

Disarmament education: practicing what you preach*

Miguel Marín Bosch**

Over the past five years this publication has made a solid contribution to the education of both practitioners and students of disarmament. In the following pages one will see why I have found it to be a valuable source of information and analysis in the field.

For more than thirty years I was a member of the Mexican Foreign Service. I went to work in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in February of 1969, two years after the signing of the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and was assigned to the office of the principal architect of that treaty, Deputy Foreign Minister Alfonso García Robles. My first task was to edit and translate his article on the treaty which appeared in one of the first editions of the *SIPRI Yearbook*.

Two years later I was sent to our permanent mission in Geneva where I was a junior officer in charge of the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD). This was the beginning of my disarmament education. As an undergraduate at Yale University I had taken one political science course that covered in part the arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union. But in Geneva, the CCD provided me with a crash course on disarmament and I was soon privy to the negotiations that led to the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC).

By some quirk of fate, I was to serve two more tours of duty in Geneva (1977–1979 and 1989–1995) and was posted twice to our mission in New York (1975 and 1983–1988). In both places I followed disarmament matters, a task I continued when I was private secretary to Foreign Minister García Robles in 1976 and chef de cabinet of Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda from 1979 to 1982. But it was as Consul General in Barcelona (1995–2000) that I began to develop a course on the subject, which I taught to both graduate and undergraduate students at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Now, at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City I am teaching a similar course—which will soon become a requirement for students seeking a degree in international relations. Given the relatively large number of students in the department (almost 600), this means I teach a course for which I will also have to train a number of future instructors.

When President Vicente Fox took office in December of 2000, I was appointed Deputy Foreign Minister in charge of Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and multilateral affairs, including disarmament. In late 2002 I resigned because I disagreed with the form and substance of the foreign policy decisions of Foreign Minister Jorge G. Castañeda (son of the former foreign minister). One of my last official duties was to travel to UN headquarters in New York and participate in the launching of the study by the group of experts appointed by the Secretary-General on disarmament and non-

* Published in *Disarmament Forum*, One, 2004, Geneva, UNIDIR, pp. 49-56.

** Miguel Marín-Bosch teaches at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City where he directs a research programme on poverty, peace and disarmament. He also writes a bi-weekly column for the *La Jornada* newspaper.

proliferation education. It was an honour and a pleasure to chair that group. It was also a good way to end my government service and return to university teaching and research. Now, I am once again practicing what I preached for so many years.

A basis for action—the UN study on disarmament education

The UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education¹ seeks to rekindle interest in a subject that has received sporadic attention over the past three decades. Two of the most prominent efforts were the 1980 UNESCO World Congress on Disarmament Education and the launching, in 1982, of the UN World Disarmament Campaign.

The study begins with this paragraph:

Science and technology transformed the world in the twentieth century. Living standards improved but warfare was rendered more deadly. Weapons of mass destruction—biological, chemical and nuclear—and their means of delivery were developed, as ever more sophisticated conventional armaments were produced and disseminated. The horrors and destruction of armed conflict persist. The need for disarmament and non-proliferation education and training has never been greater. Indeed, changing concepts and perceptions of security and threat magnify the urgency for new thinking to pursue disarmament and non-proliferation goals.²

As the Secretary-General noted in his foreword to the study, the goal of disarmament education is to ‘inform and empower citizens to work with their Governments for positive change.’³ To achieve this, one must ‘combat ignorance, complacency and a culture of violence.’⁴ That is one of the first things I stress in my course. And, in order to demonstrate it, I give my students a short, ten-question quiz. They are asked, for example, what are weapons of mass destruction? Which countries have nuclear weapons? Or, what does the acronym ‘PESC’ stand for? Most scores are low, yet occasionally the results are encouraging.

