Culture and conflict: Understanding, negotiating, and reconciling conflicting constructions of reality ☆

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Abstract

The paper explores the relations between culture and conflict that emerge when parties with differing constructions of reality come into contention regarding the distribution of power, control, and influence. While differences in the construction of reality do not necessarily mean conflict, and while conflict does not necessarily lead to violence, differences in the construction of reality that are codified and embedded in "unassailable" belief systems, such as those associated with fundamentalist political, economic, and religious systems, can elicit and sustain serious forms of violence, including ethnic and religious cleansing, genocide, and torture. This paper argues that we must recognize the power of culture in constructing our realities, and the reluctance we have as human beings to tolerate challenges to these realities because they introduce unacceptable levels of uncertainty and doubt. The consideration of culture in the mediation of conflict broadens options for resolution by introducing possibilities outside the limits of one's own cultural spectrum, including an improved understanding of the role of history and life contexts in generating shared meanings and behavior patterns. Following a discussion of various examples of cultures in conflict associated with political and religious fundamentalism, the paper advances a series of recommendations for understanding, negotiating, and mediating conflict via the use of cultural understanding, learning, and the development of cultures of peace.

Keywords: Culture; Conflict; Peace; War; Conflict negotiation; Global problems

1. Introduction

Violence and war have been present throughout most of human history, and there is no reason to think that the future will bring many changes in this age-old inclination and willingness to respond with violence to anger and hate-filled impulses (Chirot & Seligman, 2001; Dutton, Boyanowsky, & Bond, 2005). Indeed, there are many scholars (e.g., Sigmund Freud, Edmund Wilson) who believe there is an inborn human predisposition to war and violence because of evolutionary forces that serve the survival of the fittest. Yet there is also growing evidence that non-violence and peace may be equally compelling options for the survival of the fittest, including evidence that considers altruism, justice, and harmony to equally serve human needs and motives (e.g., Paige, 2002). It now appears that the Twenty-First Century will be the crucible in which these two positions will be contested.

The causes of war and violence are multiple. They can be found in the moral, economic, political, religious, and psychological domains of human life (Marsella & Noren, 2003). These causes are often complex, interactive, and rooted within long-term historical conflicts. While we may question the validity of these causes, their costs and consequences are not subject to debate—they are always destructive. In all instances, these costs and consequences extend far beyond the periods of actual violence and strife. This fact must be considered when the "true" costs and consequences of war are weighed against the choices of peace and other non-violent approaches to conflict resolution. Though ultimately nations, groups, and/ or individuals may make decisions to make war rather than peace, knowledge of the spectrum of costs and consequences might attenuate the impulse toward war and violence.

The field of peace and conflict studies has done much to raise consciousness about the costs and consequences of war and violence, and its offers a new ethic, vision, and ideology that supports harmonious relations (e.g., Galtung, 2000). As both a science and a profession for understanding, meditating, negotiating, resolving, preventing, and transforming conflicts, peace and conflict studies have now achieved widespread interest and support. Today the field exists as a highly developed area of study that is multidisciplinary (e.g., communication, law, psychology, sociology), multisectoral (e.g., judiciary, military, business), multinational (i.e., international interest), and multi-cultural (i.e., cultural variations are critical) in nature, scope, and consequence. It has its own books, journals, websites, teaching materials, professional organizations, conferences, and funding agencies. Within the vastness and complexity of the field, however, one topic that continues to emerge with regularity and concern is "culture."

Even though the peace and conflict studies literature is replete with examples of cultural variations in beliefs, values, communication styles, and history, my reading of the literature suggests that the topic of "culture" per se has received only modest attention. There is an obvious awareness and reflexive acceptance of the importance of culture, but little discussion of how it influences and impacts conflicts and their resolution. Thus, in this paper, I will discuss the concept of culture and its implications for conflict and for peace and reconciliation. I will end with a series of ideas and recommendations regarding peace and conflict resolution that emphasize short, mid, and long-term actions designed to build cultures of peace.

