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MASS DESTRUCTION
COMMISSION

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“2009 – Time for detente and disarmament”

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The Cold War ended but it seems to be here again

The title for this paper is ‘2009 – time for détente and disarmament’. It really should have read ‘high time for détente and disarmament’ because the Cold War ended about twenty years ago and yet today it seems as if it were still here.

We hear of plans for new nuclear weapons, the development and testing of missiles and antimissiles, plans for a further expansion of NATO and a chill in the cooperation between EU and Russia as a consequence of the war in Georgia.

What has happened to the political climate?

From 1945, when WWII ended and for about 45 years East and West were engaged in an ideological struggle in which Moscow aspired to extend the Communist creed and power world wide. With US leadership the West successfully contained these aspirations – both militarily and ideologically. Eventually the ineffectiveness of the Communist economic system brought it down and the Soviet Empire collapsed. The world drew deep sighs of relief. The risk of ‘mutually assured destruction’ (MAD) through a nuclear Armageddon was written off. People stopped marching against the global stocks of some 55.000 nuclear warheads.

We are now in 2008 – nearly 20 years after the end of the long Cold War.

Despite weaknesses that have been all too well demonstrated recently the market economy of various shades is recognized as the most effective economic model by practically all.

Furthermore, ‘participatory democracy’ is recognized by practically all as the best political system even though it is obviously not practiced by all.

There are also no significant conflicts about borders or land between the five big powers that were the victors in the World War and now have permanent seats in the UN Security.

Taiwan is a flashpoint but at least currently it is handled with much pragmatism and even the other land issue that involves two large states – Kashmir -- is mostly kept on a low burner.

Why then is it that the world seems gradually to have moved into a new Cold War? For instance:

- In 2007 the world spent some 1.300 billion dollars on military expenses – an increase in real terms by 6 % since 2006 and 45 % since 1998. Nearly half of the 2007 expenses fell on the US; 4 -5 % each on China, France and the UK, and 3 % on Russia. (Sipri Yearbook for 2008).
- The US is proceeding to deploy a missile shield and plans to build parts of it in Poland and the Czech Republic. US armed forces have had joint exercises with Georgian troops and US naval units that navigate in the Black Sea have recently delivered emergency equipment to Georgia after the war with Russia.
- For its part, Russia is engaging in joint naval maneuvers with Venezuela in the Caribbean and has talked about deploying medium range missiles in Kaliningrad.
- Within the Bush administration proposals have been advanced for the designing of a new nuclear weapon before the experienced weapons designers go into retirement. In other nuclear weapons states efforts are undertaken to modernize their nuclear capacities.
- Military doctrines concerning the use of nuclear weapons have become less restrictive.

The two climate changes: global warming and cold war

These developments are taking place and the expenses for new weaponry are incurred at the very same time as conditions on our planet Earth seem to change in ways that may threaten human civilization. Most scientists agree that dangerous global warming will occur unless we drastically reduce the emission of greenhouse gases. A minority of scientists disagree. That is as it should be. Nevertheless, with compact scientific advice governments must act.

I, for one, confess that I am even more worried about medium and long term global warming and other environmental threats than I am about the short and medium term threats of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. The weapons could lead to a quick global suicide; the global warming could lead human civilization to slow suicide.

In my view the weapons and war issue could be tackled successfully if wisdom were used in a dozen governments. The environmental threats are linked to the blood circulation of the world's economy – our use of energy – and the lives of 6.5 billion people.

Against the perspective of the environmental threats to human civilization the Cold War type political tensions that we see seem almost like mad and dangerous distractions.

Should we not shift a major part of the resources that we now budget for defense and destruction to measures that can be taken to protect our environment? Why is it that this did not occur already in 1991 when the real Cold War ended?

Détente at the end of the Cold War

In the years immediately after 1991 a number of positive events did, indeed, occur, but action against global warming was not one of them.

While during the Cold War Security Council had been largely paralyzed and blocked by the veto, the situation changed drastically after the Cold War. Consensus decisions became common and allowed important joint decisions and actions. Many peace-keeping operations were agreed to and in 1991 the Council agreed to stop Iraq's aggression against Kuwait and authorized the Gulf War.

In the specific areas of arms control and disarmament several positive results were obtained:

- In 1993 the Convention against Chemical Weapons was concluded - after some 20 years of negotiation.
- In 1995 the Non-Proliferation Treaty was extended without any final date.
- In 1996 a Treaty comprehensively prohibiting all nuclear weapons tests was adopted.

