



Pax Scotia

Issue 64

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The Alternative Approach to Security



Dr Joanna Frew is the Outreach Coordinator for the Rethinking Security network. She is an activist & researcher who has been involved in global economic justice, climate justice and anti-militarism work for 20 years. She is also a community gardener, historian of the British empire and lives in community with refugees and asylum seekers in north London.

So-called national security has been high on the agenda in the UK since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, and this year, Kier Starmer's government released both a Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and a National Security Strategy (NSS). The narrative of both of these is that we live in a 'dangerous world' and that our security lies in spending more on 'defence'. But there are other options that don't run the risks of escalating inter-state tensions and drawing the world in to an arms race.

Defining security is tricky but if the mainstream approach begins with 'national security', the assumption is that threats to the state (rather than people, communities and the planet) are most important. These kinds of threats do exist, but the problem is that these threats are assessed and responses developed by a small group of elite policy makers in Westminster who usually have a connection to the military in some way. This means that security becomes the realm of defence and militarism, and makes thinking differently almost impossible. What we need is a broader definition of security.

Take climate breakdown, for example. The MoD are shaping government responses to this existential threat we face, but these are about being battle ready in a climate changed world, containing the multiple crises that might be faced by societies worst affected, and keeping the fallout of these crises as far away from our shores as possible - stabilising 'failed states' and migration flows.

Similarly, NATO countries have consistently outspent Russia on military equipment at least 10 times over, but still think a further increase in military spending will decrease the threat we face from Putin's regime.

We desperately need alternative approaches to security.

Another way of looking at security, instead of prioritising the state, is to think in terms of global, community and individual needs. Globally, the threats we face (such as climate breakdown and conflict) require more cooperation between governments. Using every effort to build cooperation would move us away from the competition and towards solidarity. Within countries, communities should be fully included in policies that affect them, rather than being minoritised and targeted by security policy, and have access to all they need for secure lives: healthcare, food, jobs and economic security. Security should also extend to individuals, who – no matter their identity – should be able to fully participate in politics and decision making, making full use of their capabilities within a democratic society.

Starting from this outlook means that many more methods could be employed to build security. For example, with climate breakdown instead of attempting to insulate ourselves against the fallout from climate disasters, resources could go towards mitigation and adaptation and addressing the causes of climate change.

Furthermore, as far as decreasing the likelihood of conflict with Russia, would it not make more sense to use other approaches to build security, such as dialogue and diplomacy, to address both Ukraine and Russia's hopes for security? RS's sister network in Germany have worked on a proposal for Europe to develop ways of engaging in constructive dialogue for a ceasefire at the same as time strengthening multilateralism, rather than pull back from dialogue that we have witnessed in recent years. What is crucial is that the **underlying causes of insecurity** are addressed, not the symptoms. Otherwise security remains elusive and out of reach. *Joanna Frew*



Mahé Métivier is a French citizen who stands for peace, in contrast with the Lancaster Agreement 2.0 (July 2025) signed between the French President and the Prime Minister, which concretises a military alliance based on nuclear rearmament. Mahé studies at SciencesPo, a prestigious school of political sciences in France, and is currently on an Erasmus semester at the University of Edinburgh. Specialising in climate change, she is aware of the impact of nuclear weapons on the environment and the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals. She has promoted human rights for several years, particularly through volunteer work within Amnesty International. She believes in the importance of peace and the alternative solutions of diplomacy, dialogue and friendships which she says are much more reliable, stable, and ethical.



If you want peace, prepare for peace...

Rather than applying literally the expression that has proven false in the past - "if you want peace, prepare for war" - why not consider instead "if you want peace, prepare for peace"?

In a world where military escalation has become the norm, it is my dream that France and the UK come together to ensure a peaceful and sustainable future.

I am a French citizen, and I study climate change both at Sciences Po and at the University of Edinburgh. That is why I am particularly aware of all the dangers nuclear weapons represent for our planet. I have worked with NGOs promoting human rights and sustainable development which leads me to stand not only for the right to life but also for the right to live in a healthy environment.

