

A MORE SECURE WORLD, THROUGH PEACEBUILDING

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Once upon a time, our concern didn't need to extend beyond our family . . .
And once upon a time, our concern didn't need to extend beyond our village . . .
Once upon a time, our concern didn't need to extend beyond our town . . .
And once upon a time, our concern didn't need to extend beyond our nation.
In our globalized world, how far should our concern extend?

Imagine with me a story about an unstable faraway country, a country possessing major oil & mineral resources, anger at first-world influences, and poor internal governance. In this country, civil war escalates between government military and a persecuted, impoverished ethnic population. This genocidal war threatens neighboring nations, disrupts first-world commerce, and cramps international supply of oil and important mineral resources. A United States-led force invades the warring country, but the peacemaking invasion turns into decade-long catastrophe. Despite military intervention, violence & instability continue, poverty and disease are rampant, and terrorist groups strengthen in the invaded country. Meanwhile, the American society grows crippled by war costs; is disheartened by chronic, failing war; and fears terrorism spawned by foreign anger.

Not hard to imagine, is it?

THE GLOBALIZING NEEDS OF AMERICAN SECURITY

In today's world, the security of the American people depends on the prevention and management of conflict around the world, and requires much more than military power. Globalization (of movement, communications, economics & finance, environmental forces, and subversion and violence) brings faraway threats into our lives (and, by the way, magnifies the force of what we do globally, too).

But the complexity and long duration of global problems make them opaque and difficult for Americans to grasp. Remote catastrophes and dangers draw us only briefly, and only if presented as vivid, simple stories. We fall victim to nationalist fervor, and to the dangers of fatigued inspiration and disappointment.

Until recently, Our U.S. response to the outside world has been almost totally a militarist response, and our investment in peace has been a nearly-total investment in militarism. The United States has sunk 3 trillion dollars into our Invasion of Iraq and into continuing the Iraq War from 2003 until now. The track record of this political-Realist approach has been dismal. U.S. wars have wreaked horror and terror on victim populations while spurring one conflict after another into continuing violence. Rather than stability and peace, U.S. militarism has generated hostility, escalating instability, and has almost certainly heightened risks of anti- U.S. terrorism.

But don't we sometimes need to do something? If not military, what alternatives do we have to produce stability abroad and security for ourselves?

PEACE STUDIES and PEACEBUILDING

Peace studies are a 35-year-old discipline that has developed systematic analyses of: current-day violent conflict; conflict histories, changing patterns of ethnic & profiteering war; and of the dynamics of violent conflict, of inciting & propelling factors. Peace studies study the interrelatedness of: violence, lootable resources, poverty, famine, racism, and failing governance. Peace studies systematically analyze peace processes --- what works, what fails, & why; and, amid all these factors, peace studies develops Strategic understandings of the complexities of building sustainable peace.

Who does peacebuilding? What is it? We tend to think of peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts mostly as a state enterprise, a function of governments, top-level diplomacy, and the militaries of the U.S. and perhaps other nations. But peacebuilding is only partly a statist, governmental enterprise. In reality, peace processes at the level of government and diplomacy can only be the frosting on the cake, a structural veneer that, while essential, has no hope of effectiveness without broad and deep foundations of peacebuilding within societies. Military command structure and mission capacities are poorly suited to building sustainable peace. Experts in statecraft and peacebuilding recognize the importance of non-governmental civil society in building peace. Though they struggle for funding support, indigenous and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may actually be doing half or more of the global work of peacebuilding.

Northern Ireland and Kenya are excellent examples both of peacebuilding effectiveness and of the huge role non-governmental actors and agencies play in peacebuilding that makes possible the "frosting on the cake" potential for top-level peace processes.

Northern Ireland's guerrilla civil war had gone on for most of a century -- well, for a thousand years -- and had defied repeated diplomatic attempts at resolution before the Good Friday Accords of 1998. The experience of Northern Ireland demonstrates the impotence of top-down political processes in the absence of parallel peacebuilding throughout society. Through the 1990s In Northern Ireland, civil society groups and religious leaders worked to overcome the culture of war through religious leadership, education, social mobilization, cultural reconciliation, and the condemnation of sectarian violence. These grassroots and civic leadership movements marginalized the voices of extremists and encouraged diplomatic processes, laying the critical foundations for peace.

After post-election ethnic violence enveloped Kenya in early 2008, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan headed the mediation-negotiation process that led to a signed peace agreement. Annan was supported in the peace process by prominent African leaders, the African Union, and the United States and other major powers. Certainly, These top-level figures were of great importance in quelling Kenya's near-genocidal catastrophe. But

Kenya's 2008 peace process was, in reality, much, much broader, deeper, and more complex.