Détente peters out. US reliance on military superiority

However, while the Warsaw Pact disintegrated and the Russian military power crumbled, the NATO alliance survived and the US became the sole military superpower determined never to lose that position. The opportunity to make a peace treaty after the Cold War was missed. Instead, ruffling feelings in Russia, the former Warsaw Pact countries Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Baltic states now joined the NATO alliance. Further:

- The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty that had been signed by the Clinton administration in 1996 was rejected by the US Senate and the moratorium on nuclear tests that has been respected by the P 5 was ignored in 1998 by India, Pakistan and --- later – by North Korea.
- The disarmament process stagnated. A planned START III Treaty between the US and Russia failed to materialize;
- The Disarmament Conference in Geneva went into coma. For over ten years it has been unable even to adopt a work programme.

With the entry of the Bush administration in 2001 and the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in the autumn of 2001 the US moved to a greater reliance on its military supremacy and a corresponding lesser reliance on seeking solutions through the give and take of negotiations, through multilateralism and disarmament.

“War” was declared on terrorism – not simply coordinated international action by police and intelligence.

While broad international support and UN authorization underpinned the US military intervention that freed Afghanistan from the Taliban government that had hosted the Al Qaeda many other actions were unilateral and some have seriously eroded the international détente that prevailed in the first half of the 1990s. For instance,

- In order freely to develop the missile shield the US formally withdrew from the bilateral US-Soviet ABM treaty (the Antiballistic Missile Treaty). Although the US has consistently maintained that the shield is not intended as a protection against Russian and Chinese missiles, these countries suspect that a later development of the program

could be designed to make the US immune against any missile attacks and thus neutralize the deterrent effect that Russia and China attribute to their nuclear weapons.

- In 2002 the US almost single-handedly prevented the adoption of measures that had long been developed to add verification mechanisms to the BWC (Biological Weapons Convention);
- In 2002 the US voiced suspicions that the DPRK had started a program for the enrichment of uranium. It asserted that this was a violation of the Agreed Framework of 1994 -- an arrangement by the Clinton administration that the Bush administration had always seen as an immoral appeasement. To put pressure on the DPRK the US stopped further implementation of the arrangement.. The result was that North Korea withdrew from the NPT, produced more plutonium and exploded a nuclear device.
- In 2002 a new US National Security Strategy flatly declared that in the era of missiles and terrorists a right to use armed force in self-defence only in cases where 'armed attacks' were occurring or were 'imminent' would be insufficient. This was tantamount to giving public notice that the US would not feel restricted by the rules of the UN Charter.
- The armed attack on Iraq in 2003 was launched without authorization by the Security Council. In the 2004 US Presidential Campaign the view was ridiculed that any armed action that the US Government might deem necessary could require a 'permission-slip' from the Security Council .
- The 2005 Review conference of the Non Proliferation Treaty ended in bitterness and without result. Led by the US the five nuclear-weapon states parties to the treaty rejected the criticism of many non-nuclear weapon states for not performing their duty under the treaty to negotiate toward nuclear disarmament.

Recent budgetary allocations in the US have demonstrated not only the huge costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan but also a determination to maintain global military supremacy. The missile shield continues to devour billions of dollars and the same is true of the adjacent programs that prepare for space war. Although the US Congress has imposed some restraints – for instance not funding the nuclear bunker buster -- it has not until now provided a major break. We could recently watch the turmoil and convulsions before the main financial crisis program of some 700 billion dollars was accepted. At the very same time hardly a murmur was heard when with great speed and smoothness about the same amount – 700 billion dollars – was approved for the military budget.

It seems likely to me that the huge defence budgets have been accepted because of a very general wish in the US public to come out, if not victorious , at least reasonably well in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and to avert the threat of terrorism and the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

If , as is now expected all US combat forces will be withdrawn from Iraq by 2011 or earlier and if terrorist attacks continue to abate it would seem likely that the US taxpayer despite the attachment to security and to strong US military power, may support cuts in the military budget. The need for bigger budget resources to pay for the financial rescue measures may be an added reason to trim the military budget.

Reliance on the threat or use of military force has not been successful

It would seem to me that other reasons for reductions in the military spending are that the strong reliance on the threat or use of military strength has not been very successful while

on the other hand the much disliked give and take of negotiations have proved less costly and more promising.. Let me develop:

Iraq was meant to be a quick operation removing an odious dictator, eliminating weapons of mass destruction and introducing democracy and a US friendly regime that would – like Korea, Japan and Germany – be glad to host US troops. It did not turn out as envisaged. The operation is now in its fifth year and the costs in lives and resources are enormous – for the US and even more for Iraq. Contrary to faulty intelligence there were no weapons of mass destruction; democracy is a hard plant to raise and requires more than the removal of a dictator; and the continued presence of some US troops is meeting with Iraqi reservations.