1.1. The lesson: understanding and negotiating conflicting realities

The lesson from past and present conflicts is that "culture" is a critical determinant of conflict, and every consideration must be given to cultural factors in understanding the origins, escalation, resolution, and prevention of conflicts. Whether we are speaking of disputes and antagonisms between individuals or nations, "culture" can be considered both a source of the conflict and the means for its resolution. By ignoring culture in the mediation of conflicts, the opportunities for understanding, compassion, and empathy are reduced or negated. Cross-cultural conflict mediation knowledge has blossomed within the last few decades as evidenced by the scores of publications on the topic (e.g., Augsburger, 1992; Avruch, 1998; Avruch, Black, & Scimecca, 1991; Barnes, in progress; Bercovitch, 1996; Deutsch, Coleman, & Marcus, in press; Fry & Bjorkqvist, 1997; Kimmel, 2000; Lederach, 1995). In this article, I will not address the specifics of behavior and communication involved in conflict mediation and negotiation since these have been presented very well in other publications. Rather, I wish to discuss the concept of culture and cultural variation, and the issues associated with the cultural construction of reality and its vicissitudes.

As a number of writers (e.g., Pedersen, 2001, in press) have pointed out, the inclusion of cultural considerations and sensitivities in conflict mediation has numerous advantages: (1) options unavailable in one culture are revealed in another, (2) awareness of cultural differences highlight the complexity of most conflicts; (3) consideration of culture offers insights into the causes, processes, and effects of conflicts, (4) cultures have their own way handling conflicts which may or may not be acceptable to others. But too often "culture" is assigned a marginal rather than a central position in mediation and negotiation practices used by Western people.

Differences, of course, do not mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence is inevitable. However, it is also clear that differences, when codified and embedded in "unassailable" belief systems, such as those associated with nationalistic fervor or fundamentalist political, economic, and religious systems, can provoke ethnic cleansing, genocide, and massacres sanctioned by dogmatic religious beliefs. And it is here that we must begin to recognize the power of culture in constructing our realities and the reluctance we have as human beings to tolerate challenges to these realities because they introduce unacceptable levels of uncertainty and doubt. It is unfortunate, indeed, that as human beings caught in the endless natural quest for meaning, that belief systems once established become highly resistant to change and challenge (Clark, 2002).

The pathways to violence and war are grounded within a series of factors that are embedded within culturally constructed perceptions including:

- Perception of danger to national or group survival, identity, well-being.
- Perception of "Other" as evil, dangerous, threatening.
- Perception of situation as unjust, unequal, unfair, humiliating, punishing.
- Perception of self as self-righteous, moral, justified, and "good" by virtue of religion, history, identity.
- Perception that normal pathways for resolution may no longer be available, accessible, acceptable.
- The availability of military or other means for engaging in war and aggression.
- The availability of media for gaining support for actions through propaganda.

I cite these factors now, because later in this paper I wish to point out the United States is creating a culture of violence by constructing its national defense policy around many of these perceptions and factors.

2. Life in a global age

2.1. The interdependency of our times

We are living in a global age in which our lives, our security, our hopes are inextricably linked to one another by a globalization process that is itself both a source of positive change and a source of many of the conflicts before us. In a previous paper, I wrote:

> Human survival and well being is now embedded in a complex and interdependent global web of economic, political, social, technical, and environmental events, forces, and changes. The scale, complexity, and consequences of these events, forces, and changes constitute an important challenge to our individual and collective well being by confronting us with an array of complex, conflicting, and confusing demands and/ or opportunities. Our response to this challenge—as individuals and as societies— will shape the nature, quality, and meaning of our lives in the coming century (Marsella, 1998, p. 289).

In so many ways, we stand at the edge of a precipice that we ourselves have created through ignorance, denial, and greed. These tendencies in human character and culture stand in stark contrast to their admirable opposites: wisdom, conscience, and conciliation. In this time of turbulence and social upheaval, we are confronted by tensions coming from hegemonic globalization, homogenization of world cultures, changes weakening the nation state while strengthening global corporations with allegiance only to profit, and rapid socio-technical changes that are producing uncertainty, fear, and confusion. In the mental health professions, we are now witnessing a spectrum of individual disorders that seem to be related to social disintegration including future shock, culture shock, alienation/anomie, acculturation stress, poverty syndromes, meaninglessness, insecurity, rootlessness, identity, suicide, confusion, and demoralization. We are also witnessing collective or societal disorders including cultural disintegration, cultural dislocation, ethnic cleansing, genocide, social disillusionment, urban blight and decay, social fragmentation, cults, endemic crime and violence, and cultural abuse and collapse (Marsella, 1998, in press).

