

New World Order and the United Nations

Ending terrorism, wars and violence for building a peaceful society

ACT-UN and WDC meeting

Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street
Manchester, M2 5NS

Tuesday, 25th November 2008

Panel of Speakers:

Rae Street	Chair, Greater Manchester & District CND
Vijay Mehta	Chair, Action for UN Renewal & Co-chair, WDC
Rita Payne	Chair, Commonwealth Journalists Association
Frank Jackson	Co-chair, World Disarmament Campaign

Vijay Mehta
vijay@vmpeace.org

Contents

1. New World Order
2. Terrorism, wars and violence
3. Building a peaceful society and the role of the UN
4. Conclusion

New World Order

The new world order (NWO) is erupting, threatening the stability of the world. The NWO can be described as the unilateral ambitions and actions of the US and the West to attack, intervene and control the affairs of another country. It also stands for disregard and violation of all international laws, respect for human rights and multilateral treaties. Some examples are the war in Iraq without a UN authorised mandate, Russia's military incursion into Georgia, bombing of a sovereign country like Pakistan by US forces. The so called 'war on terror' is part of the NWO, as groups like Al Qaeda and the Taliban continue bombing cities and spreading chaos and fear among civilians. On the other hand, the US and other countries of the West continue to attack and bring unrest to other countries under the guise of imposing democracy and neo-liberal economics.

Owing to that, we are at present witnessing a new financial order in which the poor are being marginalised by the rich as the financial crisis worsens by the day. Hundreds of millions of people are losing their livelihoods and their hopes for the future are dashed because of a crisis they have no responsibility for. On the other hand the rich are being protected by \$700 billion bail-out for the markets and financial institutions.

The world is dealing with the security challenges of today, that is - Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, North Korea, and Russia, to name a few, which require immediate action and if not dealt with, will undermine the global stability for the foreseeable future.

It is also important to figure out that under the new world order how the poor and the rich will deal with climate change, global food, energy and financial crisis? Will the rich countries be able to give a fair deal to the developing countries? Or, as usual, poor will be marginalised and receive unfair treatment as history bears witness for the past several hundred years?

The transnational threats that transcend borders and undermine our collective global security, include terrorism, global pandemics, money laundering, illicit trade, crime and drug syndicates. Taken together, global trends and transnational threats serve as force multipliers that lead to poverty and fuel conflicts.

In this turmoil, and shifting balance in the globe, we will examine the role of United Nations and civil society for building peace and international security?

Terrorism, wars and violence

Terrorism can be defined as the use of violence against civilians in order to achieve political goals. Unlike other forms of protest, such as strikes and peaceful demonstrations, terrorist acts always involve violence or the threat of violence. Terrorism differs from an act of war against enemy soldiers or military targets because its targets are non-combatants or civilians. In addition, terrorism is different from criminal acts or random forms of violence because its goals are political; concerned with how a state is governed or how its people are treated. Terrorism has changed a great deal since the 1960s. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism, the end of Cold War, the global banking network, and the telecommunications revolution have all played their part.

We are realising belatedly, that our societies are wide-open targets for terrorists. We're easy prey because of two key trends: First, the growing technological capacity of small groups and individuals to destroy things and people; and, second, the increasing vulnerability of our economic and technological systems to carefully aimed attacks. While commentators have devoted considerable time to the first of these trends, they've paid far less attention to the second, and they've virtually ignored their combined effect. Together, these two trends facilitate a new and sinister kind of mass violence—a "complex terrorism" that threatens modern, high-tech societies in the world's most developed nations.

The prisoner abuse at Guantanamo Bay, Bagram Air base in Afghanistan and of Rendition to countries notorious for practicing torture, including the horrific images from Abu Ghraib where gross violation of human rights activity have taken place. The only solution to this grave problem is closing all the detention sites, launching a comprehensive inquiry into how authorised torture took place, and giving a fair trial and hearing to the prisoners who have been victims of torture, beatings, rape and subject to gruesome acts performed in the name of gathering information.

A staggering 77 percent of all international crises in the post-Cold War era have involved at least one unstable or failing state. We must acknowledge the inherent linkages between economic and social development, respect for human rights, and peace. At present there are 30 wars across the globe, out of which the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq have created or exacerbated international crises. The lethality of conflict in Iraq has reached horrendous proportions for civilians. These wars also provide provocations and targets for terrorist attacks on the US and its allies.

Building a peaceful society and the role of the UN

The UN is overwhelmed with the problems of state failure - in Somalia and Rwanda, continued fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, the war on terror - which is proving beyond the UN's capacity to handle and which frayed the solidarity of the main powers.

