

*International Network of Universities (INU) Seminar
Hiroshima University, 8 August 2006*

‘What can we do for peace construction?’¹

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First allow me to thank Hiroshima University for the opportunity to address this year's INU Seminar. It is really a pleasure to be able to exchange views with young people about what is unfolding in our world.

UNITAR is the smallest agency in the UN – it was established in 1965 and its mandate is to provide executive type training to government staff and representatives of academia and civil society in the areas of peace and security on the one hand, and economic and social development on the other. We are not an academic institution *per se* – rather our main focus is to train mid-career officials and professionals, mostly from developing countries. The perspectives I share with you today are therefore not those of an academic but of a practitioner – I hope however that they will be complementary to your other lectures.

You are in Hiroshima at a very special time, during the A-bomb commemorations. And hopefully you have heard much of Hiroshima's reconstruction. The speaker before me, former Mayor Hiraoka, gave a remarkably lucid and comprehensive analysis of the history of Hiroshima and the A-bomb - I think I can in no way add to his excellent analysis. I would just add, as one interested in urbanism, that the physical reconstruction of Hiroshima is something that impresses me quite a bit as well -- the perseverance and vision it took for the people to rebuild their city, despite their then dire circumstances, to transform it from a cemetery – for that is what the area around the epicentre had become -- into the Peace Memorial Park as we see it today, a place of reflection and one which retains still such a strong and universal appeal. The design of the ensemble is by the well-known Japanese architect Kenzo Tange, and I personally feel it was his best work ever, bringing the different strands of Hiroshima's identity and history together -- remarkable to think that it was designed in 1949 – it may have aged, but it has done so ever so gracefully.

So 6 August is indeed a moment of reflection here, but it is imperative that such a reflection not cease on 7 August... And when we do reflect, we are forced to admit, looking around the world, that it is difficult to feel much confidence about using the word 'peace'. You really question whether we have in fact become any smarter, as a species, than 61 years ago -- if the number of wars and weapons of mass destruction that are proliferating is any indication, it would not seem so. On the nuclear front and since the quasi collapse of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT) talks last year in New York, the containment policy that had held nuclear proliferation in check these past decades –

¹ *The speaker would like to thank Dr. Sergei Shaposhnikov of UNITAR for invaluable assistance in the research of this lecture*

unevenly and stumblingly it is true -- is all but coming apart. Global trade negotiations reached a standstill last week in Geneva, mostly because none of the industrialized countries wanted to cede any ground – on agricultural subsidies in particular. Meanwhile, tensions in East Asia are high; the Middle-East is teetering on the verge of large-scale conflict, accusations and rhetoric rather than behind the scene negotiations seem to be the main form of international diplomacy taking place.... As for the United Nations, the one universal organization set up for the preservation of global peace and security – shackled and contained by some of its most powerful member states – it does not seem to have much capital of power or influence left to intervene as a valid broker. So the picture, if I may say so, is pretty grim.

In this context, I have been struggling with the question put to me by the organizers of this session – i.e. what can we do to build peace? (My first reaction was: change the human brain circuits!). I shall try my best to answer. Before doing so allow me, for transparency's sake, to be clear about my own perspectives and biases - personally and professionally.

First, my personal perspective comes not from any particular nationality but from the eyes of a citizen of the world, a badge of honour I carry with pride: I was born in Iran, have lived in Pakistan and Turkey in my youth, am a citizen of Switzerland where I moved to at the age of 17, my family is American and my current home is Hiroshima. As if the geographical diversity were not enough, culturally and religiously too, it is a mixed picture --I was born in a Muslim family, attended Christian and Jewish schools, and can be just at ease in Buddhist or Hindu temples as I am in a mosque or church (the architecture or interior design of a place of worship being of little importance in my spiritual path....). I am proud of my many heritages and identities and diversity is part and parcel of my life.

As regards my professional perspective, it is solidly in the internationalist camp - the first line of the Charter of the United Nations 'We the peoples of the United Nations...' has a deep resonance for me. It has become fashionable to be critical of the United Nations, often without even knowing much of its actual intent, structure and functions. At times the criticism has been justified; there is no denying that a bureaucracy headed by 191 members or masters can become an unwieldy and even inefficient entity -- but often too, the criticism has been unjustified and worse, unleashed mainly for domestic political gains. So let us linger a while on the United Nations.

