

**Ted Turner Address and Q&A**  
**Yale Center for the Study of Globalization Conference**  
**“Nuclear Weapons: The Greatest Peril to Civilization”**  
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Thank you – thank you Mr. President for that glowing introduction. I really, really appreciate it. I have 20 minutes for my presentation and then I think we will have 30 minutes or so for our discussion and questions and answers. I want to start by making the statement: I have given a great deal of thought over a number of years to the nuclear situation and been very concerned and worried and thankful at the same time that nothing has seriously gone wrong – that we haven’t had a nuclear exchange or nuclear annihilation. But my conclusion – and I will talk about how I got there little later – my conclusion, because I want to be certain to make it very clear, my conclusion is that the only solution to proliferation, the only way that we are going to get out of this box that we have built for ourselves is a complete abolition of all nuclear weapons all over the world and agreement by all countries not to make, use, deploy or do anything with any weapons of mass destruction, but certainly not nuclear.

And I just feel like that is the only way we got to – all the countries of the world have to play by the same set of rules. Jonathan Schell has a wonderful new book out, “Seven Decades,” and I just finished reading it. He comes to the exact same conclusion. The smaller countries in the world – they have the same rights as the larger countries and for us to sit there with 10,000 nuclear weapons and tell everybody else in the world that they can’t have any, particularly when we allow Israel to keep their 100 nuclear weapons and also we were opposed to Pakistan and India at the time, but as soon as they got them, well, they joined the club. After you... if you don’t get blown off the face of the earth by the US in the first year after you get your nuclear weapons, then you will be in the club, you know? And once you’re in, it’s okay, but that’s bullshit. You can’t ask people to do that. By God, we’ve all got the same rights.

And another thing the US needs to do is quit telling everybody what in the world they need to do, and if we want people to be like us – and I guess there is nothing wrong with that – the way to do it - the way to get them to be like us is to do such a good job and be so prosperous and happy and set such a good example that people will want to mimic it. That’s the way to get people to come along with you is do like Tom Sawyer did or Huckleberry Finn, you know, make it look like so much fun to paint the fence that everybody else grabs the brush and paints the fence. They didn’t want to go fishing; they would rather paint the fence.

So I really feel that’s the only way. And also we have an opportunity now because we’ve got several challenges now where the world, where humanity faces terrible dangers. And right behind the nuclear threat, right behind it is the global warming threat and the concurrent collapse of the environment that’s occurring all over the world. We’ve got to straighten that situation out too. And then the third thing that we’ve got to get control over, and another book I strongly recommend to you is Lester Brown’s latest book, “Plan B, 3.0” which deals with all the world’s problems in 200 and some odd pages and it’s got all the solutions in there, too.

And the third big problem that we need to work on is stabilizing population because as Lester says in his book, if we don’t stabilize population, all the other things that we’re doing – we’re still going to go down the drain because we just cannot keep increasing exponentially the way

that we have been, because we just put too much tax on the natural environment and it can't support more of us at a decent standard of living.

Those are the three major challenges that humanity faces, and we really need to tackle them all right now, and we need to have successful conclusions, so why not put them all together? I mean, there is going to be a lot of... it's not going to be easy to have total nuclear disarmament and certainly not to have it in a reasonable period of time.

I want to make one other point; it's that in thinking how we're going to get there, how we are going to do it, that there has to be some sort of rough plan where it can show the countries of the world that it can be done. I'm trying to think about a solution to that: how we actually go from the nuclear weapons that we have now with eight or nine nuclear powers to zero as quickly as we can. Why not a five- or a ten-year plan where we freeze – we agree at the United Nations, all the countries of the world – to freeze them and gradually reduce them over a five- or ten-year period, say 10 percent a year that the US with 10,000 nuclear weapons would destroy a thousand a year. Pakistan with a 100 nuclear weapons would destroy 10 a year, so we we'd all stay for those 10 years relatively the same. Because we are going to have to have a plan that treats everybody relatively equally, and when we get to the global warming situation, it's another set of problems because we are not going to be able to do that equally because the developing countries don't pollute the atmosphere anything like at the rate that the wealthy developed nations are that use much more energy.

