

The urgency for surpassing the nuclear age

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A decade after the end of the Cold War one might have thought that the " nuclear genie " had gone back into its lamp. We have to admit that such is not the case. The disappearance of antagonism between two powers, while removing the major threat, did not mean that nuclear weapons were spontaneously reprovved. The strategy configuration has changed but the problematics remain.

So, for the five nuclear powers known until now, in spite of various international treaties the importance of which we shall by no means underestimate, abandoning this type of weapon does not seem to appear on their present-day schedule. The American "Presidential Directive Decision 60" dated November 1997, the British "Strategic Defence Review" of July 1998, "NATO's Strategic Concept" in 1999, the "New French Defence Programme Act" for 2003-2008, the Russian "Security Concept" and "Military Doctrine "in 2000., the Chinese Military programmes over recent years, are striking indications that this is indeed a present-day issue.

The persistent refusal on the part of these States to go purposely forward on the road to nuclear disarmament, the more so to exclude it from international relations has led and is likely to lead to new arrivals of countries possessing these weapons of mass destruction. Thus, after Israel, India and Pakistan now possess the nuclear weapon. There is the likelihood that the NPT, and Article VI, to which the present nuclear states do not comply will have no effect in abolishing the proliferation of these weapons. The fact is, the sincerity of the nuclear powers is hardly credible as long as they continue to declare that in their hands the nuclear weapon is a warranty of security whereas in the hands of others it is a threat to world peace. A number of countries that had noted with great interest the arms reductions planned by the USA and Russia – both bound by the CTBT – are now concerned by the vast existing stockpiles being modernised and the development of simulation methods for testing them on a permanent basis. As Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, Vice-Secretary General of UNO remarked at the NPT Review Conference 2000 : "If the present nuclear states persist indefinitely in carrying out no substantial progress towards nuclear disarmament, I fear that the world consensus relative to ceasing the proliferation of nuclear weapons will gradually crumble, with the likelihood that a growing number of countries will reconsider their nuclear choices."

its seems that the warning has not been heard, and if the threat of proliferation is taken seriously, its perception will not lead to a change of doctrine but to looking for ways and means of protection from it. This is particularly the case with the American NMD project, a project which, far from attenuating the dangers is more likely to aggravate them by starting up a new post-Cold War arms race.

The least we can say is that the "nuclear genie" is still reluctant to go back into its lamp. In this respect, we sometimes hear the following remark : "the nuclear cannot be disinvented" Obviously, but history is generous with inventions of all kinds, which, without being "disinvented" are nevertheless capable of playing a worthless role for the future. If this is not so for nuclear weapons, then the causes are of another nature with deeper implications.

The nuclear weapon is still part of a multi-dimensional concept where international security is based on the balance of power and military capacities in inter-State relations. Looking at the purely military aspect of security, "nuclear deterrence" has for fifty years been the touchstone of the powers that happen to be the five permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations. In spite of valorous speeches on non-proliferation, it would be an illusion to imagine that these powers are

actually prepared to abandon their tool of power, - the nuclear weapon - spontaneously. Nevertheless, however powerful they may be, they are not alone.

Since the end of the Cold War, more and more voices, and not the least significant have been clamouring for the elimination of nuclear weapons. There are various ways of addressing this issue; multiple, ethical, economic, political, legal, even military. But they have a common denominator: in the first place, questioning the reasons why states consider they have to possess this type of weapon for their security. So true is it that today no security exists independently of the security of others, -all the more so, against that of others. In his declaration before the UN, Monsignor Renato Martino, permanent observer to the Holy See said : "The idea that the strategy of nuclear deterrence is essential to the security of a nation is the most dangerous presumption passed on from the previous period to the present one. Continuing nuclear deterrence in the XXIst century will be an impediment to peace rather than an advantage. It is a fundamental obstacle to the advent of a new period of global security"

Arising out of the movement against nuclear weapons is the idea being more and more emphasized that today the purely military aspect of security is to be surpassed as a legacy that belongs to another age. A surpassing founded on the famous Hegelian concept "Aufhebung" that at the same time underlies abolish and elevate, eliminate and accomplish. Cooperative security is in fact still confined to the state view and a conservative vision of the international system, the Westphalian system that has lasted for centuries. UNESCO is to be thanked for opening the debate on a contemporary approach to the question of security. The concept of human security can now be defined briefly in four words : human finality, globality, interdependence, rationality that seem quite suited to the reality of today's world. Obviously, in this context, there is no room for nuclear weapons.

Going from inter-state insecurity that tends to justify military reinforcement to collective security in the name of the principle of human security is no small matter. It is a process, as the Palme Commission stated in 1982 that "should in the long run transform the vision that has been stimulating and perpetuating the arms race between the major powers". With common security, the dilemmas of defence and security could finally disappear. The road to denuclearisation leads the way to a vision of global security springing from a growing allergy to the military nuclear issue. It seems obvious to me that, faced with such a tremendous challenge humanity cannot do without the United Nations "The only world institution that has the legitimacy and competence on account of its universal composition "as stated by the present General Secretary Kofi Annan. Is it advisable for this reason for it to be allowed to respond to the demands being expressed today in different forms by the peoples of the whole world ? Therefore, the organisation within must be revitalised to take seriously into account the diversity and interdependence of the world. It must adopt a more democratic way of functioning so that peoples and citizens have the authority to speak out and be heard. It is undoubtedly the most appropriate institution for drawing up and implementing a convention to ban all nuclear weapons.

Without question, this is a challenge that calls for the presence of all citizens in the field of international politics. NGO's have a vital part to play in informing civil society, - to debate, to act, to influence national and international institutions, so that whatever may perpetuate an outdated analysis of security relying on nuclear weapons will be outlawed. In this way, a network of international communication for organizing activities in common is a precious asset. The international community is undoubtedly capable of surpassing the nuclear age, but it will not be an easy process or a quick one. To sum up, the rhythm of the process will depend largely on the contribution of each one of us. It is a battle which is evidently worth the trouble.