Although the UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education was prepared by a group of only ten experts, a relatively small number compared to other UN reports, it drew upon the knowledge and experience of a broad range of institutions and individuals. The group began its work by conducting a qualitative survey among states, academic research institutions and NGOs in order to assess where we are in the field.⁵ In preparing the report, the group broke new ground by involving representatives from the UN family, other international organizations, educational and research institutions, academic experts, NGOs and civil society in general. Throughout its deliberations, the group benefited from their advice and proposals. In a sense, the ten experts were the core of a much wider group that participated in the study.⁶

After defining contemporary disarmament and non-proliferation education, the study takes stock of existing experience in the field and spells out the need for

education and training at all levels—the family, schools, universities, the media, the community, NGOs, governments, parliaments and international organizations. It then identifies ways to utilize evolving pedagogical methods, particularly the revolution in information and communications technology. It describes ways to introduce the subject into post-conflict situations as a contribution to peace-building and underlines the need for coordination among United Nations and other international organizations with special competence in disarmament, non-proliferation or education.

The study concludes with thirty-four practical recommendations for the promotion of disarmament and non-proliferation education and training. While underlining the importance of all the recommendations, the experts identified those that can and should be implemented rapidly and at a relatively low cost. The experts were well aware that disarmament and non-proliferation education and training is:

... a lifelong and multifaceted process, in which the family, schools, universities, the media, the community, NGOs, Governments, parliaments and international organizations all participate. It is a building block, a base of theoretical and practical knowledge that allows individuals to choose for themselves values that reject violence, resolve conflicts peacefully and sustain a culture of peace.⁷

The experts were also conscious that disarmament and non-proliferation education and training means different things to different people. One thing is dealing with children, women or former combatants in a post-conflict situation, and quite another is raising the awareness of the nuclear threat among students in the developed world.

The UN Department for Disarmament Affairs will oversee and coordinate the international efforts of the various multilateral institutions, while national governments are expected to do the same by designating a focal point, which, in turn, will inform the UN of the steps taken to implement the study's recommendations. This follow-up mechanism should help governments to move forward in this endeavour.

Curriculum outline

The purpose of my one-semester course on disarmament and international security is to introduce students nearing the end of their undergraduate studies to a subject that is absent from most university curricula. Wars, weapons and conflict were a prominent feature of the twentieth century. Disarmament efforts and agreements were also an important chapter. Nevertheless, students of international relations only deal with these subjects in passing—in courses in international law, international organizations, history and multilateral negotiations. My course seeks to fill a gap and interest students in a subject that in the future may become a larger part of the international relations curriculum.

In most universities it is not easy to introduce new courses. Yet my experience in Barcelona and Mexico City has been different. In each case the university president

invited me to give a course on disarmament and international security. In both places the faculty and student reacted very positively. At the Universidad Iberoamericana, the course was introduced as the international relations programme was being modified and it was decided that it should become a requirement for graduation. Let me briefly describe it. Comments from readers would be welcome.⁸

The course comprises thirty-two two-hour classes. The syllabus is arranged by subject and chronologically.

As I first discovered in Barcelona and later confirmed in Mexico, there is much material available on disarmament and security, but many university libraries seem to have overlooked acquiring it. Moreover, the literature is mostly in English and often too specialized for undergraduates. In my case, the answer was to provide the students with the texts of both the required and optional reading lists. They also have access to my own collection of disarmament material, including books, articles, periodicals, videos and official UN documents and conference records.

Students are required to attend class. Participation in the discussions is of fundamental importance. They are also asked to write two short papers of no more than 1,500 words on a subject of their choosing, which they first present orally to their peers for comments and suggestions. There are two more oral presentations: one is a description of a disarmament periodical, NGO, or national or international institution; the other is an analytical summary of news items regarding the course's subject matter that have appeared in a newspaper over a given fortnight. There is no final exam or term paper.

The period covered by the course is mostly the twentieth century, from the Hague peace conferences at the close of the nineteenth century to the present. It is divided as follows: 1899–1945; 1945–1948; 1948–1962; 1962–1978; 1979–1989; 1989–2001; and the period since 11 September 2001.