So we're going to have to come up with a special formula for that and that's going to be the most difficult challenge that humanity has ever faced, cause we have to have a 191 countries agree on that. On a nuclear situation, we only have to have eight or nine, depending on whether North Korea really has nuclear weapons or not. I don't know. It doesn't matter, but count them in; count them out. At some point, that's the other thing we are going to have to have is complete inspections all over the world. The countries are all going to have to agree to that, but that shouldn't bother us. We can do that. We have the IAEA and we have the United Nations. We already have the bodies that we need to administrate this. They're already in existence. They don't have to be invented, and for the most part they have most of the world's respect and admiration because they've done so much good. Are they perfect? No, of course they're not perfect, but nothing that we do is perfect. But we're going to have to get closer to it now than we ever have before or we're going to be toast and our planet is going to be toast, too.

The thing that really upsets me, one of the things that upsets me, is that with nuclear annihilation, and it will happen sooner or later if we don't get rid of the weapons, the weapons are going to get rid of us. I mean, at some point... because just remember a couple of months ago that B-52 bomber took off from Nebraska and flew down to one of the Gulf Coast states – was it Louisiana or Texas - and they had four armed hydrogen bombs on the plane that got on accidentally – six, I'm sorry - that's right, Matt. They had six and they didn't even know they were on there and for several days they were missing. When they landed they didn't know they had them on there. We should all, when we say our prayers at night, say thank you God for getting us through one more day of life where we haven't blown ourselves up. I mean, what kind of sense does it make to destroy millions of people, children? And how many people like their museums? I like museums, but you know, we're going to blow up all the museums. I mean, there will be nothing left. If anybody did arrive here a million years from now after we had burned the world up, they wouldn't be able to find hardly any record that we were here. At least the pharaohs, I mean Egypt – I was just in Egypt – it's beautiful. And I went around and saw all the antiquities and

went to all the museums and spent a week doing it. At least there's still a record, but by God if you take a couple of hydrogen bombs and explode them right over the pyramids at Giza, there wouldn't be two stones left on top of one another. You couldn't be able to find a thing. And the curator of your museum was at our dinner last night; he's probably here right now, that runs the museum here. And you know it would be a real shame to lose Yale and the museum.

Anyway, this could be... we're going to exterminate all the higher forms of life with nuclear war. There won't be anything left except maybe a few cockroaches. That's a hell of a thing to have done to ourselves. It's one thing if we get struck by a meteor or we have a bunch of volcanic explosions that burn up the world, but to actually commit global suicide – I mean is life that bad? I just got back this summer; I went to the Galapagos Islands. I took my family down there and looked through all the tame animals that you – they won't pet them, but you could because they sit right there because people don't kill them and beat them up down there. And I came back saying this world is worth saving. This world is worth saving. Life is worth carrying on, so let's not deliberately kill ourselves. Who wants to commit global suicide, and who wants to kill millions of people, children, grandmothers, grandfathers? Who wants to do that? Nobody.

I talk all over the world. I never find anybody that wants to do it. Then why in the hell do we have these weapons sitting there? I know why. We built them during the Cold War, but the Cold War is over. We're in another era. War is not the way to get things done anyway. The great military powers of today are not going to be the powers of tomorrow. The countries that are going to be the great powers of tomorrow are the ones with the best educational systems, the ones with the best health care, the ones with the best science and technology, the ones with the best businessmen, the ones with the most integrity. Those are going to be the countries that are going to be the champions of tomorrow. I mean, look at this stupid military stuff in a war. Look at the war in Iraq. Here we are with a \$500 billion military budget, and we are being defeated or at least tied by a group of guys down there, the Taliban, and they don't even have generals and they don't have headquarters and they don't have any tanks. They don't have nothing but a few rifles, but they're able to, by being guerillas and having moved into the cities, they negated the tremendous strength that the US had.

And it's not just us. We're not the first superpower. We already lost in Vietnam. We killed three million people in Vietnam; we lost 60,000...If you count the body count, we won, but you don't do it that way. It's who's in possession of the country at the end of the day, and the Vietnamese were in possession of their own country for the first time in a long time, thank goodness. Every time I see a Vietnamese – anybody from Vietnam here in the room? Whenever I see one, I apologize for what we did to their country. They didn't attack us. They posed no threat to us whatsoever; we just decided we're going to do a pre-emptive war, just like we've done in Iraq. And we're not the only ones, the only superpower, that's been defeated by a developing world country. The Russians were beaten in Afghanistan, too; and we're getting beaten there too, incidentally. We have so few people there that they're growing their opium, and we're not stopping that, you know. It's a drug situation.