As you well know, the forerunner of the **UN was the League of Nations**, conceived in 1919 at the end of WWI, under the Treaty of Versailles and which ceased its existence after its failure to prevent war. The UN is part of the international architecture built after WWII – and its founding was not some theoretical exercise but the result of much blood and suffering, the resolve of the world to never relive the horrors of WWII. Interestingly the US, then and for many decades the most active member state of the UN, was at the height of its power in 1945 – and yet not only did it accept but actively promoted the idea of a 'parliament of men'², to share power in other words.

²'Locksley Hall' by Alfred Lord Tennyson

So what are today the perceptions of this global organization that came into being after so much blood and suffering? In a survey on the UN completed in May 2006³ in some 13 countries, the Pew Global Attitudes Project found some interesting results – generally a decline of favourable impressions of the UN in all countries post 9/11 but impressions that somehow contradicted one another – for example while in the US people felt that the UN was shackled by and biased in favour of developing countries, in most developing countries the opposite was felt. The recent tragedies in Beirut are a case in point⁴.

I will make no further comments on the UN as it is not the topic of this lecture – but simply let us ask ourselves what alternative do we have, other than to make this organization work? In the words of one of the greatest Secretaries-General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld **“The UN was not created to take humanity to heaven, but to save it from hell”**

Let us now return to the question of ‘what can we do for peace?’. Maybe in the current world context, a more pertinent articulation would be ‘what can we do, to avoid deepening conflict’?

First, we must do more to slow down the **insanity of the arms race** – conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological. The craze with which governments – *most* of our governments -- continue to research, produce, sell and purchase arms is simply repulsive⁵. Last year, according to SIPRI⁶ the world reached one trillion US\$ (Yen amount 120 trillion) in terms of expenditures for conventional arms alone. Arms sales in some regions have increased terrifyingly – some 65% in North Africa for example, 34% in North America, 73% in Central Asia, 50% in South Asia, 40% in the Middle East. Shamefully, some of the greatest arms exporters are the very members of the Security Council, many of which preach good conduct to others – US, UK, France, China and Russia. As former president Carter mentioned, ‘We cannot have it both ways. We can’t be both the world’s leading champion of peace and the world’s leading supplier of arms’⁷.

Meanwhile stock-piles of nuclear weapons grow. As do those of chemical weapons - yesterday we were presented with some images from the chemical attacks of March 1988 on the city of Halabja, in Northern Iraq. Over the weekend, an international conference on the proliferation and use of depleted uranium in arms was held in Hiroshima. I dare not even think about the possibility that efforts may be ongoing in laboratories to ‘perfect’ biological weapons. The resources wasted by governments and individuals for these instruments of collective and brutal murder are simply unbelievable. The ‘opportunity cost’ – what this sick industry takes away in terms of the creativity, productivity and morale of a society -- must be even more staggering than the actual financial costs. So this is the first battle ground (to use an appropriate war terminology) and my first recommendation to young people would be join or found campaigns and groups that try to expose the impudence of arms dealers and war mongers but also the

³ *The Pew Global Attitudes Project is a series of worldwide public opinion surveys that encompasses a broad array of subjects ranging from people’s assessments of their own lives to their views about the current state of the world and important issues of the day. More than 90,000 interviews in 50 countries have been conducted as part of the project’s work. <http://pewglobal.org/>*

⁴ *Even as UN peace observers were killed by Israeli bombings in southern Lebanon, UN offices in Beirut were ransacked by Lebanese mobs.*

⁵ *‘World Military Expenditures’, Coordination Office for the Decade to Overcome Violence, World Council of Churches, Geneva, Switzerland, 2005*

⁶ *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*

⁷ *‘World Military Expenditures’ p. 21*

hypocrisy of governments, in spending so much money on death and destruction even as their own people, lack basic health services, education, social, scientific or cultural infrastructure. This supposedly economic activity – of what General Eisenhower called the ‘military-industrial complex’ -- is truly a stain on society and unless we are able to stop it, it may well be our common undoing.