The first two classes are devoted to a discussion of what is meant by disarmament and international security, the role of the nation-state, the agreed codes of international conduct, including the UN Charter, the various concepts of security, and an overview of the twentieth century and the appearance of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles together with the development of ever more sophisticated conventional weapons. In 2003 the situation in Iraq served to focus our discussions. The students read newspaper clippings on these subjects, as well as articles on the nation-state and the new Europe, by Flora Lewis and Fritz Stern, respectively.⁹

For the next class, where we cover the period to 1945 with emphasis on the various disarmament conferences and the codification of the rules concerning the use of force, the students read the pertinent chapter of Charles Rousseau's textbook on international law.¹⁰ As optional reading, they are given excerpts from the works of Francisco Vitoria and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

We then move to the UN Charter and the brief period before 1948 when it seemed that the newly founded organization would fulfil its promise by maintaining international peace and security. That is followed by one class devoted to the onset of the Cold War and the emergence of parallel security structures (NATO and the Warsaw Pact). They read a chapter on the origins of war from Kenneth N. Waltz's

classic book, *Man, the State and War*,¹¹ Lester R. Brown's 1977 groundbreaking essay, *An Untraditional View of National Security*,¹² the UN Charter's provisions on disarmament and international security, and the concluding chapter of the 1985 UN study on concepts of security. If they so wish, they can also examine two pamphlets published in 1947 and 1948 that reflect the interest of one segment of the American public in strengthening the role of the UN in the fields of security, disarmament and collective self-defence.¹³

In five classes we cover the period from 1962 to 1978. Here we look at the various disarmament fora, beginning with the establishment of the Eighteen-Nation Disarmament Committee. We discuss unilateral, regional and multilateral disarmament efforts, the meetings of the parties to existing treaties, the agreed bases and objectives for an effective disarmament process, multilateral disarmament diplomacy, the role of NGOs and, finally, we analyse the provisions of multilateral treaties. The reading list includes the pertinent provisions of the 1977 Additional Protocols to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, the Final Document of the first Special Session on Disarmament (SSOD I), the scope of the prohibitions of some disarmament treaties, the 1981 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects (CCW), the 1997 convention on anti-personnel landmines, the 1998 Oslo text containing elements of a common understanding regarding an international agenda on small arms and light weapons, and an article of mine on the UN and disarmament.

The eleventh class is devoted to the first of two discussions on where we have been and where we are going in the course. Students are encouraged to take stock of the course and suggest changes. For that class they read the UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education. Feedback has indicated that at first the students find the course's subject somewhat exotic but soon, especially when it is related to current events and relations among states, they begin to appreciate its relevance.

The next two classes cover the 1979–1989 period: Afghanistan, Ronald Reagan, Margaret Thatcher, advances in science and technology and their application in such areas as outer space (for example, the Strategic Defense Initiative, also known as Star Wars).

In the following class we look at the years from 1989 to 10 September 2001: the end of the Cold War, the United States and the so-called new international order, the first Gulf War, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the cases of Iraq, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran. The war on international terrorism is discussed in the following class.

For those classes, the students read Charles F. Hermann's 1977 article *Defining National Security*,¹⁴ Madeleine Albright's *A Diplomatic Framework for Disarmament*,¹⁵ an article on international terrorism,¹⁶ Michael Ignatieff's recent article *Why Are We In Iraq? (And Liberia? And Afghanistan?)*,¹⁷ and a number of newspaper stories from the 1990s on Russia's difficulties in ridding itself of rotting chemical weapons, on how the United States is dealing with its own chemical weapon

stockpiles, the work of UNSCOM in Iraq, the supply of anthrax to Iraq by France and the United States in the 1980s, and the anthrax scare in Las Vegas, Nevada in 1998.

Six classes are devoted to nuclear weapons. Here we divide the nuclear age into four periods: 1945–1949; 1950–1968; 1968–1995; and 1995 to the present. We focus on 1945 and 1950 with the acquisition and use of the first atomic bombs and the move to thermonuclear weapons, respectively, and on the main players (United States, Soviet Union, United Kingdom, France and China), as well as others which played or thought of playing the nuclear card (Canada, Sweden, India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil). We review the history of nuclear testing, the nuclear arms race, changing nuclear doctrines, nuclear energy (uranium, enriched uranium and plutonium), the negotiations that led to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the treaty's provisions, its five-year review conferences, its indefinite extension in 1995 and the results of the 2000 Review Conference.