Anyway, can we go to question/answer? I'm about out of time anyway, that's my presentation. Now we'll have a little question-and-answer. Thank you very much.

Ernesto Zedillo, Director of the Yale Center for the Study of Globalization: Well, I promise you that this will be inspirational. It has been because Ted, as usual, has delivered. Ted has accepted to take a few questions; whoever wants to make a question should walk to the microphones.

Turner: Let me say one other thing, Mr. President. I just want to make it very clear which I didn't say earlier because I didn't have a prepared text. I wanted to speak from the heart rather than just read something. And I want to make it clear that the opinions that I express are mine, not necessarily that of the Nuclear Threats Initiative which I'm on the board of, or the United Nations Foundation. I obviously support the United Nations. I am wearing a tie... I'm a strong internationalist. But I just want to make it clear that those were my own personal opinions.

Zedillo: I wish more people and more institutions shared your opinions. So who wants to make the first question?

Linda Gunther: Thanks for coming today. I have two children adopted from Vietnam, so I appreciate your remarks about the Vietnamese board.

Turner: I am hard of hearing, too. That's another thing, so I am going to probably... yeah, that's good, that's right.

Gunther: Okay. My name is Linda Gunther. I'm with Beyond Nuclear and I have two children adopted from Vietnam, so I wanted to thank you for your remarks about Vietnam. It's a country that forgives so well, and when I visited there, the welcome I got is incredible. I wanted to ask you about the \$500 billion that we have already wasted in Iraq. And when you think about what we could do with that money and how we could apply it to good in the world, have you any advice or thoughts on ending this hemorrhaging and being able to start to use that money wisely?

Turner: First of all, I neglected to mention that Lester Brown and I think it's around a \$100 billion a year to straighten out all the world's problems, to have a school-lunch program for all the poor kids in the world, so they get at least one decent meal a day – the poorest kids in the world I should say, and to make sure everyone has an education, that we do away with illiteracy and the other problems [ identified by ] Jeffrey Sachs in the Millennium Goals of the United Nations, to eliminate poverty over the next few years. It would take about a \$100 billion dollar a year. And the global military budget is ten times that much. It's a trillion dollars a year, and the US is half of it. We're spending now close to 20 times as much as Russia and 20 times as much as China, which are the other two largest countries in the world, and they are not our enemies. We have a very, very strong military industrial complex in this country. Frighteningly strong. So strong that they basically are spending money in every Congressional district in the United States, and they like making money and selling all of this crap, this useless stuff – aircraft carriers. I mean what good... we put them in the Gulf there by Iran and we run them up and down, you know. What a good deal. We could attack if we wanted, but I'll tell you – I don't think we should. I think that's really, really foolish, but we should cut our military budget way back over a period of time, I think, because we're wasting that money and we've got these huge deficits now because of the war in Iraq and because of this big military, bloated military expenditure. We're going to have to cut back on our military budget on conventional stuff. If we're going to get the Russians to agree with us to go without nuclear weapons, then they have to feel like we are not threatening them. Right now we threaten the whole world because of our military budget. Why do we need such a huge military budget? Who are our enemies? We don't have any enemies other than poverty and terrorism. There's no nation that's an enemy of ours. The Chinese just want to keep selling us shoes, you know. They want to get cars; they want to have a good life. The Chinese aren't our enemies and neither are the Russians.

And something else we need to go back and do; we should have done – I said it 15 years ago when the Cold War ended – is we ought to invite Russia to join NATO. Then you don't even need NATO, but why not invite them in? They're not our enemies, but treat them like friends. That's what I did in the Good Will games and this was the middle of Cold War and we got along great. The next thing you know, the Cold War was over! It wasn't very hard! Who's next?

