

ROBERT MCNAMARA LECTURE ON WAR AND PEACE

ELUSIVE PEACE AND HAUNTING WAR

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Robert McNamara (1916–2009) was the Secretary of Defense under Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. He later served as President of The World Bank. McNamara Lecture speakers address the prevention of conflict, weapons of mass destruction, and nuclear terrorism.

It is an honor and pleasure to deliver the McNamara Memorial Lecture on War and Peace. Durable peace remains a quest that humanity continues to grapple with without success. Wars have dominated the human timeline since recorded history. Hundreds of millions have lost their lives to violence under the guise of religion, nationalism, ethnicity and other casus belli. We can barely remember the causes of many of those wars. Some of the states involved no longer even exist. We organized ourselves around city-states, empires and sovereign states. We created the League of Nations and the United Nations. But peace remains elusive and force and violence remain the primary choice to settle differences.

Today we are not doing much better. As I am speaking to you, violence continues to ravage our planet: senseless, destructive, dehumanizing conflicts; a mindset of Carthago delenda est! What's worse, due to the annihilating weapons at our disposal, there is an increasing danger of sleep walking into self-destruction. Robert McNamara used "system analyses" for making key decisions. A decision should be considered in a broad context and a complex

problem should be reduced to its component parts. I will try here to reflect on the broad context of war and peace, together with its constituent parts.

There are two central questions before us: What are the drivers for war and peace? and, How are the mechanisms and institutions to promote peace and mitigate war faring?

First, let us take a brief look at the state of the world today. Poverty and hunger continue at dreadful levels; some conflicts have been left to fester for generations; brutal repression and denial of human dignity are the hallmark of a third of the world's nations; the sanctity of life depends on who is dying and where; rich countries are apathetic to the misery of the poor; the inequality in the distribution of wealth amongst countries and people has become obscene. The human rights law designed to protect human dignity, and the humanitarian law intended that when we kill each other we do it more humanely, are both now cited more for violation than for compliance. The "responsibility to protect" principle articulated in 2005, so the international community can guard against genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, now almost always rings hollow. And the international system of criminal accountability that created the International Criminal Court has so far been selective and limited to the weak and defeated.

In the recent past, the international community has limited itself to hand-wringing while millions of innocent civilians were slaughtered in Rwanda, Congo, Darfur and other places. And today in Syria, we continue to witness yet more horrible carnage.

Almost half the world population struggles to live on two dollars a day and some 900 million people do not have enough to eat. The 85 richest people on the planet now have as much money as the poorest 3.5 billion. Millions die every year because of lack of access to medical care. I often say that poverty is the most lethal weapon of mass destruction because these are not just numbers. The plight of the poor is invariably compounded by and results in human rights abuses, a lack of good governance, marginalization and a deep sense of injustice and anger. This combination is the

most fertile breeding ground for conflict, civil strife and other forms of violence and extremism.

This environment of extremism and often, authoritarianism continues to wear different masks of ideology, religion, ethnicity and ultra-nationalism to commit the most heinous of crimes either by non-state actors or by repressive regimes. Sadly, the ones footing the bill are the innocent civilians who are blithely dismissed as "collateral damage." Shamefully what we spend on peacekeeping operations and disaster relief amounts to around 1 percent of what we spend on armament.

In such an environment the "logic" among some is: if you don't treat me as a human being why do you expect me to act as one? And if you don't care about my life why should I care about yours? It is an environment that breeds violence, tyranny and fascism. In our increasingly interconnected world, however, our connectivity is not limited to opportunities but also to risks.

Our most significant global threats are invariably threats without borders: poverty, terrorism, climate change, weapons of mass destruction, communicable diseases, cyber security, human trafficking and illegal drugs. Our actions or non-actions eventually come back to haunt us no matter where we are. No part of the world can be quarantined any longer.

Our policies and international institutions are still designed for times past. The latter are highly polarized and increasingly paralyzed. They suffer from structural deficiencies and lack of authority and resources. One result is a dysfunctional system of collective security. The failure of the UN Security Council to take preventive measures or provide adequate responses over the years has led to conflicts continuing to deteriorate, violence continuing to rage and misery continuing to spread. We are steadily facing a crisis of governance: governments pursue short-term myopic politics that fail to address long-term global challenges in need of cooperative policies; and international institutions that remain bereft of the tools and resources needed to address these challenges.

