

Negotiations Are Not Enough

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In this special meeting of CNANW, we are considering the issue: “How to Reduce the Nuclear Weapons Threat in Ukraine.” We are asked three questions:

1. Can there be peace without ‘capitulation’ or ‘victory’? I answer yes.
2. Will stopping the nuclear blackmail help meaningful negotiations? Definitely.
3. How can Canada help the negotiations? I answer: Implement Canadian values.

The terseness of my responses is not meant to diminish the importance of the questions, rather to point to a larger question: Is peace possible in today’s world? Suppose, by some twist of fate, a sudden ceasefire in the Ukraine war occurred without either Ukraine or Russia being declared a winner; and Russia’s threat to use nuclear weapons stopped; and Canada actually used its diplomatic machinery to become active in helping both Ukraine and Russia to live with the geopolitical contours agreed at the negotiating table. Would the world then be at peace? Unfortunately, the answer is no.

While the Ukraine war is presently the focal point of governments and the media, the list of crises threatening global security is staggering. The modernization of nuclear weapons continues every day. Global warming worsens every hour. A new pandemic can strike any minute. Hunger, armed conflicts, terrorism, insecurity and the intolerable suffering of refugees driven out of their homes by war, droughts, floods or a combination of all three shame the claims made that human rights are expanding in the world.

The world is facing so many intermingled crises that a new term is now being used: the polycrisis. As the *Financial Times* puts it: “In the polycrisis the shocks are disparate, but they interact so that the whole is even more overwhelming than the sum of the parts.” U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has found a dramatic phrase to express the polycrisis: “We are gridlocked in colossal global dysfunction.”

At least, there is a place to start in applying new lessons from the Ukraine war. Despite their internal differences, the G20 Bali Leaders’ Declaration of Nov. 16, 2022 said: “The use or

threat of use of nuclear weapons is inadmissible. The peaceful resolution of conflicts, efforts to address crises as well as diplomacy and dialogue, are vital. Today's era must not be of war."

The G20 statement should be applied immediately to the Ukraine war. I support the Foundation for Global Governance and Sustainability's call for a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. A move to a final peace settlement should be "supervised by international institutions, notably the UN, under conditions of demilitarization of any and all occupied areas and a larger demilitarized zone of disengagement between the armed forces of the belligerents." The plan also calls for immediate efforts to be focused on repairing civilian infrastructure, including in the areas to be placed under temporary international administration, and on securing an adequate supply of food, water, health care and energy for the inhabitants.

While, of course, every problem must be worked on by its own set of experts, the polycrisis demands a wholistic approach to peace. In an interdependent world, no one problem can be solved by itself, nor can any one nation live unto itself. The effects of the Ukraine war are not confined to that geographical area; they are felt around the world. The age of common security, or at least the recognition that no one nation can achieve security at the expense of neighbours, has arrived. The polycrisis shows this.

Today, when the world is going through an ugly upheaval brought about by a loss of faith in the international institutions to actually achieve global security and social justice, there is no clear Canadian voice calling out to defend the rule of international law, to defend the United Nations, to defend the poorest people against the most outrageous assaults on their humanity, to defend people everywhere against a possible Armageddon of nuclear warfare, to defend the planet itself against a carbon assault that could be contained by stringent laws. This is not to suggest that Canada by itself can settle the world's greatest problems, but Canada, as a significant middle power, can lead the way with its partners in the multilateral forums, not least the U.N.

Canada should engage in the development of the U.N. Secretary-General's "New Agenda for Peace." This document, now being prepared, will be published next year as part of the run-up to the U.N. Summit for the Future in 2024. As the Stimson Center points out: "The spirit of the original 1992 "Agenda for Peace" can be recaptured by a new and dynamic approach to sustaining peace, and promoting a mutually reinforcing approach to justice and security in the twenty-first century." A firm path to the elimination of nuclear weapons, the greatest threat to

peace, must be forged through this new instrument. The nuclear powers will, of course, fight this. But here Guterres needs the support of important middle power countries in challenging the major states' war policies.

Canada has a special role to play in backing Guterres's efforts. The country has well-established links with major groupings of states. CNANW should prod Canada to resist NATO's insistence on Western military dominance. That would be a first step to common security.

CNANW stands for the abolition of nuclear weapons. That must remain our goal and the centrepiece of our efforts. We should take the words of Mohamed ElBaradei, former head of the IAEA, to express this guiding principle of our work: "A total prohibition on the possession of nuclear weapons must become a peremptory norm of international law." Another way of saying this is: there can be no peace without the abolition of nuclear weapons. That is a fundamental principle of common security.

In the midst of the polycrisis,, we must frame our goal in ways that remain true to our principles while opening up a new dialogue with the Government of Canada on achievable steps toward that goal. Such steps would include the de-alerting of nuclear weapons, a no-first-use policy; pressing for new U.S.-Russia bilateral negotiations, Canada opening up a dialogue with the leaders of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. In short, we must contribute to lessening the present extreme dangers so that the international community can get on with pressing for comprehensive negotiations to eliminate nuclear weapons.

Most of the world's peoples, not least Canadians, want nonviolence as a guiding principle for a peaceful world. Nonviolence has far more than a direct physical application: it applies to economic and social relationships and the relationship of humanity as a whole to the planet. It is a new way of thinking and it needs to be espoused by political leaders, not just by academics or religious leaders. Changing our attitude to reject militarism as such an important component of Canadian foreign policy – as Guterres has asked of all countries – would enable Canada to adopt a more holistic approach in pursuing a just peace.