The Israeli armed action in Lebanon started as a justifiable retaliation against Hezbollah incursions into Israel and hostage taking. The US encouraged development of the action into an all out military effort to eliminate Hezbollah in Lebanon proved a failure. Eventually the UN had to be called in to guard a fragile peace.

In the case of the small and destitute DPRK it must have been realized early that the huge US military power could not be used to destroy the nuclear programs. Of course. theoretically the reprocessing plant and other nuclear installations in Nyongbyon could be bombed.. However, the risks of North Korean retaliation practically precluded military action.. With many million inhabitants Seoul lies within artillery range from North Korea.. Several years were lost before diplomatic negotiations in the shape of the six power talks were started in Beijing and these years were used by the DPRK to produce plutonium for several more nuclear bombs. Some of the economic pressures exerted by the US and others may have had an effect. Others have simply made the country intransigent.

In the main it would seem that carrots more than sticks have provided leverage. Oil and rice deliveries are important parts. Perhaps promises of diplomatic relations with the US and Japan and guarantees against any attacks provide the strongest leverage to bring the ostracized regime to abandon its nuclear program.

In the case of Libya it has clearly been talks and promises of an end to isolation and long economic sanctions that persuaded Mr. Khaddaffi to scrap his nuclear weapons program. He was rewarded by a lifting of sanctions and opening of economic relations and the social and diplomatic ostracism was ended by procession of visits by Western leaders: Mr. Blair, Mr. Chirac and Ms. Rice

In the case of Iran , there has been no lack of military threats from the US. Again and again it has been declared that ‘all options are on the table’ and several US air craft carriers have been stationed with their ready cruise missiles in the Persian Gulf. It seems that these threats have only strengthened the hardliners in Iran and rallied public opinion in national support of the government. Until now the US has taken the stand that it will be ready to sit down and negotiate with Iran only when Iran has agreed to suspend its program for the enrichment of uranium. It is not surprising that Iran has proved unwilling. Who gives away the strongest card before the game?

The arguments for security through cooperation

In 2009 Mr. Obama as new President of the US will join several other political leaders who have relatively recently become heads of their government: Mr. Medvedev in Russia, Mr

Brown in the UK and Mr. Sarkozy in France. Is there hope that they will try to escape from the current path of increasing militarism and tension and cooperate to focus on measures to avert environmental changes that threaten all? I should like to give a positive answer to this question and offer the following reasons:

The technical evolution has increased trade, transport and travel exponentially resulting in a much greater interdependence and proximity between nations. Viruses do not need passports and visas. They travel fast all over the world and call for universal cooperation to stop diseases like avian flu, and to restrict the spread of HIV.

As we have painfully experienced recently, the financial markets of the world are so closely dependent upon one another that serious failure in some important area spreads like wild fire and calls for concerted action by all.

We also know that to protect against possible attacks from terrorists, governments everywhere need to cooperate through police and intelligence not least to prevent that nuclear and other material or equipment useable for weapons of mass destruction fall into the wrong hands.

With these examples among many before our eyes is it farfetched to ask whether it would also be possible to achieve security for all through cooperation rather than through ever more sophisticated and expensive weapons systems.

What are today potential sources of conflict?

Perhaps we should first ask which are the potential conflicts between the big military powers. Wars between nations used to be above all about borders and land. There are certainly still some conflicts of this kind, but hardly between the major military powers. Here in the Nordic corner it is unthinkable that we would wage war against each other although in past centuries we were pretty good at slaughtering each other. In Europe the European Union was created to forge a cooperation so close as to rule out armed conflicts. Let us note that the Oder-Neisse that was a line of death during the Cold War is now an internal waterway in the European Union. No one can imagine a war between the US and Mexico today and armed conflicts also seem unlikely between states on the South American continent.

Wars of national liberation were numerous in the first decades after World War II but these conflicts are largely a thing of the past. It is also hard to imagine any further conflicts based on ideology or religion. There will be no wars of civilizations.

There may be more armed conflicts in Africa, where borders were often drawn without regard to tribal and other relevant conditions. Regrettably, we can also not exclude the risk of more armed conflicts in the Middle East, and civil wars in various places, but with the Cold War over it is hard to imagine that such wars or conflicts in Africa or the Middle East could cause armed conflicts between major military powers. Admittedly, part of the reason would lie in the existing US military superiority. However, even with a greater balance in the military sphere it is hard to believe that they would allow themselves to drawn into a major direct military confrontations.