Second – we must be far more active about the **environment** -- our existence as a species is now seriously being questioned, even in reasonable and moderate circles. This June, at a talk at Hong Kong’s University of Science and Technology, **Stephen Hawkins** of the University of Cambridge stated that he was not optimistic about the chances for survival of the human race – that he thought disease, nuclear war, global warming or some other calamity by man or nature could well wash away our civilization. He recommended we start thinking about human colonies elsewhere, such as on the Moon. Meanwhile recently the **Government of Norway**, not known for particularly frivolous announcements, stated that it had launched a seed bank project, to be set in the country’s permafrost and used if a global disaster were to destroy agriculture as we know it today.

Ironically, the more our science advances and we understand just what a miracle life on this planet is, the less we seem to be able to handle it with the care it requires. **Global climate change** is a huge threat and governments have been talking about it persistently for almost two decades (at least since the 2nd World Climate Conference of Geneva in 1990) and through endless rounds of negotiations under the umbrella of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. How it is possible, to talk so much and yet to deliver so little, to have such a mismatch between words and actions, is really beyond me. There are things we *know*, we *have known for years that we can do* immediately, that we know we *must* do – stronger policies on emissions control, public transport, denser and ‘green’ cities and less far-flung and energy-guzzling suburbia, organic and sustainable agriculture, less waste generation - all of this should have already become part and parcel of our societal landscape. But from rhetoric to reality, the dots have not been linked yet. I was visiting family in southern California last month – the highways full of 17-18 year-olds driving huge SUVs.... This absurd and vulgar dependence on the car and fossil fuels is not letting go, affecting our entire future. Even in Hiroshima’s tiny streets, we are starting to see huge SUVs – Why?! Not only is it unsustainable, it is so primitive, really -- city centers are not meant for such cars. In fact my most simple and immediate recommendation to you would be: buy a bicycle, nothing as efficient and civilized as a bicycle....).

I am an admirer of the theories of James Lovelock, the author of GAIA (or the living planet). I feel that in this theory lies the possibility of looking at our ‘footprint’ on earth and our interactions with its other species in a different light. Instinctively understood in Japanese tradition – where all things – stones and trees and seasons and stars – are alive and related, the GAIA theory promotes belief in the interconnectedness of our universe, allowing us to better understand the consequences of our actions and policies. Some of these may be at our small personal levels, while others will have to be at national and global levels – but both require action.

Third, we need to counter the ignorance and intolerance around **religion and culture**, the extremism and hysteria on all sides that seem to be silencing intelligent discourse. **André Malraux**, the great French writer and philosopher said, ‘The 21st century will be a

time of spirituality or it will simply not be....'⁸ Malraux was not thinking of any particular religion but rather of our collective spirituality. Human beings, irrespective of their religion, race, colour or creed, need some sense of connection to the larger scheme of things, to feel that their lives are more than just mere existence. It is true that our wealth and prosperity has allowed wonderful achievements for our societies – but let us have no illusions, it has not protected us from accompanying trash - let me briefly refer to a few (the full list could take pages!): the overwhelming number of stupid films and TV shows, weekend 'retreats' for the elderly to gambling parlours (where they can stare at a slot-machine for hours on end – a strange notion of the dignity of old age), rising dependence on drugs and alcohol, obsession with more and with bigger, with fake and plastic everywhere, from nails to lawns, pornography on display even in convenience stores (and exported on satellite TV channels to Afghanistan!) – and all of it under the disingenuous claim that 'there is a market'. I wonder at times what our ancestors would think – those who fought for 'a better life', for enlightenment and knowledge, for freedom, democracy and equal rights -- to now see their descendents settle for so little! And of course we seem to have on the other hand an increasing number of quasi-illiterate fanatics, parading as religious leaders, menacing – all in the name of religion – to kill, pillage and destroy anyone in disagreement with their beliefs. Truly, extremism does breed extremism.