Jeff Alexander: Thank you. My name is Jeff Alexander. I'm a sociologist here at Yale. You pointed out how irrational this nuclear arms race is, so it would seem to be a matter of just commonsense. But, I am a sociologist so I want to ask you: what would be the social conditions that would have to convince these governments? In other words, I remember back, the nuclear freeze movement which was a kind of a social movement. Don't you think we need that kind of mobilization of the base of people around, especially in the US at least and elsewhere. It has to come not just from the elites down, but from the bottom up.

Turner: Well, guess what. We've got a candidate running for President – Obama has already come out publicly and said he's for zero nuclear weapons, so we haven't had a presidential candidate that I can ever remember say that, not a serious one and we've got... you know, you've got Secretary George Schultz and Sam Nunn and Henry Kissinger and Bill Perry, the four of them have done those two editorials – op-eds in the Wall Street Journal, and they've gotten a whole lot other former big cheeses in our government that want to get rid of all nuclear weapons. We're closer today than we have ever been; it's not going to be easy, but it could be because it's just time that we stop doing dumb things and start doing smart things. Really, it's that clear and everybody can understand that, everybody can understand it and Africa and Asia and Europe – because we've got this global warming thing and everybody recognizes that too, and while we're working on it, we might as well straighten everything out. You know, like an alcoholic that's decided to give up the booze and straighten his life out. You know?

Question: Thank you. How likely is it that if the US were to declare our intentions to fully disarm or by whatever gradual plan, how likely is it that the rest of the nuclear countries would follow suit, and does that matter?

Turner: What we have to do – first of all Britain has already announced that their new secretary or whatever has already said: we want to get rid of nuclear weapons completely as soon as possible, so you've got one of the eight that's already agreed. Now, I do not advocate that we unilaterally declare we're going to get rid of our nuclear weapons. What we should declare is that we're ready to sit down and discuss getting rid of them if everybody... everybody's got to get rid of them at the same time and agree not to do it. And the countries that don't have them have to agree to that, too. But just remember this: there are eight nuclear countries now, maybe nine. There have been four that have already disarmed: Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan and South Africa have already given up their nuclear weapons. Those three former republics of Soviet Union sent them all back to Moscow – you can have them, we don't want the goddamn things. Pretty smart, huh? Anyway, we'll do it together. The pressure on everybody... first of all, it's the right thing to do, and at the end of the day, if we're going to survive, particularly with the high technologies that we have like nuclear weapons, we're going to have to learn to be a little bit smarter than we were in the past. We just can't go around hitting each other over the head with swords and knives and stab each other. First of all, that's uncivilized and inhuman. What we want to do is start acting like decent, kindhearted, intelligent, educated human beings. If you do that, you don't want nuclear weapons.

Question: Hi, I'm Mary Ellen, a freshman here in nuclear dilemmas class. You mentioned a couple of objectives, one being eliminating nuclear proliferation; another one being dealing with overpopulation. Now, as a lot of nations said they want nuclear energy in order to deal with the rising needs of these... to deal with overpopulation, often by themselves turning to that energy source, but that energy source is one that as Mr. Schell explained to our class, is about seven-tenths of the way to making nuclear weapons. What's your opinion on nuclear energy and is it really...

Turner: Well, I can answer that. I like solar and wind better because they're cleaner and they are less expensive and nuclear power is still dangerous because we still haven't figured out what to do with the waste....I don't think you can have nuclear power with low enriched uranium which is not weapons-grade, so I don't think we should. And obviously, countries that have nuclear cycles and capability... Anybody can build a nuclear weapon if they want to, but if we've all agreed not to do it and we have supervision with the IAEA, who is going to cheat? What are they going to do? I've got one or two nuclear weapons – so, you've got one or two nuclear weapons. You know, there's a way of dealing with that, too. If you have one or two countries of the world that absolutely refuse to cooperate, that are truly rogue states, if everybody else decides they want to get rid of nuclear weapons but one or two countries, there is a way to handle it and peacefully. And that is – you boycott the countries. The whole world... the United Nations, you give them warnings that if you don't go along with the rest of us, we're just going to boycott you.

What that means is you have nobody come into your country. Airplanes can't land anywhere else; we won't trade with you. You do whatever you want to inside your own country, but no country can handle that in the age of globalization, no country can stand alone like that, and it wouldn't be worth it. So they could have two nuclear weapons – so what? What are you going to do with them?

