

It seems as if the world has two political axes -- East/West and North/South.

The East/West axis has been characterised by forty years of tension, of escalating armaments and declining understanding. East-West relations have come to be defined in terms of the nuclear arsenals of overwhelming destructive potential possessed by the two superpowers.

The North/South axis is characterised by decades of deprivation, famine, homelessness and disease. North-South relations have come to be defined in terms of the stark disparities in resources and opportunities which exist between a privileged minority of the world's population, who enjoy great prosperity, and the vast majority afflicted with utter destitution.

The management of these two sets of relationships is the starting point on the route to peace. East/West relations focus on the negotiated limitation and reduction of arms and the building of confidence and trust; North-South relations focus on the sound economic development of the most impoverished nations in the world.

The U.N.'s 1985 Report on the World Social Situation reveals how far we have to go to achieve these goals:

- In 1984, global military expenditure was \$800 billion -- approximately \$130 for every man, woman and child in the world. This is equivalent to more than the average income of many developing countries;
- In 1980, military spending by developed countries represented more than 10 times the amount spent by developing countries on health programmes;
- The cost of a single nuclear submarine equals the annual education budget of 23 developing countries with a total of 160 million school children.

The field of arms control is itself highly complex, technical and, above all, political. It is easy to advocate ridding the world of nuclear weapons, numerous proposals have been put forward since the Baruch Plan of 1946, but it has been very difficult to find a way of negotiating them down to acceptable levels on the basis of equality and equal security.