So Hiroshima is indeed an appropriate place, to think about the sicknesses and greatnesses – of our societies and governments, of our ideas about modernity, progress and science, of ourselves. Hiroshima is something of a miracle because you may say that it may well not have existed. After the bomb there were those who actually considered moving the city altogether, because what is a city the center of which has become radioactive ash? Instead of which we are here today, in this green and lively place. What cost in human suffering, but also what resilience and courage it must have implied -- I think that that strength should and can imbue your seminar and your fight for the future.

Some of you may be familiar with Sufism, which is the esoteric school of Islam. My Sufi teacher, who was trained as a scientist, used to frequently quote a theory by Leonard Euler, the great 18th century Swiss mathematician, finding in it great spiritual solace and inspiration – it reads as follows: 'The pull of the future is stronger than the push of the past'. This can be reassurance for young people like you, too – to know that in whatever difficulty, vowing at this instant, irrespective of past patterns, mistakes and chains, to try and set the course straight, can open untold possibilities -- for our world and of course for our selves.

Thank you for your attention.

⁸ André Malraux, '*Le 21ème siècle sera religieux ou ne sera pas*'



What can we do for peace construction?

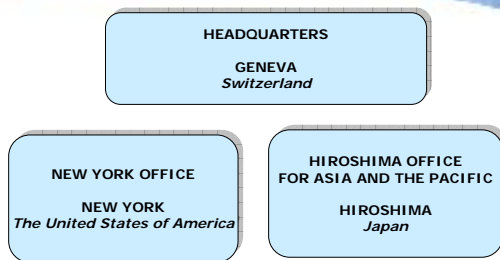
Hiroshima, 8 August 2006

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United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

- Established in 1965 by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1934 (XVIII) of 11 December 1963 and resolution 42/197 of 11 December 1987.
- An autonomous institution within the framework of the United Nations, UNITAR is governed by a Board of Trustees and is headed by an Executive Director.
- The Institute is supported by voluntary contributions from governments, inter-governmental organizations, foundations, and other non-governmental sources.

UNITAR Organizational Structure



UNITAR Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific (HOAP)

UNITAR's regional office responsible for training programmes for **over 50 countries**



2003-2006 Activities

- Post-Conflict Reconstruction (and the Fellowship for Afghanistan)
- Management and Conservation of World Heritage Sites
- International Economics and Finance
- Biodiversity
- Sea and Human Security
- International Peacekeeping
- Training Methodologies and Training of Trainers (ToT)



Founding of the United Nations

- **1942** – Atlantic Charter, outlining idea for United Nations, signed by Allies;
- **1943-1945** - idea for the UN is elaborated at the wartime Allied conferences;
- The US, *at the height of its power*, convinced its reluctant allies of the need for cooperation to prevent conflicts between nations... by fostering an ideal of *collective security*;



Founding of the UN (cont'd)

- **April 25, 1945** - UN Conference on International Organizations starts drafting the Charter;
 - **June 26, 1945** - 50 nations sign the Charter of the United Nations in San Francisco;
- "We the peoples of the United Nations..."*
- **October 24, 1945** - The UN comes into existence after the Charter had been ratified by the five permanent members of the Security Council — *Republic of China, France, the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, and the United States* — and by a majority of the other 46 signatories.



Chapter III (Charter of the United Nations)

UN Organs

- General Assembly
- Security Council
- Secretariat
- Economic & Social Council
- International Court of Justice
- Trusteeship Council

Chapter IV

The General Assembly

- Main deliberative organ of the United Nations;
- Composed of representatives of all member states (192 as of August 2006), each of which has one vote (one state, one vote);



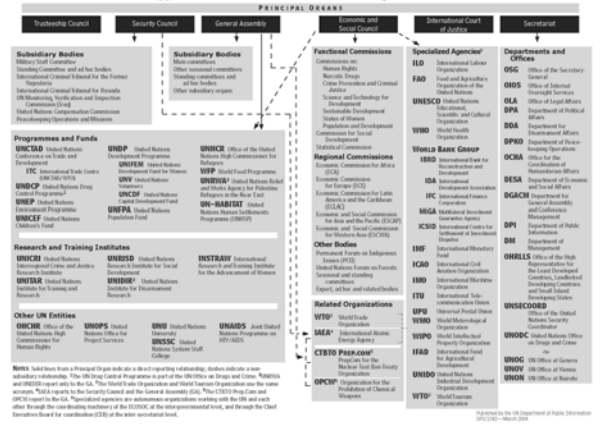
- Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority;
- Decisions on other questions are by simple majority.