That's the other thing: what are we going to do with our 10,000? Are we going to dump them on Russia? If we do, the radioactive cloud comes back within the next few days and we're dead, too. Using nuclear weapons on a large scale is suicide. So they are no good for anything except to threaten your neighbors. We don't like you and we could bomb you if we wanted to, you know, so you better do what we say. But they don't do what we say. Saddam Hussein didn't do what we said; the Vietnamese didn't do what we said and if during the Vietnam war, we would have given Ho Chi Minh an ultimatum – say, listen we're sick of this war; it's gone on long enough and we want you to unconditionally surrender by next Friday at noon or we're going to hit you with a hundred nuclear bombs. Know what he'd say? Bring 'em on. He would've. Then what we would we do? Go do it? It's unthinkable. Who's got the next question?

Rebecca Johnson: Rebecca Johnson, Acronym Institute for Disarmament Diplomacy in London. I love the way you think and talk about these issues, and I have a mission for you which is to get yourself into a room for a one-to-one with Gordon Brown without any of his business-as-usual advisors there. The reason why I say that is – you're quite right: the mood music in Britain has changed and there's all this lovely talk about how they have a vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, how they want Britain to be seen as a laboratory for disarmament. Note: this is vision and scene, this is all about management of news because the decision three months earlier in March of last year was forced through by Tony Blair to get the next generation of British nuclear weapons to take us not just beyond 2020, which is the current system – beyond the 2050s. Why? Three reasons were advanced, only three. One was the status. You've dealt with that. The big

powers of the future are going to be those that have well-educated healthy, intelligent, forward looking populations, not the ones with big weapons, you got that. The second one is insurance policy – that we don't know what the future might hold. Well guess what, we do know quite a lot about what the future might hold and if we don't deal with climate change and if we carry on putting a lot of resources into nuclear weapons, we will end up with nuclear winter and all climate change.

My question is the third, and that's the job-creation scheme, the industrial aspect the defense industries push on governments to keep going with the military and keep going with the nuclear weapons. You, as a brilliant entrepreneur and industrialist, how would you convince Gordon Brown to ignore that pressure and indeed convince the leaders of the other nuclear weapon states so that we actually can move beyond the rhetoric into the actuality of getting rid of nuclear weapons?

Turner: What was the question, again, in a nutshell?

Zedillo: How would you convince Gordon Brown to use the 30 billion pounds that they are planning to spend on the new...system?

Turner: Got it, thank you - I got it. First of all, as I already said, the way you got to start this is not... cause the US spends money, too, and the Russians spend money; we all spend money on our weapons. We have to sit down and agree to get rid of them and to freeze work. If we're going to get rid of them, if we agree to do that, then there is no point in modernizing them. You can save that money and everybody would do it, but you've got to get all the nuclear powers plus the rest of the world to agree to it. Now, the rest of the world has already agreed to it in the nuclear non-proliferation treaty which the US and Russia and all of the nuclear powers except India, Israel and Pakistan. Those are the only three countries that didn't sign, but France did, and they agreed to get rid of nuclear weapons already back in 1956, we just haven't done it. So all we have to do is to live up to what we signed and this is it; it's very short. I keep it in my wallet at all times – July 1st, 1968. This is the quote: "Each of the parties to the treaty undertakes to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament and on a treaty of general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control." We've already signed the treaty. All I have to do is sit down and agree that we are going to live up to what we have already agreed to.

Question: Thank you. It seems to me that the problem is that if we were to abolish nuclear weapons, there is nevertheless still a dramatic imbalance in terms of the military potential and strength, for example, the United States, certainly relative to the rest of the world. So how do we tie conventional military strength into the nuclear bomb?

Turner: I think that the nuclear situation is so critical that we need to deal with that first. And as part of it, the US is going to be under a lot of pressure when we get to the global warming part of things to cooperate there, and that's going to cost us some money, too. And I think that will lead to a cut back in our military budget over time. It won't be easy because of the strength and power of the military industrial complex, but it's not good for the American people and it's crazy. I mean, what are we going to do? Fight the whole world all at once? And what are we going to fight them for? I mean, if we don't – the invasion of the United States is taking place along the

Mexican border right now, but it's not coming with tanks or landing crafts; they're walking across the Rio Grande to find a job. All these military to aircraft carriers aren't any good for that. First of all, the Rio Grande is all dried up because of the drought, and you couldn't float an aircraft carrier in the Rio Grande. It's not even but a creek. I know because it runs right by my house in New Mexico.