2.2. The cultural context of global challenges

Table 1 lists the spectrum of global challenges we face today amidst our growing interdependency. The challenges are complex and interactive and are rooted within competing and conflicting cultural contexts. Globalization with its attendant changes looms as one of the major sources of conflict in our world today, compelling individuals, groups, and nations to position themselves in opposing world views.

Sandel (1996, p. 74) writes that we are now faced with a new political, economic, and social milieu in which conflict is endemic. He writes:

> National sovereignty is eroded from above by mobility of capital, goods, and information across national boundaries, the integration of world financial markets,

Table 1
Examples of major global challenges

1. *Hegemonic globalization:* The process and product of increased global interdependency fostered by telecommunications, transportation, and transnational movement of financial capital and wealth. Control and benefits of globalization are confined to Western power sources.

2. *Telecommunications and media:* Rapid communication technology (e.g., email, television, fax) and emerging global cyberspace subcultures.

3. *Transportation:* Rapid transportation technology (e.g., airlines, automobiles, bullet trains).

4. *Global and transnational corporations:* Corporations and commercial enterprises of global proportion that have no national allegiance nor identity thus constituting a powerful new economic, political, and social force.

5. *Health and disease:* Major advances in medical knowledge, technology and services that are extending life spans and producing new ethical and moral challenges (e.g., genetic cloning, stem cell research, medicalization of social problems). Emergence of major international diseases (e.g., AIDS, Avian Flu, Plague) and health risks illegal drugs, tobacco addiction, and alcoholism.

6. *The isms:* Racism, ageism, sexism, and related prejudices and hate-filled biases challenge peace and understanding and encourage categorical responses that limit human relations.

7. *Population:* Rapid and massive world population growth (i.e., 6.3 billion in 2005, projected to exceed 9 billion by 2050 or earlier). Changes in demographic distributions in many countries. Population growth will occur mainly in developing countries while there are reductions in birth rates within developed countries except among minority populations.

8. *Environment:* Environmental problems with air, water, and land pollution, degradation, and desertification. Problems with ocean fish depletion, rain forest loss, reduction in biodiversity, global climatic changes, and species extinction.

9. *Poverty:* 20% of the world population living in absolute poverty (i.e., no adequate food, housing, water). The poorest 20% of the world's population have 1.4% of the global income. Access to clean, safe, and sufficient water is emerging as a serious problem in both developing and developed nations.

10. *Inequitable wealth distribution:* Increasing gap in the distribution of wealth between rich and poor. Largest wealth gap is now in the United States.

11. *War:* Existence of more than 30 low-intensity wars (e.g., Afghanistan, Congo, Kashmir, Israel–Palestine, Russia, Sri Lanka, Sudan). Governmental repression of autonomy movements (e.g., Tibet, Kurds in Turkey, Northern Ireland, Chechnya). Continuation of major war in Iraq.

12. *Terrorism:* Increase in worldwide terrorism. Growing risk of massive biological, chemical, and nuclear terrorism (i.e., WMD).

13. *Migration and refugees:* Existence of 40 million refugees and internally displaced persons, most from developing nations). Massive legal and illegal migration waves from south to north, east to west.

14. *Human rights violations:* Widespread violations of human rights in countries throughout the world. Documented use of torture and rendition by the United States thus reducing its moral authority and legitimacy.

15. *Crime and violence:* International problems in crime and violence including organized criminal syndicates controlling illegal drugs, prostitution (Natasha Circle), gambling, illegal arms sales.

16. *Urbanization:* More than 50% of the world's population live in cities that are unprepared to deal with the problems of urban blight and decay, especially in developing countries. Slums continue to develop and to become sources of violence and discontent. Homelessness and street children are major problems.

17. *Well-being and mental health:* Massive problems in mental health, psychosocial well-being, and social deviancy as rapid social changes, often in the form of hegemonic Western cultural penetration, result in cultural disintegration, collapse, and loss of traditional life styles and decline in indigenous populations.