On December 30, 2007, when Kenya's presidential election results were first announced in Nairobi, Kenya exploded in widespread ethnic and political-based attacks and counter-attacks. Some massacres, sexual violence, and beatings were spontaneous, and some were organized and funded by business and political actors. Police and radio demagogues escalated the violence. Near the city of Eldoret on January 1, more than thirty people seeking refuge in a church were burned alive. Both national presidential candidates vacated any responsibility for peaceful leadership, while ethnic jealousies and anger raged. Chaos and terror rapidly overwhelmed the Kenyan people. In two months, more than 1,300 people lost their lives and more than 300,000 were forced from their homes and livelihoods. The crisis threatened Kenya's national future.

During the first day of spreading violence, five Kenyan civilians — a diplomat, two professional peacebuilders, and two retired generals, all experienced peacemakers — led other Kenyan peacemakers to fill this leadership void. These five leaders became the Core Team of Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP), a citizen's diplomacy-activist group that rapidly expanded to include peace-dedicated volunteers and professionals from the breadth of Kenyan society. Working both publicly and behind the scenes, CCP mobilized Kenyans to participate in a peacebuilding web that effectively countered the extreme violence, and fed directly into the international mediation process that culminated in the National Peace and Reconciliation Accord signed on February 28, 2008.

The successes of Concerned Citizens for Peace derived from a number of key peacebuilding features:

1. Mature Kenyan Peacebuilding networks were in place & working long before eruption of violence
2. Even before violence was full-blown, CCP drew together and called for non-violence and dialogue, using national TV, radio, and international media.
3. CCP drew the national media into a partnership, uniting for peace and uniting against the common enemy --- violence --- urging nonviolence and denying media coverage to those who attempted to broadcast hate messages.
4. CCP's open invitation to all concerned Kenyans generated Open Forums; the Citizens' Agenda for Peace; and a broadly inclusive web of civil society leaders, writers, social workers, women's groups, tech experts, students, educators, & peace-active programs to halt violence and stimulate inter-group dialogue – an astoundingly broad response that pushed the opposing presidential contenders toward peaceful compromise.
5. Finally, CCP facilitated high level mediations involving African leaders and Kofi Annan.

FOUNDATIONS OF PEACEBUILDING

We need a stable, peaceful world. In order to flesh out the idea of peacebuilding for you, I'd like to begin by reviewing some underlying concepts:

- the nature and dynamics of conflict;
- attitudes that obstruct reconciliation and peace;
- the nature and requirements of peace; the necessary joining of justice and peace;
- and the processes of building peace.

The Nature of Conflict

Conflict is the collision of mutually incompatible interests & needs, and always involves multiple truths and competing perceptions of justice. Violent conflict, including terrorist actions and military invasions, grows from historic traumas, perceived injustices, and/or greed. Conflict is characterized by escalating cycles of violence. The continual failures of military attempts to impose “peace” demonstrate this dire reality. Violence is driven by fundamentalism and extremism (always in the service of perceived justice). Unresolved Conflict produces and resides in structural injustice, structural violence.

It’s crucial to understand the concept of structural violence. Structural violence is the injuries, disparities, and deaths caused by systems, institutions and policies that meet some people’s needs and rights at the expense of others’ needs and rights. Structural violence, always imposed in the name of stability and order, breeds reactive violence. Discriminatory laws, preferential law enforcement, restriction of access to political process or economic sustainability, and unfair taxes are all examples of structural violence.

All groups of human beings bear attitudes that obstruct Reconciliation and Peace. In the spirit of self-examination, think of how we Americans have borne these attitudes in our dealings with the world over the past decade. Have we crippled ourselves with these obstructive attitudes?

- All groups divide people into “Us” versus “Them.”
- We scapegoat, and blame the “Other.” We generalize & stereotype the “Other”
- We hold ourselves to be morally superior to the Other.
- We willingly accept or take advantage and power over others, while disadvantaging people we see as different.
- In conflict, we always perceive that our side are the victims. This enables us to be blind to others’ pain & needs, to hold onto our treasured trauma & to our revered victimization, and to assume our own innocence.
- *All* groups do these things.

