

President Obama's discourse on the just war in his Nobel acceptance speech was more than a disappointment. It was a wasted opportunity to move the world beyond the age-old justification for war—and the numerous wars being waged now worldwide—and to summon humanity to “choose life, that we and our descendants may live (Deut.30:19).”

After eight long years of war in Afghanistan, is this call for more troops all we have to offer? A just war? No. It is just war. As Nicholas Kristof points out, in 2010, US military spending *only in Afghanistan* will be more than the total official military budget of every other country in the world. Since 2001 the US has established 19 new military bases in Afghanistan and neighboring countries, adding to the 900 military bases and facilities it has in 46 countries and territories. The U.S. Defense Authorization Act for 2010 is an astounding \$680 billion, which includes \$130 billion for the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 30,000 new troops come at a price tag of \$1 million per soldier per year. Afghanistan is a desperately poor country—one of the poorest in the world. Sending in the troops of the US and other rich nations is like giving a stone to a person asking for bread. An unmanned drone aircraft may be intended to kill only the enemy but tell that to the families of unintended victims, such as the wedding party that was unfortunately slaughtered by mistake. Afghans need safe drinking water and medicine, education and food, not more war. The victims of modern warfare are overwhelmingly civilians, not the soldiers that the proponents of just war talk about.

People who defend sending in more troops say “What is the alternative?” If you are in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging. In the months of deliberations the White House took to look at the war (in itself a good process), US military, diplomatic and political leaders were listening to *themselves*, not the *Afghans*. What wisdom might the tribal elders and community leaders have brought to the table? If they had been asked about ways to bind up the nation's wounds and meet the basic needs of the people, one doubts their answer would have been to continue the war and send in tens of thousands of new troops. Greg Mortenson, author of **Three Cups of Tea** and **From Stones to Schools**, recently said that although the Taliban have burned down many schools, they have not harmed any of the hundreds of schools his project has built because they are all built only after receiving the opinions of the elders and the input and work of the local villagers.

When Obama was campaigning for president he proposed a \$2 billion global education fund. I kept hoping he would refer to this in his Nobel address. But the old conundrum—bombs or butter—still holds. If you choose to go down the military path, you just won't have much left over for “butter.” To say this is only a temporary necessity is short-sighted. During the Cold War we were always told “the peace dividend has to wait.” But when the Cold War ended, the Peace Dividend never materialized because the bloated military budgets were continued, in rich and poor nations alike. The world chose to ignore the wisdom of Gandhi and King who said that means and ends are inextricably inter-related.

In fact, the end is predetermined by the means you use. Peaceful means produce peaceful ends.

As A. J. Muste said, "There is no way to peace. Peace is the way."