Chapter V

The Security Council

- Composed of five permanent members and 10 non-permanent members; currently (with year of term's end): Argentina (2006), Greece (2006), Qatar (2007), Rep. of the Congo (2007), Japan (2006), Slovakia (2007), Denmark (2006), Peru (2007), Tanzania (2006), Ghana (2007);
- Decisions on procedural matters are made by an affirmative vote of at least nine of the 15 members. Decisions on substantive matters require nine votes, including the concurring votes of all five permanent members. This is the rule of "great Power unanimity", often referred to as the "veto" power;
- Under the Charter, all Members of the UN agree to accept and carry out the decisions of the SC;
- While other organs of the United Nations make recommendations to Governments, **the Council alone has the power to take decisions which Member States are obligated under the Charter to carry out.**

The United Nations system



Perceptions and opinions of the UN

- Positive ratings of the UN in the US declined from 77% before 9/11 terrorist attacks to 51%;
- Opinions of the U.N. in Muslim countries surveyed vary widely – from very positive (Indonesia) to predominantly negative (Turkey and Jordan);
- In Japan, share of negative ratings (36%) is higher than in most Western countries in the survey.

Source: The Pew Global Attitudes Project Report, released on June 13, 2006. Based on telephone and face-to-face interviews conducted under the direction of Princeton Survey Research Associates International in April – May 2006. Surveys in all countries are based on national samples except in China, India, and Pakistan, where the sample was disproportionately or exclusively urban. Average sample size is about 1000 people.

Opinions of the U.N.

	Fav %	Unfav %	DK %
U.S.	51	38	11
2005	48	39	
France	72	28	*
2004	67	30	3
Germany	68	25	7
2004	71	23	6
Britain	65	23	11
2004	74	18	7
Spain	60	30	10
Russia	49	29	22
2004	60	18	21
Indonesia	78	18	4
Egypt	49	51	*
Pakistan	42	22	36
2004	35	27	38
Jordan	30	69	1
2004	21	73	6
Turkey	29	51	20
2004	51	35	14
Nigeria	68	26	7
Japan	56	36	7
China	53	25	22
India	39	35	26

DK: Don't know

Major criticisms of the UN

United States

- Ineffectiveness, unwilling or unable to enforce its own resolutions in Iraq for example;
- Corruption – “oil for food” scandal;
- Bureaucracy and lack of accountability and democratic legitimacy;
- Weapon of other states, which seek to constrain and hinder US policies.

Developing countries

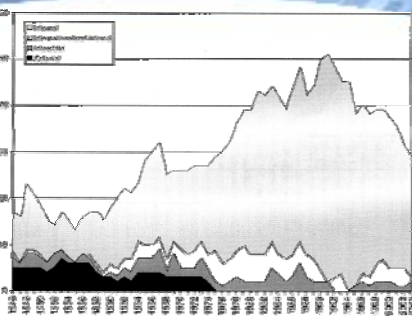
- Serves the goals of the US and the West – emphasis on human rights at the expense of economic development;
- Threatens countries' sovereignty – e.g., humanitarian interventions ;
- Ineffectiveness – the UN not doing enough to help occupied Palestine.



