

Disarmament For Development

by Alfred de Zayas,* Geneva

"In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes."

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 17 January 1961¹



Alfred de Zayas
(Photo ma)

Edit. The author is both US and Swiss citizen. Here he comments on economic policy issues concerning the USA.

AdZ. Our governments have the wrong priorities – totally skewed budgetary priorities. Year after year our tax dollars are being squandered by Congress, which

adopts military-first budgets instead of human-security budgets.

As I documented in my 2014 report to the UN Human Rights Council,² some 40% of our budget goes for the military – trillions of dollars for war, military interventions, military propaganda, missiles, drones, military bases at home and abroad, military exercises, what else? And that is what we know from published documents. We also know that billions are unaccounted for. Where have all the missing billions go?

If we were a truly democratic country, we would be asked whether we would like to spend the budget on war or on education, whether we would like to give the priority to disarmament and peace negotiations rather than to attend to the arms race. We would be able to vote on specific aspects of the budget. We would not rely on our system of so-called "representative democracy", which in reality does not represent us.

The reality is that we have a "dysfunctional" democracy, which allows us only to vote for can-

didate A or candidate B, both of whom are committed to the military-industrial complex, both of whom want huge military budgets, both of whom prefer saber-rattling and military adventures over dialogue, tension over détente, predator competition over international cooperation.

In a world threatened by pandemics, climate change, earthquakes, tsunamis and other natural disasters, it is time to practice international solidarity to solve global problems. Our governments should begin by respecting the sovereignty of other states, refrain from interfering in their international affairs as stipulated in General Assembly Resolutions 2131, 2625, 3314.

They should stop provocations, silence the drums of war, stop the enormously costly arms race and observe article 2(3) of the UN Charter, which commits all member states to solve their differences by negotiation, peaceful means, and in good faith.

Although most politicians in East and West, North and South give lip service to the importance of local, regional and international peace, they actually undermine peace on a daily basis. Although they are ostensibly committed to achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, there is no reasonable prospect whatever of achieving them, since military budgets are expanding, not contracting, and propaganda for war has grown exponentially.

Wherever we look in the media – the "quality press", Hollywood, televised news, internet news, the social media – everyone seems to be engaging in fake news, skewed narratives, and giving full faith and credit to false flag operations.

The recklessness of such behaviour might eventually lead to an error of judgment by a senior politician a computer glitch, a fateful human error – that will result in a nuclear confrontation with Russia, China or other nuclear powers.

Instead of cutting military budgets to help combat Covid-19 and other pandemics, we observe the recklessness of governments that privatized hospitals and closed clinics, because they were not generating enough of a profit.

The right to health is a human rights and governments are ontologically obliged to take appro-

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appropriate measures to advance the health of the population. What we have seen over the past decades is neglect, and unpreparedness. That is the reason why the United States has suffered over one million deaths from Covid-19.

Our response to the pandemic reveals the downward spiral of research for preparedness to tackle emergencies. In the first two decades of the 21st century many countries reduced their investment in health, education, social services, infrastructure while wasting taxpayers' money into the development and procurement of fighter jets and lethal autonomous weapon systems.

Lobbies for the military-industrial complex are fueling wars worldwide, because they can only make a profit if the weapons are used and destroyed, thus triggering the necessity to replace them. Thus, the vicious circle continues. Produce weapons, increase tensions, provoke armed conflict, blow up the weapons in real war, produce new weapons, make a profit.

Article 2, paragraph 4, of the UN Charter stipulates that States shall refrain not only from the actual use of force in international relations, but also from the *threat* of the use of force.

The international law principle is concretized in article 20 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, which specifically prohibits propaganda for war. Article 20, paragraph 2, specifically prohibits incitement to hatred and violence. How else can we describe the Russophobia and Sinophobia exhibited by many of our politicians?

Notwithstanding these norms, many "leaders" and political "pundits" in the US and NATO countries engage in inflammatory provocations and "military exercises" next to the borders of States, where we would like to see "regime change". What is particularly dangerous is that these provocations are applauded and magnified by political commentators and the mainstream media which really should know better.

