commission on Human Security (CHS) defines a framework of

⁷ Masculine characteristics legitimize seats of political power. Leaders are believed to possess these male characteristics, and those vying for political seats of power often feminize their opponent as a way of delegitimizing their rival. In the U.S. during the 1980 presidential election, President Carter was perceived as too weak to handle the Iranian hostage crisis, for instance. In his campaign, Reagan often attacked the Carter administration by characterizing it as feminine: too weak to handle the crisis, too easy to appease the U.S.’s enemies. In 1987, Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder cried when she withdrew from her presidential campaign, and the media had a field day: “Women are clearly too emotional to hold such a high political office. Imagine a woman, an emotional and unstable crier, with her finger on the nuclear button?”

⁸ As scholar Cynthia Enloe points out, women who prevent or impede their sons from fighting a war are often accused of being “bad mothers” by hindering his growth into “real manhood.” Enloe, Cynthia. *The Morning After: Sexual Politics at the End of the Cold War*. University of California Press: Berkeley and Los Angeles 1993: 163.

⁹ See also “Protection of Civilians: Gender Considerations for Disarmament, Conflict Transformation and the Establishment of Human Security,” International Alert, 2003, at: <http://www.peacewomen.org/resources/SALW/IAGender.html>

¹¹ The Commission on Human Security was chaired jointly by Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for

human security as one that protects “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment.”¹¹ Furthermore, CHS notes that threats to people’s security are not always a threat to state security. In this way, a human security approach entails a more comprehensive and therefore more effective method to assessing and addressing security needs.

Decision-makers can go to sleep at night even as they send off their young people to die in a war, if the spoils of that war perpetuate or increase the State’s hold on power. The same justification underlies rejection of important security treaties such as the Ottawa Convention, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, or even the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Accountability of States to other States is perceived to detract from their hold on power. A State’s maintained right to test nuclear weapons ensures that the State can continue to hold the power of nuclear annihilation over other States. It has nothing to do with the security of human beings.

“National security” justifies opacity in governmental proceedings, clandestine national and foreign operations, policies and alliances. National security allows for the stripping of civil liberties, regardless of democratic principles or foundations of freedom purported by the country’s government. And above all, national security legitimates the development, deployment, use and threat of use of a weapon with the potential of eradicating an entire people.

A human security framework, by contrast, looks at what human beings need to feel secure in their daily lives. Do they have enough to eat? Are they literate and educated and able to make choices in their lives? Are they comfortable walking the streets, free from the fear of gun violence, sexual violence, racial violence? Do they feel safe traveling outside of their native areas, without fear of retribution for what their government has done to others in their name?

The human security framework focuses on the threats to personal and communal safety, rather than the defense of borders.¹² Efficacy of the human security framework is evident in the near-global ban on anti-personnel landmines, the establishment of the International Criminal Court, the protection of refugees, small arms control, and the campaign against human trafficking.¹³ Despite these achievements, the human security approach has rarely - if ever - been a framework for discussions of nuclear weapons and disarmament.

Of course not all governments and decision-makers have recognized the utility of this 21st century approach to security. Such a universal paradigm shift remains a difficult task. This, however, is where a gender perspective will be the most useful tool.

Promoting Human Security

The UN Department for Disarmament Affairs Gender Mainstreaming Action Plan, launched during 2003's unsuccessful UN Disarmament Commission meeting, is itself situated in a framework of human security. The Plan recognizes that "Gender analysis begins with people, their experiences and their lives, rather than with notions of state security." If we are to ever begin realizing the promise laid out in Article 26 of the Charter - a promise of the Security Council to regulate armaments toward the least diversion of global resources - we must challenge current notions of national security. As the Action Plan states, "disarmament and gender analysis offer critical approaches to the concept of national security grounded in military superiority and the threat of the use of force." Gender perspectives will enable us to move away from militarized notions of security thereby facilitating disarmament processes of weapons both large and small.

¹² Human security, as defined by The Canadian Consortium on Human Security:
http://www.humansecurity.info/CCHS_web/ABOUT/en/Human_Security.php

¹³ See: http://www.humansecurity.info/CCHS_web/ABOUT/en/Human_Security.php.

No international fora, including the CD, the NPT conferences nor even the General Assembly, will be able to make a substantive breakthrough so long as its Members equate armaments with security. This perception must be dispelled in the face of the perpetual conflict and ever-increasing arms expenditures that terrorized the twentieth century and threatens the century that lies before us. Only four years old, this century has already witnessed two major wars between States (neither of which are over), as well as ongoing intra-State conflicts on nearly every continent.

With our focus today on nuclear weapons, let us right now begin framing our thoughts, our arguments, our debates, and our work in a concept of human security, contextualized in the gendered framework of people - their perceptions, their attitudes, their needs and their roles in society.

The film, “War and Peace”, a documentary made by Indian filmmaker Anand Patwardhan, documents the reactions of Indians and Pakistanis immediately after the South Asian nuclear tests in May, 1998. One of the most common reactions of men on the streets of Delhi, Mumbai, Islamabad and Karachi was one of exuberance and pride in their country. Many men spoke of “feeling like a man” now, or that the show of nuclear power allows their country “to play with the big boys.”

If States are to live up to the obligation codified in Step 9.e of the 2000 Final Document, which calls upon all NWS to seek “A diminishing role for nuclear weapons in security policies,” we must understand the role that gendered perceptions play in their security policies. So long as these perceptions of strength and masculinity remain affixed to nuclear weapons, it will be difficult if not impossible to persuade governments to relinquish them. No government wants to be viewed as the regime which emasculated their people.