“The UN was not created to take humanity to heaven, but to save it from hell”

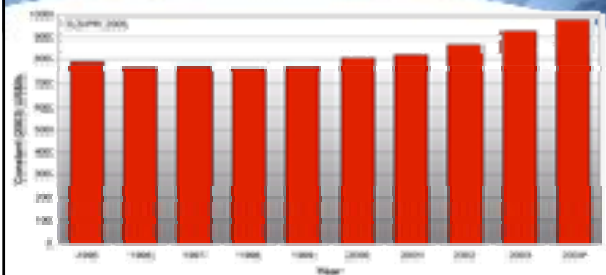
Dag Hammarskjöld
UN Secretary-General (1953-1961)
The Nobel Peace Prize Winner

Number of armed conflicts by type, 1946-2003



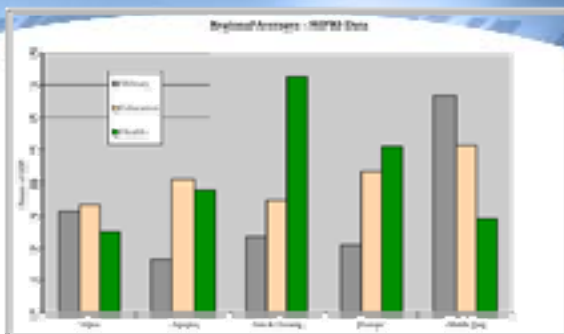
Source: Ramesh Thakur, *The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect*, Cambridge University Press; 1st edition, 2006

World military expenditures, 1995-2004 (conventional weapons)



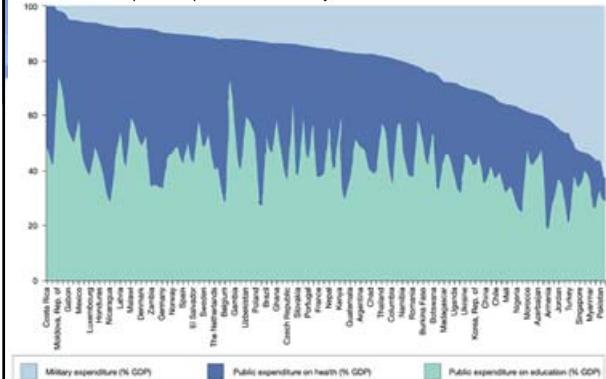
Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Percentage of GDP expenditures on military, education and health



Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

Distributions of public expenditure on military, health and education

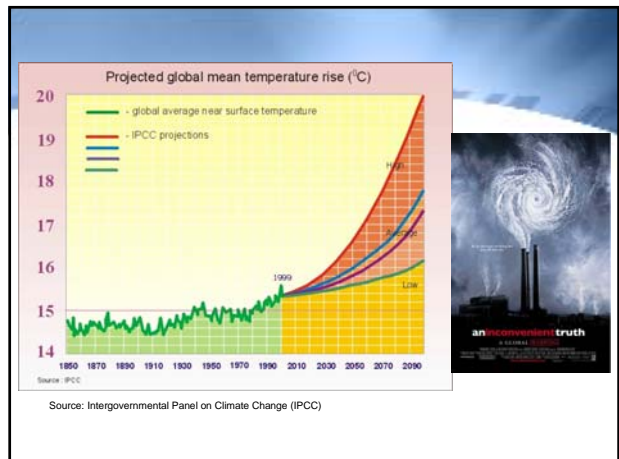


Source: Human Development Report 2002 (United Nations Development Programme, 2002)

Country comparisons, as percent of GDP for military, education and health

Country	Military	Education	Health
Cambodia	3	2	1.8
China	2.2	-	2
Egypt	2.6	-	1.9
Japan	1	3.6	6.2
India	2.3	-	0.9
Iran	4.3	5	2.7
Israel	7.7	-	6
Kenya	1.9	-	1.7
Nigeria	-	2.3	1.4
Pakistan	4.6	-	1
Russia	4	3.1	3.7
Singapore	5.1	-	1.3
South Africa	1.6	-	3.6
Thailand	1.4	5	2.1
UK	2.5	-	6.2
USA	3.1	5.6	6.2

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) compilations from 1998-2001



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A BRIEF HISTORY OF TIME
FROM THE BIG BANG TO BLACK HOLES
STEPHEN W. HAWKING
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY CARL SAGAN

JAMES LOVELOCK
gaia
and the theory of the living planet
with a new introduction by the author

Culture and Religion

- Sufism and Unity in Diversity
- Leonard Euler (Swiss mathematician, 1707-1783):

"The pull of the future is stronger than the push of the past"

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