Many will suggest that competition about oil, gas and raw materials will lead to armed conflicts. It is not difficult to see that various states seek to establish close relations with countries that have rich resources of oil and gas – Arab states and Iran in the Middle East, Libya and Algeria in North Africa, Sudan, Angola, Nigeria in Africa, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan in Central Asia. There is a competition to have access to energy sources and to

safeguard means and routes of transport, like pipelines and sea routes. However, is it not most likely that this competition will play out in price increases rather than in armed conflicts?

I am left with the question whether the huge military apparatus that has been retained and developed by the US and the sizeable military machines that are now being strengthened in Russia, China, India and elsewhere are really meaningful. Some will undoubtedly find the question naïve. However, unless there are important terrorist actions or developments that make China and Russia look like threatening vital Western interests or that make the West look like threatening vital Russian or Chinese interests, the climate should be favourable for demands for significant reductions in military budgets, for arms control and disarmament. While I warmly wish to see a revival of arms control and disarmament and the reductions in risks and the saving of resources it would bring and while I am fully aware that agreements on arms control were possible even in the midst of the Cold War, I believe decisive efforts to create a new *détente* are needed for such a revival. With new leadership in the US and several other big powers this should be possible. Let me make some comments regarding measures to foster *détente* and then turn to measures of disarmament.

Measures for *détente*

It has been argued that Russia should appreciate NATO membership being extended to its neighbours as such membership will help the countries remain stable and democratic. Today the question concerns Georgia and Ukraine. but Senator Lugar, who was the Republican Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, urged that the Alliance should be open also Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Mr. McCain proposed that the alliance should be open to all democratic states and that a League of Democratic states should be established.

It is realistic to assume that the Russian government and Russian public opinion as well would see further NATO presences on Russia's doorsteps as a Western policy of encircling Russia. Stronger nationalism and more defense spending might well be the result. Neither Russia nor China would expect to qualify for membership in a League of Democracies and they would suspect that the creation of any such League would be an attempt to ignore the universality of the UN and the Russian and Chinese vetoes in the Security Council. Against these perspectives I, for one, do not regret that the recent armed conflict in Georgia may have strengthened doubts in the West about the wisdom of further NATO expansion along Russia's borders.

The suggested League of Democracies will not fly but may have appealed to a part of US public opinion that is particularly negative to the UN or angry that US proposals for far-reaching enforcement action are blocked by Russia and China in the Security Council. However, one should perhaps note that a very large number of decisions are taken by consensus in the Security Council. Like many others, Russia and China may often doubt that far-reaching sanctions are helpful but by no means do they automatically oppose US proposals in the Security Council.

Turning to the US missile shield links in Poland and the Czech Republic I note that the Russian leaders have not claimed that the links will deprive Russia of a second strike capability. However, they undoubtedly feel that these measures on their doorsteps are provocative and suspect that a further development of the installations could have substantial security implications. It should not be difficult for US military strategists to understand such reactions. An American air force general said in July that any Russian

stationing of “nuclear capable bombers in Cuba” would cross a threshold “ for the United States . (AFP 22 July 2008).

The military gains of these measures hardly seem to stand in any proportion to the political damage they do. If , as is asserted the measures aims only to protect against missiles from rogue states or terrorists, it would seem rational that other states – including Russia and China – be invited to join in a common defense effort. Mr. Obama’s administration will need to disarm the issue.

For continued détente with China the new US leadership will need to act in such a way as to minimize the concern that is likely to exist in Beijing that the nuclear cooperation agreement made by the Bush administration with India will increase India’s capability to make nuclear weapons and will bring India in a closer military cooperation with the US.

In the question of the North Korean nuclear program there is a viable mechanism for cooperation between the relevant big powers. It will be of the greatest importance for détente in North East Asia that the joint direct talks in Beijing lead to an acceptable result. A further development of North Korean nuclear weapons could have scary domino effects in the region. The cooperation between the big powers is also in itself a useful exercise for them to adjust to each other in order to produce a common position that will be more effective than separate individual positions. As I noted, this cooperation has resulted in an emphasis on carrots rather than sticks, on rewards rather than threats.

It would be desirable that a similar approach be followed in the case of Iran where there is now a stalemate. The Security Council’s demand that Iran must suspend its enrichment program before discussions take place and the US military threats seem to have made Iran more intransigent. Mr. Obama’s generally positive attitude to direct talks between opposing parties may break this log-jam. There is no guarantee that in the case of Iran talks without preconditions would yield a solution. However, as in the case of North Korea perhaps a potential US readiness to offer of diplomatic relations and guarantees against attack and subversion might provide better leverage than repeated threats of military actions.