Conflict is often viewed as being about issues (political power, land, resources, employment, taxes). But the root causes of conflict are based in needs: basic survival needs, perceptions of injustice or insecurity, humiliation, a history of violation or intolerance, and hopelessness. If we hope to develop stability and peace, we must figure out what unmet needs are driving violent actions. What unmet needs, what senses of structural injustice, drive violent Israelis and Palestinians? What unmet needs drove our United States to invade and destroy Iraq?

Conflict management addresses overt, physical violence. Conflict resolution addresses issues. Conflict Transformation addresses not only surface issues, but seeks to reorder and reconcile people's relationships at the level of needs; Conflict Transformation intends justice, -- sustainable mutuality -- for all.

The Nature of Peace

What, then, is Peace? A term to describe the absence of overt violence is "negative peace." "Positive peace," on the other hand, is the absence of both overt and structural violence. Positive peace is not only order and control, but is freedom from oppression and abuse, the freedom for positive development. This absence of structural violence is political, economic, and social Justice. Structural justice, therefore, privileges first those who are least privileged.

In contrast, the approach to peace of political Realism (think Henry Kissinger) argues: that "the best defense is a strong offense"; that peace can be imposed by force and war, and is maintained by the threat of force; that "justice" and "truth" are defined by whomever is in power (the state, the privileged); and finally, that "security" is more important, and often substitutes for, the common good.

Since the end of World War II, U.S. foreign policy has been shaped and directed by four fundamental beliefs. These beliefs have become so entrenched in our American culture as to be nearly unquestioned. This construction of American foreign policy assumes not only that we are right, but that we have the resources and the ability to accomplish these intentions. It has survived and gained strength despite repeated failures (most notably Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq). The fundamental beliefs are that:

- 1) The United States has the unique responsibility to lead, save, and ultimately transform the world;
- 2) We need to maintain a global military presence that is
- 3) Our global military must be configured and able to project American power anywhere in the world.
- 4) And, when we perceive a threat to some American priority somewhere in the world, we will intervene with military force.

Sustainable peace, the aim of peacebuilding, is very different from any military outcome. Scientific peace studies reveal that sustainable peace depends on:

- Human security, freedom from violence;
- and the dependable, secure assurance and development of human needs (food, shelter, just relationships, recognition of everyone's dignity & identity, and opportunity for self-determination).
- Further, sustainable peace requires the protection and development of everyone's political, economic, social, and religious human rights.
- Thus, sustainable peace requires structural justice: fair distribution of resources, freedom from discrimination, real access to political process; and economic sustainability.

Dynamics of Peacebuilding

Peace is a long-term Process, not an objective or accomplishment. By nature, peacebuilding is a four-steps-forward, three-steps-back kind of enterprise -- something gets worse, something gets better -- but the accumulating record of successes around the world shows that peacebuilding does move forward and upward. Its aim is long-term, but it must be short-term responsive to episodic risks, too.

In 1994 a chronic inter-ethnic conflict in Northern Ghana erupted into war, triggered by a marketplace dispute between two men, a Konkomba and a Nanumba, over the purchase of a guinea fowl. Over long history, chief-dominated Nanumbas had controlled land ownership; the Namumbas were mostly Muslim. The Konkombas were poorer migratory farmers and were mainly Christian. The Konkomba farming groups had been required to pay “rental” tribute to the Nanumba chiefs. Deep resentments had developed, based on perceptions of economic and political inequalities, social and cultural prejudices, and competition for limited resources. By the time the conflict flared into full flame, it had killed thousands, and had displaced at least 100,000 people. Houses and crops were burned, and schools, clinics, and wells destroyed.

The Ghanaian government initially responded to the exploding conflict with military force, and then attempted an unsuccessful mediation. Non-governmental organizations in Ghana asked Kenyan peacebuilding mediators to come and help. The two invited peacebuilders first invested time in listening, learning, analyzing, and gaining trusted credibility among chiefs, youth, and community and political leaders. In town meetings and smaller discussions they heard stories and concerns, developed understandings, and identified “potential ‘bridge builders,’ ‘voices of reason’”. Beginning with this small group of respected elders from all ethnic sides in the conflict, the peacebuilders involved enlarging circles of all the fighting communities in the discussion processes. Youth of both sides, many of those most responsible for acts of violence, became peace advocates. Women’s groups promoted peace.

The peace process progressively pulled all the contending groups into self-reflection, mutual understanding of each other, recognition of each others’ losses and each side’s own guilt, and the mutual perception that the conflict itself was the common enemy. Sixteen months later, all parties signed the Kumasi Accord on Peace and Reconciliation. These accords provided for continuing growth of peace-sustaining infrastructure, and led to sustained peace and stability.