Required reading for the classes on nuclear weapons include the NPT, excerpts from the memoirs of some of the individuals involved in the decisions regarding the development and use of atomic weapons (and nuclear energy) and later thermonuclear ones (including Truman, Churchill, Baruch and Acheson), recent resolutions of the UN General Assembly on nuclear disarmament, charts on existing nuclear arsenals and fissionable material, reflections on the evolution of the international community's reaction to the Indian and Pakistani tests in 1998 (in the Conference on Disarmament, the P5 and the Security Council), statistics on the place of nuclear energy in the world's energy consumption, newspaper reports on the transport of nuclear materials on land and by sea, Rebecca Johnson's article summarizing the international debate on eliminating nuclear weapons, Jozef Goldblat's article on the legality of nuclear weapons and Thérèse Delpech's reflections on the future of nuclear weapons.¹⁸ Students are also provided with additional, but not required, reading material on Bertrand Russell's reflections on nuclear weapons and the birth of the Pugwash movement, a study on why countries play the nuclear card,¹⁹ a critique of the NPT in 1968, and a review of the Partial Test-Ban Treaty amendment conference.

Students are required to read the International Court of Justice's 1996 advisory opinion on the legality of nuclear weapons and familiarize themselves with the individual position of one of the judges.

Four classes refer to security arrangements and non-military threats to security. Two cover the different aspects of security in the Americas, from the 1945 Chapultepec Conference to the 2003 Special Conference on Security of the Organization of American States. Required reading includes the Declaration on Security in the Americas.²⁰ Here we trace the evolution of the concept of security from a strictly military one to the present multidimensional approach.

Two more classes are devoted to NATO and the European Union (EU). We discuss the transatlantic tension between the United States and Europe, as well as the problems of the four non-NATO members of the EU. The material read includes the provisions of the Treaty on European Union (the 'Maastricht Treaty') on a common foreign and security policy, an article on the Organization for Security and Co-

operation in Europe, excerpts from Esther Barbé's 1981 study on NATO,²¹ a summary of the Paris Summit of 27 May 1997, several articles on the EU and NATO, and newspaper reports on Europe's military industry and arms trade. There is also a text on world military spending.

The role of the UN Security Council (before and after the Cold War) is the subject of one class. We review the subjects of the Council's resolutions from 1946 to the present, the vetoes of its permanent members, the texts of resolutions 1422, 1487, 1502 and 1511, and Mexico's role as a non-permanent member in 2002 and 2003.

We then devote two classes to peace-keeping operations, humanitarian intervention, poverty and conflict, and ethnic wars in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Europe. Special emphasis is placed on the effects of conflict on civilians and the role of children. The texts read include an article on small countries and the transcript of a discussion on poverty and conflict organized by the Worldwatch Institute. Optional reading includes an article by Richard Holbrooke on Bosnia.²²

In two classes we discuss the forces that undermine disarmament efforts (geopolitical and economic interests) and fuel the arms race (its root causes, the international market for conventional weapons). We also discuss the impact of armaments on the environment. Here the students read the relevant provisions of the Statute of the International Criminal Court, a document by the ICC Coalition, an article on civilian-military relations, another on the Kyoto Conference, one on human rights and the environment, and one on the UN and international law.²³ There is also a selection from one of Ruth Leger Sivard's many publications and excerpts from the 1972 UN study on the social and economic consequences of the arms race. Optional reading includes two articles on the UN Secretary-General.²⁴

In the last class, students are asked to consider the question of transparency in armaments, the culture of peace and tomorrow's international security. Students read UN General Assembly resolutions A/53/243 (1999) and A/57/6 (2002) on a culture of peace.