Arms control and disarmament

In the US presidential campaign Mr. Obama certainly sought support by reminding the voters that he had been against the Iraq war and of his readiness for talking to adversaries to avoid military actions. However, on many issues he presented a centrist position. He rejected any idea of unilateral US disarmament and spoke in favour of an orderly exit from Iraq. He wanted to increase military and other efforts in Afghanistan, where in his view the US should have focussed its attention from the outset.

When you read proposals tabled by Mr. Obama in the US Senate and carefully study his positions you cannot avoid the impression, however, that although he is not a dove and although he wishes the US to remain a strong military power, he is inclined to listen to adversaries, to understand them and, if possible, solve controversies by negotiation. You also get the impression that he strongly and genuinely favours arms control and disarmament.

If steps are taken in 2009 that begin to lead to détente on significant issues – notably the missile shield and further NATO expansion – the outlook for progress on arms control and disarmament will also brighten in 2009. Several issues are burning. The START 1 agreement

between the US and Russia will expire at the end of next year unless agreement is reached on a prolongation. Without a prolongation of this agreement all rules concerning mutual inspection and verification between the two states will lapse. Another instrument requiring urgent care is the comprehensive agreement on Conventional Forces in Europe. Dissatisfied that it has not been brought up to date Russia has given notice of withdrawal from it.

Mr. Obama is on record as fully supporting the dramatic appeal by the former Secretaries of State, George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, the former Secretary of Defence, William Perry and the former Senator Sam Nunn to take the initiative with Russia and other nuclear weapon states to eliminate nuclear weapons and to begin moving toward that goal by seeking a number of important arms control and disarmament measures. While hawks in the US do not wish to take this initiative seriously it has very broad support in among experts in security and foreign affairs. Perhaps disenchantment with the Bush administration's affinity for relying on US military power and a need to find budgetary resources to pay for the financial rescue operations might come to support disarmament.

Mr. Obama is on record specifically to support that the US Senate should review the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and to ratify this agreement that it rejected over ten years ago. As the international Commission that I headed noted in its report on Weapons of Terror (www.wmdcommission.org) no other measure could send a stronger signal that the disarmament process has restarted.

I shall not review the many other measures that my Commission and the American elder statesmen recommended. One that interestingly had the support of Mr. McCain was the withdrawal of NATO nuclear weapons from Europe. If it were matched by a Russian withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons further into Russia such measures would contribute to restore détente. Another measure of considerable importance would be the negotiation of a verified agreement to stop the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons -- enriched uranium and plutonium. Such an agreement that has been on the drafting board -- but not the negotiation table -- for very long would close the tap for more nuclear weapons material. Together with reductions in existing warheads and stocks of nuclear material it would gradually reduce the world's supply of nuclear explosives.

A verified cut-off agreement could also help undo some of the damage done by the recent agreement between the US and India that allows India to import uranium fuel for power reactors and thereby enables the country, if it so chooses, to enrich its indigenous uranium to bomb grade level. The five nuclear weapon states parties to the NPT appear already to have stopped producing fissile material for weapons as they have more than they need. However, with the adherence of all to a verified cut off agreement, Pakistan, India and China would be able to feel confident that none of them is increasing the stocks of bombs and bomb grade material. Without such an agreement there would be no confidence but a risk of an arms race.

A relatively simple measure that would allow us to sleep better would be an agreement to take nuclear war heads off what is called 'hair trigger alert'. It would reduce the risk of releases by accident or misunderstandings. With many thousands of nuclear weapons -- by far most of them in the US and Russia -- there would be some little comfort to know that they are not ready for immediate firing.

Lastly – in this incomplete list – arrangements will need to be reached to strengthen the controls of use, transport and trade in radioactive materials to reduce the risk that such material may come to be used in ‘dirty bombs’, i.e. bombs that do not explode but spread their material and causing contamination and panic. In a world that will have many more nuclear power reactors than the some 450 that we now have the incentive to build plants for production of nuclear fuel also needs to be reduced. A plant built to enrich uranium to fuel grade – less than 5 % -- is also capable of enriching to the grade needed for weapons. It might be difficult to devise disincentives but there is a good starting point: it is not economic to build enrichment plants for small nuclear power programs. Sweden with 10 nuclear reactors finds it is economic to import the enriched uranium it needs for fuel .