Let's now look at the war machinery at our disposal. Nuclear

weapons are a legacy of the Cold War. But a quarter of a century after the end of that war, it borders on insanity that we still have over 16,000 nuclear weapons, around 2,000 of them on alert. The abolition of nuclear weapons is, alarmingly, no longer a fashionable topic. Yet it is evident that with the technology out of the box, and as long as some countries choose to rely on nuclear weapons, directly or through bilateral or multilateral alliances, others will eventually seek to acquire them. A security concept based on “some are more equal than others” and on a system of deterrence that is irrelevant to extremists with no return address, is unsustainable and almost naïve. It raises the question of how long the center of the nonproliferation regime can hold in places like the Middle East, East Asia and other areas of potential conflicts, or for how long we can live with a patchy nuclear verification regime that gives the IAEA uneven and often limited authority. More ominously, how long will it take before a terrorist group lays its hands on a nuclear weapon? It is of course imperative that no more countries acquire nuclear weapons. But to that end it is equally imperative that the weapon states divest themselves of these weapons.

Under the NPT, the weapon states not only have an obligation to negotiate in good faith towards nuclear disarmament, but equally, in the words of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), “the obligation to achieve a precise result: nuclear disarmament in all its aspects.” However, after more than four decades of undertaking these obligations, nuclear weapon states are moving in the opposite direction. They are modernizing their arsenals. In addition, some of them cannot even commit to a ban on nuclear testing. As a result The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), concluded in 1996, is yet to enter into force. And for the last 20 years, the proposal to conclude a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty to prohibit the further production of fissile material for nuclear weapons remains dead in its tracks. In 2009, President Obama made a clear commitment “to seek the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons” and to “reduce the role of nuclear weapons in (US) national security strategy.” Yet in 2014, the US is planning to spend a trillion dollars to modernize its

nuclear weapons arsenal, including authorizing a new generation of weapon carriers. This is the largest expansion of funding on nuclear weapons since the fall of the Soviet Union. As a result, these weapons will haunt us at least until the end of the century.

Almost all prominent strategic experts in this country and beyond, including two great minds who delivered this very lecture, Sam Nunn and Bill Perry, have argued strongly that reliance on nuclear weapons is becoming “increasingly hazardous and decreasingly effective.” In 2008 Sam Nunn stated in this forum: “I believe that America would be far more secure if no one had nuclear weapons.” He concluded that we are moving in the wrong direction. In 2011 Bill Perry talked about three false alarms he knows of, in which Soviet missiles were thought to be screaming towards the US. “To this day I believe that we avoided nuclear catastrophe as much by good luck as by good management.” McNamara put it in stark terms: “The indefinite combination of human fallibility and nuclear weapons will lead to the destruction of nations.... There will be no learning period with nuclear weapons,” he said. This led McNamara to the inevitable conclusion that “the only way to eliminate the risk is to eliminate nuclear weapons.” President Obama emphasized the same: “One nuclear weapon exploded in one city ... no matter where it happens, there is no end to what the consequences may be ... ultimately for our survival.” In his summary, the chairman of the Second Conference on the Humanitarian Impact of Nuclear weapons held in Mexico earlier this year, with the participation of 146 states, but with the significant absence of all the weapon states party to the NPT, stated, “Today the risk of nuclear weapons use is growing globally as a consequence of proliferation, the vulnerability of nuclear command and control networks to cyber-attack and to human error, and potential access to nuclear weapons by non-state actors, in particular terrorist groups.” He went on to say, “as more countries deploy more nuclear weapons on a higher level of combat readiness, the risk of accidental, mistaken, unauthorized or intentional use of these weapons grows significantly.” The third such conference will be held in Austria next month. The US has announced that it will attend. This is a step in the right direction. I

hope all other nuclear weapon states will follow suit.

But with all these warnings, have we put our money where our mouths are? Have we seriously tried to drastically reduce the number of weapons in existence when no limit was set under the New Start on the number of operationally inactive nuclear warheads? Have we seriously tried to alter the nuclear launch warning system? Have we seriously tried to reduce our reliance on nuclear weapons in national security strategy? Have we seriously started thinking about the security architecture in a nuclear weapon-free world, including the need to deter and defeat possible cheats? This, in my view, is a dismal record and raises the question whether our commitment to nuclear disarmament is genuine.

In addition to nuclear weapons, other weapons of mass destruction are still with us. If you rely on the mother of all inhumane weapons, and I have security concerns, why should I commit not to acquire other WMDs? This, I assume, is the logic of some of those who have not joined the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons in the regions of the Middle East and East Asia. Forget even that the Convention on Biological Weapons has no verification mechanism despite efforts that came to naught in 2001 given the opposition of the US.

In addition to the global non-proliferation treaties, we have control regimes that are designed to tighten export control of sensitive equipment and material relevant to these weapons. Membership in these regimes is based on subjective political criteria. The Nuclear Supplier Group does not include India and other non-NPT states. The Australia Group for Export Controls on Chemical and Biological materials excludes China and India, even though they are party to both conventions. The Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) does not include China. These regimes create two categories of states: “reliable” suppliers and “not so reliable” suppliers or recipients. But in the absence of agreement by all, suppliers and recipients, on the end game, a regime is fragile and vulnerable. Security in the long run cannot be based on withholding know-how, but on addressing security deficits and resolving conflicts. Every state, irrespective of its nature

or orientation, and in the absence of an equitable, inclusive, reliable and verifiable security system, will do what it takes to protect itself against perceived threats and insecurity.