Understanding the motives of those who seek nuclear weapons will help us - as disarmament advocates - adjust our approaches and strategies to better argue for disarmament. The United States - the most egregious violator of disarmament commitments - defends its vertical proliferation policies through the justification of terrorism. Therefore, as harbingers of the human security approach, we must apply the gendered lens of human security to the ever-growing problem of terrorism, and, the current State-led attempts to combat it.

Terrorism itself is not rooted in a concept of national security, and perhaps that's why it continues to be so difficult for our national security-centered policymakers to sufficiently address the problem. The insecurity of disaffected, unproductive or impoverished men and women leads to terrorism. When their nation-state is viewed as no longer preserving or seeking the security of their families, people turn to terrorism. And how has the world responded to terrorism? By waging more wars on peoples, by developing more weapons, including "useable" nuclear weapons.

While it's true that the September 11 attacks were initiated with pocket knives, can any of us dare to imagine the consequences if terrorists in the future obtained weapons of mass destruction? There are, of course, numerous ways to *curb* access to these weapons: controls and monitors on stockpiles, programs such as the Global Threat Reduction Initiative, the Proliferation Security Initiative and the U.S.-Russia Cooperative Threat Reduction program. Yet one incontrovertible fact remains: the only way to ensure that no one will ever use or threaten to use these weapons is by verifiably, transparently, and irreversibly eliminating them. Protect your people from mass destruction by eliminating the weapons that threaten them. This has been, and will always remain, the only way to security. Then, apply the human security framework to the problem of addressing the root causes of terrorism.

Every time there is a public reinforcement of the notion that military strength and the willingness to use it are key elements of security, every time disarmament or choosing not to rely on the threat or use of force for security are dismissed as weak or womanly (and therefore not desirable or worthy of power) options, the power of the terrorist is reinforced. If the world's message to terrorists is that violence does not solve their problems, why do the world's governments engage in their own violence to solve *their* problems?

Gender, Human Security and the NPT

The cornerstone of the disarmament regime, the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, stands at its most crucial juncture in its history. With significant backsliding from key advancements made at the 2000 Review Conference, drastic measures are needed in order to ensure the treaty's longevity. In these next final months of preparations for the 2005 NPT Review Conference, all actors within the international disarmament community must do everything they can to use the Conference as a tool for ensuring the human security of all peoples, everywhere.

First, States Parties must recognize the commitments already made in past years. Allowing hard-won diplomatic achievements, such as the 2000 Final Document, to be ignored as if it had never happened, has calamitous effects on the entire international legal regime. As South Africa warned during the 2004 PrepCom, "...undermining one agreement reached in the context of the NPT undermines all such agreements, including on issues that may be of particular importance to them. One cannot undermine one part of an agreement and hope that other parts will continue to have the same force, or that others will not turn in attempt to follow the same practice."¹⁴ States Parties must now seek to advance, rather than rescind on, those commitments.

Secondly, in a reminder that governments are representatives of the people- not parents who believe "they know what's best" for their children- foreign and defense ministries must actively

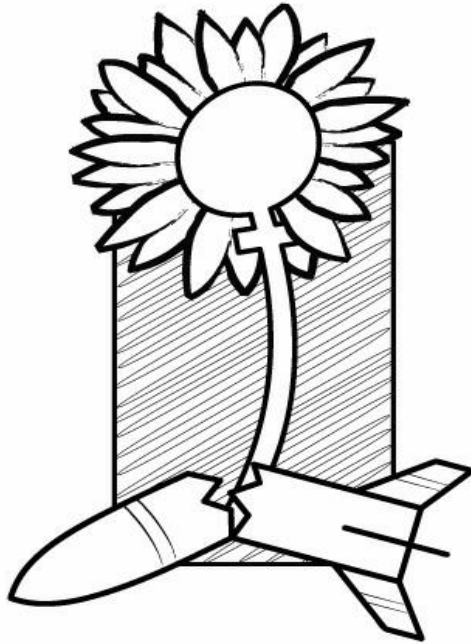
¹⁴ South Africa's statement can be found at: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/legal/npt/prepcom04/statements.html>

engage all people in their citizenries and ask how *they* define security. How do their people's- men and women of all races and ethnicities- perception of security differ from the agendas and policies of the government? How can they be harmonized?

Thirdly, governments must be more active in recruiting women to participate at higher levels of government. In Security Council resolution 1325, the Council urges member states to increase the numbers of women in all levels of decision-making (national, regional and international), relating to the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts. At its heart, is not the NPT a critical tool by which the international community seeks to prevent nuclear war through effective nonproliferation and disarmament of nuclear weapons? If so, then all States Parties are required through this resolution to engage much higher numbers of women in their deliberations.

And finally, we urge all States Parties to allow for greater participation on the part of non-governmental organizations. Relegated to the sidelines of the NPT conferences, NGO representatives have dedicated their time, their energy and their minimal (and dwindling) resources toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. This diverse group of activists, experts and analysts base their dedication to nuclear abolition on the notion that nuclear weapons are an anathema to the security of human beings. They come to the NPT conferences not to just criticize and blame the delegates for the continued specter of nuclear war; they come to speak to the governments as individuals and as human beings, all fighting the fight for the survival of the human race, free from the threat of nuclear terror and free from the heavy burden of all weapons of war.

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Reaching for a Critical Mass of Political Will
for Nuclear Disarmament

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