The development of violent conflict arcs through time. Equilibrium gives way to Protests, which escalate into reverberating Violence and Explode into War and Catastrophe. One point here is that most full-blown violence develops over time. Predatory wars of profit are exceptions to this pattern.

Even while violence rises --- not just after overt violence stops --- peacebuilding can be working to address structural injustices and bring people together, and should extend beyond any illusion of “accomplished” peace. Diplomatic peace accords, which may

take months or even years to develop, become reality at a moment in time. What follows is the long process of resolution and recovery, which generally takes as long as it took the conflict to develop. At any time, renewed violence and War is a serious risk.

Peace Processes can be envisioned as a pyramid of efforts: top-down diplomatic and peacemaking efforts, bottom-up grassroots movements, and, middle-out dynamics involving leaders who are not tethered to inflexible political positions. A critical reality is that people must own their own decisions; real change, real peace, cannot be imposed from outside.

An “aerial view” of Peace Processes reveals sequences and layers of peacebuilding:

1. Throughout society, grassroots and elicitive processes and mediation build peace, such as we've seen in these examples of Kenya and Ghana.
2. Diplomatic peace accords commit government and major leaders to peace.
3. Cease-fire, disarmament, and demobilization end overt violence.
4. Structural reforms follow, if the peace accords have real teeth (courts, police, lawmaking, education, physical infrastructure, etc).
5. And the culture of war must be changed to a culture of peace, which generally demands reforms of: governing authority, media, religious intolerance, and social norms of prejudice.
6. Through it all, peace processes must maintain the priorities of self-determination and long-term sustainability.

AMERICAN PEACBUILDING

All this brings us back to American peacebuilding. Who will we be to the world --- violent parent, or nurturing mentor? Where will we allocate our resources? In what will we invest? We can pull back from militarism not only because it conflicts with values of kindness, nonviolence, and generosity, but because it conflicts with peacebuilding realities. But we should also shrink our dependency on military force because it just doesn't work in developing stable peace.

In order to gain international security and stability, what should our United States do? I believe we should:

1. Renew adherence to the world norm banning wars of aggression, and
2. Curtail U.S. militarism. We employ 210 soldiers per development professional. Funding for military and weapons projects has been sacrosanct. We maintain more than 730 U.S. military bases outside the United states, on foreign soil around the world. Is this defense, or military empire?
3. We should Initiate and support non-violent responses to conflict and injustice. As the Reverend Jim Wallis has said, “Unless we drain the swamp of injustice in which the mosquitoes of terrorism breed, we will never win the battle against terrorism.”
4. In the same way that we commit resources without waiting for all other nations to do the same, we need to commit strongly to environment-preserving policies.
5. Finally, we should shift from “our only tool is a hammer” reliance on military actions to diplomacy and strategic, long-term Aid.-- dedicated to development, not

manipulative control.

Our United States is phenomenally resource-rich, but many countries are resource-poor, lacking not only precious metals but everything down to water and arable soil. Our foreign aid should infuse necessary resources, to relieve suffering and assure human security. U.S. aid should help develop infrastructure and capacities: services, education, health, & rule of law. Rather than merely planting first-world corporate industries that take their profits back to the first world, U.S. Aid should stimulate domestic economic development. U.S. Aid should empower accountable, transparent, non-discriminatory governance. Because non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can perform in ways that the U.S. government cannot, and because they bring their own, different wisdom and expertise to peacebuilding, the U.S. government should invest sustaining support in selected international and indigenous NGOs.

How can the United States move toward more effective efforts to support world peace, stability, and prosperity? How can the United States make the shift from a foreign policy based on global militarism to the various vectors of Strategic peacebuilding? Lisa Schirch has proposed reform of funding for all defense, foreign policy, and peacebuilding programs into a “3-D” Security Initiative, rolling together and integrating Development, Diplomacy, and Defense into a single “United Security Budget.” Schirch argues that a United Security Budget would push forward funding for peacebuilding and development while shining bright light on military funding. As Secretary of State Clinton has said, with such a unified budget “you can see the tradeoffs.” Would such a reconfiguration of our foreign relations structure be beneficial? Is it feasible?

These words of General Anthony Zinni bring us back to the junction of American self-interest and a more mature, intelligent, re-formed investment in building world peace:

“We have to realize that it is in America’s interest not to have growing areas of this world sink into a sea of destabilizing conditions. The problems that result will be our problems . . . It is in our best interest to have a stable, secure, prosperous world, because that is the world in which we best thrive.”