Nuclear weapons are supposed to be "guarantors of peace", when in fact they are an open door to an escalation of fear, and danger that could occur at any moment.

I would like to raise the voice of the younger generation.

First - we wish peace rather than a nuclear war.

Secondly - we wish health rather than cancers and malformations caused by high levels of radioactivity.

Last but not least - we wish our planet to be protected and not threatened by the impacts of nuclear dissemination.

Am I right if I say that we don't want to relive a Cold War like the one we experienced in the last century?

Today we know there is a high risk that nuclear detonation could occur by accident, but more than once, Humanity has been on the brink of nuclear catastrophe, as during WWII with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and with the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962.

French President, Emmanuel Macron, claimed in May 2025 that he would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if the "vital interests" of France or those of its partners were at stake.

However, there is a real contradiction here. According to the United Nations "the use of nuclear weapons constitutes the most serious threat to Humanity and the survival of civilisation".

Maybe even more striking: in a scenario of a limited nuclear war if 100 bombs of 13 kilotons were to be used, it would considerably change the climate. According to Francesco Pausat, professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal specialising in Earth sciences:

"The climatic impacts would be largely determined by the cooling of the Earth's atmosphere due to the persistent smoke following nuclear explosions, which would block the sun's rays."

The lack of light and the decline in rainfall would impact agriculture and consequently we would experience a worldwide food crisis.

To prevent all these risks from occurring, there is only one solution: nuclear disarmament.

On behalf of the younger generation, and as a French citizen studying in the UK, I stand for peace, necessary for the economic development of our countries. I also stand for the protection of our planet that we share with all the communities in the world.

So please dear President Macron, please dear Prime Minister Starmer, do everything in your power to stop nuclear escalation and to adopt the solution of peace rather than war.

Mahé Métivier



Delia Chatoor is Pax Christi Scotland's friend in the Caribbean and UN commentator. We haven't heard from her in a while, because there have been major security and political developments centred on relations between the USA and Venezuela. - her country is only 7 miles from Venezuela. and the USA has deployed a number of military assets in the Caribbean.

In the wake of the United Nations' 80th anniversary, Delia reflects on the international organisation's role today in keeping world peace...



Can we help the UN pull off an end to the nuclear age?

In his address to the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) marking the organisation's 80th anniversary, the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres reminded member states that following the devastating effects of the Second World War, world leaders made a choice: ***Never again*** - and with that was the birth of the UN. He described it as "a practical strategy for the survival of humanity."

The world, however, has not witnessed an end to armed conflicts, the eradication of poverty, a ban on weapons of mass destruction, recognition of fundamental rights and freedoms, and equality. Yet the UN through its complex system of commissions, committees and advisory bodies, has tried to live up to its "Purposes and Principles", as enshrined in Chapter 1 of its Charter.

In September 2024, UN Member States adopted **The Pact for the Future**, which seeks to "set out vital measures to help revitalise the multilateral system and its solutions for people and planet". The call for a shared commitment to attain the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was reinforced through the adoption of the UN80 and the theme for the 80th Session: "Better together - 80 years and more for peace, development and human rights."

Presenting the Statement on behalf of the Holy See on September 29, 2025, Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher recognised the good which the UN had accomplished since 1945 but lamented "the growing crisis of credibility within the multilateral system." He explained that "overshadowing the UN's achievements, these challenges should inspire a renewed commitment to its revitalisation".

This year also marked the 80th anniversary of the use of nuclear weapons with the bombings of the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The impacts of these weapons are still being felt today, and this continues to encourage the UN and most of its Member States to call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons. Additional to this is the call for the diversion of financial and human resources to more humanitarian needs. The ever-increasing challenges facing the vulnerable who include the poor, women, children, migrants and physically challenged, make the presentation of Pope Leo XIV's Apostolic Exhortation, DILEXI TE: On Love for the Poor, timely. It is not a call only for Catholic Christians but for the international

community. The message is clear: there can be no peace in the world unless the poor and our environment are cared for and not subject to "neglect and abuse".