Terrorism and war-mongering is not the appropriate response to the problem. A simultaneous battle has to be fought, with equal vigour, in the minds of the young. At the core of this debate is a question: where lies justice? If the armies of some Western nations have travelled thousands of miles merely to impose forms of democracy and neo-imperialism, then the war will continue. If they have gone to induce the emergence of modern, equitable societies and nations then the battle for the mind can be won. The 21st century has given us all that we could ask for, except peace. Peace cannot come without understanding.

Understanding is impossible without dialogue. Dialogue can only be possible between equals, or it becomes a monologue. The world will move towards peace only on an axis of equals. This is the first principle of democracy, a point often forgotten by democracy's drum-beaters.

We need a global strategy to counter terrorism which should include conditions not conducive to the spread of terrorism. This can be done by measures to prevent and combat terrorism, including building the state's capacity to prevent terrorism. This should include the role of United Nations to ensure respect for human rights for all and the rule of law as the fundamental basis of the fight against terrorism as stipulated in SC Resolution 1373.

Merely reacting to global crises is a costly strategy in terms of both human lives and direct financial costs. The UN and civil society, in order to get out ahead and prepare itself to face the challenges of the 21st century and the NWO, should;

1. Fully integrate prevention and conflict resolution for building peaceful societies
2. Invest intelligence, diplomatic, and economic resources in the most vulnerable areas and regions.
3. Engage with the international community to improve and support international treaties and norms.
4. Develop new tools and capabilities for crisis management.
5. Replace a culture of violence by a culture of peace by educating for peace, non-violence and international cooperation.
6. Adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and stop gross violations of human rights.
7. Uphold international law and treaties, especially with respect to disarmament (nuclear, biological, chemical) and conventional weapons.
8. Work for a UN vision of ending war by adhering to the UN Charter.

Conclusion

It is a time for a dose of practical optimism. Social change is always at first dismissed as impossible. The abolition of the slave trade, the creation of an old age pension, votes for women, were all in their turn described as utopian. The realistic optimist points to history. The UK is dotted with castles - once military fortresses but now tourist attractions. Some one-time enemies, for instance Germany and France, or Norway and Sweden, have so changed their political and economic relationships that war between them is simply unthinkable.

Consigning war to history means taking practical steps to build a culture of peace, to reject "peace" resting on threats of massive retaliation, to end the arms trade, source of so much destruction and so much debt, to create a public conviction that killing people is a barbaric way of resolving conflict.

For such changes to come about we need to build a global society in which the rule of law is paramount. There has been some progress in that direction. We even have a working International Criminal Court, though its jurisdiction is not accepted by the remaining superpower. In Interpol we have the start of an international police force. Changing attitudes is not easy but it does happen. The war nostalgia of the entertainment media can be redirected. The anti-poverty agencies can make practical and financial links with the peace movements. Remembrance Sunday can honour the dead in the one way that they would want to be honoured, by working towards the abolition of war itself. War must cease to be an admissible human institution. Let us reaffirm our faith in the Preamble to the UN Charter and work towards its implementation.

"We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

And for these ends to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure, by the acceptance of

principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims."

A reformed, democratic, transparent and accountable UN can produce the result. It also depend if all of us, civil society and NGO's make a noise- loud enough for governments to take notice and back off. If the new world disorder is to be restored a critical and conditional support for the UN offer the best hope.

The full version of this speech can be downloaded from:

- VM Centre for Peace www.vmpeace.org
- Action for UN Renewal www.action-for-un-renewal.org.uk

Vijay Mehta is an author and global activist for peace, development, human rights and the environment. Some of his notable books are *The Fortune Forum Summit: For a Sustainable Future*, *Arms No More*, and *The United Nations and Its Future in the 21st Century*. He is president of VM Centre for Peace (www.vmpeace.org), co-founder of Fortune Forum Charity, Chair of Action for UN Renewal, and co-Chair of World Disarmament Campaign.

He along with his daughter Renu Mehta founder of Fortune Forum charity (www.fortuneforum.org) held two summits in London in 2006 and 2007. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage. The keynote speakers for the first and second summit were Bill Clinton, former US President and Al Gore, former US vice-President, and recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize 2007.

Vijay Mehta has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Ajjak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

He has co-written a book with Renu Mehta, called 'Climate Change 365,' which will be soon available to download free of charge in electronic form from the website www.climatechange365.eu.