Quite obviously, the course syllabus needs much work. Some of the existing reading material will have to be discarded or replaced. Texts on other questions will have to be added. For example, I am now preparing a lecture on a subject that has received increasing attention over the past decades: the violent nature of ancient societies and the myth of the noble savage.²⁵

Plans for the future

Students of international relations want practical experience in a field that is often characterized by theoretical and historical analysis. For them, I am organizing a semester in New York, in and around the United Nations. The plan is to take some forty to fifty students to observe the workings of the UN, especially the Security Council and the annual session of the General Assembly. They will take a number of courses with local professors on subjects that are treated superficially in the department. They will also do an internship in a permanent mission to the UN, an

NGO or perhaps even in the UN Secretariat itself. There will be about a dozen weekly talks on specific UN-related topics given by individual experts.

Disarmament and international security issues will be a major part of their exposure to the UN in New York. Hopefully, this on-site experience will serve to open new avenues when they consider their professional careers. Perhaps they will opt for the foreign service, become international civil servants or work for an NGO. The important thing is to introduce them to a world they hardly know exists.

Throughout the course I draw upon my foreign service experience. The students learn how the Conference on Disarmament works and how in 1978, during SSOD I, the *Disarmament Times* was born.²⁶ They are encouraged to assess the importance of the impact of civil society, especially NGOs, on the disarmament process. They are told of how a Mexican diplomat, who was present in the basement meeting rooms of the UN during the negotiations of the Final Document of SSOD I, would emerge in the evening and cross First Avenue to the offices of *Disarmament Times* and recount the details of what was transpiring at the UN so that delegations could read about it the next day.

NGOs are slowly becoming more directly involved in multilateral disarmament negotiations. For decades they were not permitted to observe, let alone contribute, to the negotiating process. Unlike in other areas of the UN, especially in the field of human rights and other social issues, disarmament NGOs were kept at bay. Now, in light of the experience of the convention on anti-personnel landmines, governments have a better appreciation of the potential role that NGOs (and civil society in general) can play as partners in disarmament efforts.

The UN study on disarmament and non-proliferation education is but a small step in a long journey. It will take a sustained effort over many years to raise the public's awareness on these issues. Today, the need to protect the environment is part of one's education at home and at school. Children and young adults throughout the world are increasingly conscious of the dangers posed by the irrational use of natural resources and many are intent on saving our planet by tackling environmental problems such as pollution of sources of drinking water or climate change. Except for those directly involved in armed conflict and war, most people are largely unaware of matters relating to weapons. In decades to come, education may make people more conscious of threats posed by weapons of mass destruction and conventional armaments, as well as the need to pursue genuine disarmament and promote a culture of peace.

Notes

¹ United Nations document A/57/124 of 30 August 2002, available on the page <<http://disarmament2.un.org/education/study.html>>.

² *Ibid.*, para. 1.

³ *Ibid.*, foreword.

⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 2.

⁵ The study's four annexes are available on the page <<http://disarmament2.un.org/education/study.html>>. Annex 2 contains the survey.