Article 26 of the UN Charter provides a very relevant guide for the "establishment of a system for the regulation of armaments" so that the billions spent on nuclear and other weapons could be redirected towards "peace, protection, and sustainable development." The UN has a pivotal role to play in the creation of the space for the design of the necessary programmes, the crafting of the mechanisms, the implementation and their management so that the benefits would accrue to those most in need.

During the 80th Regular Session of the UNGA, the First Committee, which addresses disarmament matters, adopted a draft resolution entitled: "Steps in building a common roadmap towards a world without nuclear weapons:", and 45 States accepted that they should avoid a new nuclear arms race,. They noted, "the risk is increasing, accompanied by the rapid and non-transparent quantitative expansion and opaque improvement of nuclear forces by some nuclear-weapon states".

We should also not forget the conclusion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the principal legal organ of the UN, that "there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control."

There is no doubt, however, that most of the world's population represented at the UN would like to witness the end of the nuclear age and the diversion of resources to development and other pressing issues touching on peace and security. The UN, as an international body, has the wherewithal to bring nations together to ensure that its mandate is fulfilled.

We, the Peoples of the United Nations, can do our part through adherence to the tenets of the UN Charter and by encouraging our leaders to do the same. The proliferation of weapons, more armed conflicts, degradation of our environment, and increased migration only serve to undermine, the UN's "vision for a sustainable future".

Delia Chatoor

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A President for Peace?

Sylvia Thompson is a Pax Christi Ireland member and convener of a 'Nonviolence Conversation Group'. She has been hugely involved with Pax Christi since 1972. In 2023 she introduced the Catholic Nonviolence Initiative to Ireland in collaboration with the Dublin Pax Christi office. She has lived in Ireland north and south, England, Canada USA and Peru & here she reflects on what the new Irish president could mean for world peace.



Sylvia Thompson

As I start to pen my few words, Catherine Connolly is still our 'president elect' so a good time to reflect on the nation's choice for president, Ireland's Head of State.

What caused her landslide victory?

It's certainly 'hats off' to her campaign team, headed up by Béibhinn O'Connor and Céile Varley. They started early, fairly low key and from the grass roots. Three left-wing parties backed her early on – Labour, the Social Democrats and People Before Profit. Later others joined - Sinn Féin, the Green Party, 100% Redress, several independent Oireachtas members and these were joined by her 5,000+ volunteers.

So overall this campaign was an attempt to move to a new place and away from what was often called 'middle Ireland' despite the limitations of the role of the president in Ireland.

I followed the campaign fairly closely and Catherine Connolly met most of my criteria. Top of my list was her stance on neutrality and keeping the Triple Lock. The two other candidates were happy for this safeguard on Irish neutrality to be set aside.

Catherine Connolly has impressed with her broad concern for peace, not just on this island. Her trip to Syria in 2018 along with other parliamentarians is well documented. She has continued to defend the visit as a "fact-finding" mission that reinforced her opposition to war and dictatorship.

Having the ability to arbitrate earned her the role of 'Leas Ceann Conhairle' or vice chairperson / speaker of the Dáil Éireann, the

lower house of the Irish parliament.

She also impressed with her level headedness, her declared interest in reading, her ability to study, to learn as seen in the extra qualifications she went after to become both psychologist and barrister.

I see this as a nonviolent way of communication, she listens, responds, is strong - but does not attack. One could say she is resolute.

This was evident in all the various interviews, about everything from Syria to the potential visit by President Trump, to the republic's relationship to the 'border' and Northern Ireland.

Our president elect comes from a family of 14. She is fit and healthy, swimming and performing 'keepie uppies'. She has a desire to respect the privacy of her immediate family. All this spoke a lot. Her only showmanship was letting us see those football skills! I leave the final words to her: "My message is use your voice in every way you can, because a republic and a democracy need constructive questioning, and together we can shape a new republic that values everybody."

Sylvia Thompson

For further information:

<https://swordstoploughsharesireland.org/triple-lock/>

<https://www.rte.ie/news/primetime/2025/1018/1539234-what-is-now-known-about-catherine-connollys-trip-to-syria/>

<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/lvDXJc76os8>