In the recent past we have made awful blunders and wrong choices in the ways we managed some of our WMD-related conflicts. Was waging a war on Iraq based on falsehood the best option available? Were the hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children deaths or the stunted one-third of North Korean children under five, many of them victims of “blunt” sanctions, a cost we had to pay? And has this inhumane “collateral damage” achieved its intended purpose or in fact the reverse by inspiring antipathy towards the West and sympathy for the incumbent regime? Was the US refusal for years to have direct talks with Iran the best option or would it have been better to have pursued a dialogue, similar to the one ongoing now, that could have possibly spared the Middle East much agony? Was the axis of evil branding and chatter about regime change, relying on the power of fear, the best way to create trust and a sense of security in Iraq, Iran and North Korea, or would it have been better to engage them and provide them with security assurances in return for change of behavior?

To conclude, war and peace, like many human conditions, are of our own creation. It depends on the environment we construct, our perception and blend of realism and idealism, and the mindset we cultivate. What we need is an environment based on equity, trust, mutual respect and dialogue and not on double standards, polarization, humiliation and dictates; an environment that constrains the human impulse for violence. What we need is a mindset that understands that in our globalized world we will either swim together or sink separately. If we work on eliminating the drivers of insecurity and war, and abolishing all weapons of mass destruction, the odds are we will be able to avert or at least mitigate most wars. If we work on the drivers of peace, the odds are we will be able to restore our rationality and understand that we are the same human species, irrespective of our superficial differences of race, religion or ethnicity. We will realize that we increasingly share the same core values. Equity, compassion and above all human solidarity should be our compass. If we maintain the status

quo and the same mindset, possibly we will be able to travel to Mars, but certainly we will continue to kill each other. One day, I shudder to think, we might see Rajeev Gandhi's warning in 1998 come true—when India was hoping for a world free from nuclear weapons, a nuclear war that would mean “the end of life as we know it on our planet earth.”

In 2005 the Nobel Peace Prize Committee stated that in recent decades, it “concentrated on the struggle to diminish the significance of nuclear arms in international politics, with a view to their abolition. That the world has achieved little in this respect makes active opposition to nuclear arms all the more important today.” These words are as relevant today as they were then.

McNamara had the courage to take a stand against his own conduct during the Vietnam War: “We were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why,” and, “how much evil must we do in order to do good?” These words should be our starting point. Anything less will not do.

MOHAMED ELBARADEI was director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) from December 1997 until November 2009. He had been an IAEA staff member from 1984, holding a number of high-level legal and policy positions, including that of legal adviser and subsequently assistant director general for external relations.

ElBaradei was born in Cairo, Egypt. He gained a bachelor's degree in law in 1962 at the University of Cairo and a doctorate in international law at New York University School of Law in 1974. He began his career in the Egyptian Diplomatic Service in 1964, serving in the Permanent Missions of Egypt to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, in charge of political, legal and arms control issues. During his career, ElBaradei participated in the policy and legal activities of many international and regional organizations. From 1974 to 1978, ElBaradei was a special assistant and legal adviser to the foreign minister of Egypt, where he took part in various presidential and ministerial delegations. In 1980, he left the diplomatic service to join the United Nations. From 1980 to 1984, he became a senior fellow in charge of the International Law Program at the UN Institute for Training and Research. From 1981 to 1987, he was also an adjunct professor of international law at NYU School of Law.

During his career as diplomat, international civil servant, and scholar, ElBaradei has become closely familiar with the work and processes of international organizations, particularly in the fields of international law, global peace and security, and international development. He has lectured around the world in the fields of international law, international organizations, global security, arms control, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, and is the author of various books and articles.

In October 2005, ElBaradei and the IAEA were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize “for their efforts to prevent nuclear energy from being used for military purposes and to ensure that nuclear energy for peaceful purposes is used in the safest possible way.” In its citation, the Norwegian Nobel Committee referred to the IAEA's work as being of “incalculable importance” and said ElBaradei was an “unafraid advocate” of new measures to strengthen the nuclear nonproliferation regime. In December 2009, ElBaradei was appointed director general emeritus of the IAEA.

Starting in 2010, ElBaradei became a prominent advocate for democratic change in Egypt and freedom and social justice. He is an adjunct professor of law at Cairo University School of Law and has been a board member of many associations, commission and universities. ElBaradei has received multiple other awards for his work as a public servant and as an advocate of tolerance, humanity, and freedom.