Based on the UN Charter's call to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, civil society is leading the movement to codify peace as a human right with clearly defined individual and collective dimensions.

This initiative was enshrined in the *Santiago Declaration* of 10 December 2010, which led to a draft declaration on the right to peace by the Advisory Committee of the UN Human Rights Council, a document manifesting a holistic ap-

proach to peace and encompassing, civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights.

In my capacity as UN Independent Expert on International Order, I participated in all of the consultations of the inter-governmental working group on the right to peace. It was a painful and revealing experience.

Anyone who desires to know what countries are truly for human dignity and human rights and what countries are against, should have been an observer at these disgraceful meetings, in which representatives of the United States and NATO countries outright denied that there was anything like the human right to peace. Worse still, they argued that there should not be such a right. Their arguments were not only wrong on the law – they were morally reprehensible.

The watered-down resolution eventually adopted by the General Assembly³ on 19 December 2016 is, however, not the end of the story. Civil society is not about to give up, and the *Spanish Society for International Human Rights Law*, which spearheaded the *Declaracion de Santiago*, continues its educational work to convince a majority of states of the urgency to recognize peace as a principal human right.

States must listen to civil society and complete the work already stated by the General Assembly in its Resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984, adopted at the height of the cold war.⁴

The renewed cold war and the hot war in Ukraine suggest that a General Assembly must revisit the issue and adopt a new resolution affirming all the constitutive elements of the right to peace all the more urgent.

What is most necessary today is for States to work collaboratively together on resolving the root causes of local, regional and international conflict, often emerging from the unrepresentative nature of governments, the huge disconnect between power and people, the great injustices and inequalities prevailing in the world, the race for natural resources, the asymmetries of trade relations, the imposition of illegal sanctions and financial blockades on other States, and the criminal manipulation of public opinion by governments and media.

Over the past seventy years many armed conflicts and several genocidal wars had their origin in the denial of the right of internal or external self-determination.

There are still many indigenous peoples, non-self-governing peoples, peoples living under oc-

cupation, peoples who have suffered gross violations of their human rights, who have a legitimate claim to self-determination – including the Palestinians, the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the Sahraouis, the Mapuches, the West Papuans, the Catalans, the Corsicans, the Armenians of Nagorno Karabakh, the Southern Tyrolians, and, yes, also the much maligned peoples of Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia, Crimea, Donetsk and Lugansk.

It is high time for the United Nations to proactively promote the realization of self-determination as a conflict-prevention strategy, requiring mediation and, where appropriate, United Nations organized and monitored referenda. It is not the right of self-determination that causes conflict, but the unjust denial thereof.

Countless wars since the WWII were triggered precisely by the intransigence of politicians, by their lack of flexibility, by their insistence on the obsolete principle of *uti possidetis*.

Addressing global problems including the challenges of the Sustainable Development Goals requires trillions of dollars. It is therefore imperative to drastically reduce military expenditures and convert war economies into peace economies, and thereby create millions of jobs in the education, health and social sectors.

It is unconscionable to continue the arms race, when millions of human beings world-wide are suffering from extreme poverty, famine and no access to clean water and sanitation.

Disarmament for Development must be our mantra. Nuclear states must also engage in good faith disarmament negotiations as required by article 6 of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. The threat of nuclear annihilation will persist for as long as the production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons is not eliminated.

This concern has been the subject of two General Comments adopted by the UN Human Rights Committee on article 6 of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, the right to life. It should be clear to everybody that without peace, we cannot exercise our human rights. Let us conclude with a warning by President Eisenhower:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”⁵

Source: <https://www.counterpunch.org/2022/04/15/disarmament-for-development/>, 15 April 2022

¹ https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisenhower-001.asp

² A/HRC/27/51. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UN-DOC/GEN/G14/087/31/PDF/G1408731.pdf?OpenElement>

³ <https://static.un.org/en/ga/71/resolutions.shtml>

⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-peoples-peace>

⁵ Eisenhower, *The Change for Peace speech*, http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/ike_chance_for_peace.html