So nuclear weapons don't make us any safer. I mean, we're getting beat in Iraq right now with our nuclear weapons. What we are going to do? Drop nuclear weapons on Baghdad? What about the all guys that we've got there and we've got a lot of friends there, too, you know.

Alan Robock: I am Alan Robock from Rutgers. I was trying to think who is the current situation good for? It's good, as you mentioned, for the big companies that make all of the stuff and global warming situation is good for Exxon that sells oil and makes \$40 billion. How can we practically attack them? They're the enemy because they want business as usual.

Turner: No, they're not. We're the enemy. In my opinion it's us. I wish you could blame it on Exxon Mobil. They just make the gas; they don't run it around in their cars and there are a lot of ways to mitigate that. For instance, for the last six years I've had a Toyota Prius, a hybrid when it just came out, and I doubled my gas mileage. There's a lot of things you can do. Even in my office now I keep the blinds up and I turn the lights out and I sit there in the dark in my office working, because I don't want to turn on the lights. But that's okay, I'm trying my very dead level best to do the right thing. And if everybody does that, we're going to be able to handle this – the global warming thing, too, but it's going to take a lot of effort. But it will be fun. Never before in the history of the world have human beings done the right thing on a consistent basis. This will be the first time. That will be fun to be there. I want to live long enough to see it happen; that's why I want... I'm going to be 70 this fall and I don't know how many years I've got left, and I want to live long enough to see global nuclear disarmament, goddamn it, that's what I want and I'm asking the rest of you all to help me! That's what I want for my 80th birthday. (applause) I want to be able to lay down on my death bed and say my grandchildren and all the other grandchildren of the world are safe for the foreseeable future. Wouldn't that be nice? How many of you all have grandchildren? How many love them? How many don't give a damn if they get blown to kingdom come or not? Now, come on! And that's true of the Russians too, right? You bet! And the Chinese.

Dick Garwin: I'm Dick Garwin. If I look back to the Reagan administration, I see that the Bureau of the Budget wanted to tax all the money, put it into defense so that we wouldn't be spending it on social goals. We have that problem – we cannot make up our mind. We have earmarks go to individual districts, but we have very great difficulty deciding how to spend the money that we can raise from the population. What do you think we can do about that if we do reduce the defense budget?

Turner: Do the smart thing. That's all stuff that you work out with politics. Not that nuclear disarmament will be worked out. Eventually, the politicians will be involved with it too, but in a free country where we have elections, we can change the government so we ought to put in the government that's going to do what we want them to do. I voted – you know, during Bush's first term, and I voted for Al Gore. If we'd have gotten him as president, global warming would be a receding problem instead of a bigger one. We made wrong choices. We got to start making the right choices, that's all. If we do that, we'll be fine. If we're smart, we're fine. If we're stupid, we lose.

Question: Thank you. I am Ann Calloway, a member of this community. Mr. Turner, you are the master of communication. You have got it down cold! And I imagine that there are a lot of people that would agree with you. Do you see a way that our new magical internet and your way of communication can get this message out to a wider audience that can then...

Turner: It's all over the place, it's already there, Lester Brown.

Question: But how do we connect them?

Turner: Where's the guy that's here that wrote "Seventh Generation"? He's going to speak this afternoon. He's got the answers, just do what those two books say and you'll be fine.

Question: But connect them. How do we connect them?

Turner: I don't know. Read them both, one back to back. All the information is out there. I mean it's all over the internet, it's all over the place. If I can dig it up, you can too. I already told you Jonathan Schell's book - his latest book just came out. Read it and my autobiography is going to be out after the election is over. Please buy it, too. There's a lot of good information in there. Anyway, Lester Brown's book, "Plan B - 3.0." Read those and you've got it made. That's all the information you need. It takes a couple of hours and you're done.