-
- ⁶ A list of participants appears in Annex 1.
- ⁷ United Nations document A/57/124, *op. cit.*, para. 20.
- ⁸ The author may be contacted at <mmarinbosch@hotmail.com>.
- ⁹ Flora Lewis, 1998, New Attention to National Status Could Make the World Safer, *International Herald Tribune*, 10 July, p. 9, and Fritz Stern, 1998, A Century of Building Blocks for the New Europe, *International Herald Tribune*, 8 July, p. 9.
- ¹⁰ Charles Rousseau, 1966, *Derecho Internacional Público*, 3rd ed., Barcelona, Ariel. The original in French, *Droit international public*, appeared in 1957.
- ¹¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, 1965, *Man, the State and War—a Theoretical Analysis*, New York, Columbia University Press.
- ¹² Excerpted with minor revisions from Lester R. Brown, 1977, *Redefining National Security*, Worldwatch Paper 14 (October), Washington, DC, Worldwatch Institute.
- ¹³ American Association for the United Nations, Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, 1947, Fifth Report, *Security and Disarmament under the United Nations*, New York; and American Association for the United Nations, Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, 1948, Sixth Report, *Collective Self-Defense under the United Nations: Memorandum and Draft Treaty for Implementation of Article 51*, New York.
- ¹⁴ Charles F. Hermann, 1977, Are the Dimensions and Implications of National Security Changing?, *Mershon Center Quarterly Report* 3, no. 1 (Autumn), pp. 5–7. Reprinted with minor revisions and by permission of the Mershon Center, Columbus, Ohio State University.
- ¹⁵ Speech of 10 June 1998 by US Secretary of State, The Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington, DC, US Department of State text, reproduced in *Disarmament Diplomacy*, no. 27, June 1998, pp. 43–47.
- ¹⁶ Punish and Be Damned, *The Economist*, 29 August–4 September 1998, p. 16.
- ¹⁷ The New York Times Magazine, 7 September 2003.
- ¹⁸ Rebecca Johnson, 1998, Le débat international autour de l'élimination des armes nucléaires, *RIS* (Numéro Spécial: L'avenir du désarmement nucléaire), no. 30, Summer, pp. 86–99; Jozef Goldblat, 1994, Legal or Illegal? The Perennial Controversy Over Nuclear Weapons, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 25, no. 4, December, pp. 397–403; Thérèse Delpech, 1994, What Future for Nuclear Weapons?, *Security Dialogue*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 405–408.
- ¹⁹ Bertrand Russell, 1969, *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell, 1944–1969*, New York, Simon and Schuster, pp. 6–16; Scott D. Sagan, 1996, Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons: Three Models in Search of a Bomb, *International Security*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Winter), pp. 54–86; David Vital, 1968, Double-Talk or Double-Think? A Comment on the Draft Non-Proliferation Treaty, *International Affairs: A Quarterly Review*, vol. 44, no. 3 (July), pp. 419–33; and Miguel Marín-Bosch, 1991, Amendment Conference to the Partial Test-Ban Treaty, *Disarmament*, vol. XIV, no. 2, 1991, pp. 83–93.
- ²⁰ OAS document OEA/Ser.K/XXXVIII, CES/DEC. 1/03 rev.1 of 28 October 2003, available at <http://www.oas.org/documents/eng/DeclaracionSecurity_102803.asp>.
- ²¹ Esther Barbé, 1981, España y la OTAN: La problemática europea en materia de seguridad, Barcelona, Editorial Laia.
- ²² Richard Holbrooke, 1998, Why Are We In Bosnia?, *The New Yorker*, 18 May, pp. 39–45.
- ²³ Sir John Winthrop Hackett, 1970, *Civil-Military Relations*, Harmon Memorial Lecture no. 13 at the United States Air Force Academy, October; Henry D. Jacoby, Ronald G. Prinn and Richard Schmalensee, 1998, Kyoto's Unfinished Business, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August; Antonio Vercher, 1998, Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente, *Claves de Razón Práctica*, no. 84 (July/August), pp. 14–21; and Frederic L. Kirgis, Jr., 1996, Enforcing International Law, *Insight*, Washington, DC, The American Society of International Law.

²⁴ Soledad Alameda, 1998, El hombre que paró una guerra: Kofi Annan, *El País Semanal*, Madrid, 19 July, pp. 22–28, and Philip Gourevitch, 1998, The Genocide Fax: The United Nations Was Warned About Rwanda. Did Anyone Care?, *The New Yorker*, 11 May, pp. 42–46.

²⁵ For example, Lawrence H. Keeley, 1996, *War Before Civilization: The Myth of the Peaceful Savage*, New York, Oxford University Press; Adrienne Mayor, 2003, *Greek Fire, Poison Arrows and Scorpion Bombs: Biological and Chemical Warfare in the Ancient World*, New York, The Overlook Press; and Steven A. LeBlanc with Katherine E. Register, 2003, *Constant Battles: The Myth of the Peaceful, Noble Savage*, New York, St. Martin's Press.

²⁶ Published under the auspices of the NGO Committee on Peace, Disarmament and Security in New York.