Table 1 (continued)

18.	*Labor exploitation of children, women, and certain occupations:* Increased reliance on cheap labor by using children and women for mass production products in developing countries and as illegal labor in developed countries. Certain occupations such as miners in China and in South Africa are at increased risk of death and illness because of poor working conditions.
19.	*Global warming:* Increases in global temperatures as a result of abuses in fossil fuel use and use of other products resulting in rising ocean water levels and the potential disappearance of island nations and cultures.
20.	*Theocratic movements:* Rise of religion-dominated political forces that advocate theocratic governments in developing (e.g., Iran) and developed nations (e.g., United States, Israel). Use of religion to justify violence and political dominance.

and the transnational character of industrial production. And national sovereignty is challenged from below by the resurgent aspirations of sub-national groups for autonomy and self-rule. As their effective sovereignty fades, nations gradually lose their hold on the allegiance of their citizens. Beset by the integrating tendencies of the global economy and the fragmenting tendencies of group identities, nation-states are increasingly unable to link identity and self rule. Even the most powerful states cannot escape the imperatives of the global economy; even the smallest are too heterogeneous to give full expression to the communal identity of any one ethnic or nationalist or religious group without oppressing others in their midst (Sandel, 1996, p. 74).

The "Sandel Sandwich" forces us into conflicts engendered by forces from above and below as we seek our identity. Different groups in the same nation find themselves in competition with others, often resulting in their oppression. And it must be remembered that each of these groups has assumptions, ideologies, epistemologies, and praxologies that are questioning those in power powers.

The long list of challenges and the complex emotions they elicit (e.g., fear, paranoia, anger, uncertainty, confusion, panic) are part of the tensions lending themselves to tangible conflicts that are creating a "versus" mentality position that includes the following:

- Universal human rights versus national rights, laws, and policies.
- National unity, homogeneity, and conformity versus diversity, heterogeneity, and counter-cultures.
- Colonialism/imperialism via hegemonic globalization versus sovereignty, self-determination, autonomous identity.
- Hegemonic globalization, modernization, westernization versus stasis, and tradition.
- Economic level of living versus quality of life.
- Spirituality versus religious fundamentalism, theocracy, and faith-based power.
- Militarism versus peace.
- Distribution versus concentration of wealth within and across nations.
- My identity (my property, my nation) versus your identity (your property, your nation).

The war and violence we face is particularly disturbing. It is indeed bewildering that while we continue to push the frontiers of human knowledge and wisdom beyond the

farthest reaches of our imagination, we continue to foster violence and war throughout the globe. There are more than 30 major national and international conflicts occurring in the world, several of them with the potential to push us closer to global conflagrations. The Russia–Chechnya conflict has been going on for more than 150 years. Time and time again, we have failed to heed the lessons of our past, and in doing so, each time we create new generations of hate and anger dooming our children and their children to lives of insecurity, suffering, and turmoil amidst conflicting constructions of reality.

The simple fact of the matter is that all of the global problems noted are interdependent and reciprocal in both their causes and effects. Each may be studied and responded to separately by government agencies, but they exist in a complex ecology in which reciprocity and interaction are hallmarks. Fig. 1 displays a conceptual framework that relates these global challenges to the broad spectrum of psychosocial and social–political responses they elicit and to their individual and collective pernicious health consequences. What is important here is the recognition that within the complex dynamics of these many events and forces, destructive cultural contexts are emerging that keep us captive to cycles of violence or despair.

3. Culture and the construction of reality

3.1. Definition

I have used the terms culture and cultural construction of reality freely to this point. What do I mean by them? Through the years I have been attempting to define the term culture even as I know that a widespread acceptance of any definition is unlikely. My most recent effort is the following:

> Culture is shared learned behavior and meanings that are socially transferred in various life-activity settings for purposes of individual and collective adjustment and adaptation. Cultures can be (1) transitory (i.e. situational even for a few minutes), (2) enduring (e.g., ethnocultural life styles), and in all instances are (3) dynamic (i.e., constantly subject to change and modification. Cultures are represented (4) internally (i.e., values, beliefs, attitudes, axioms, orientations, epistemologies, consciousness levels, perceptions, expectations, personhood), and (5) externally (i.e., artifacts, roles, institutions, social structures). Cultures (6) shape and construct our realities (i.e., they contribute to our world views, perceptions, orientations) and with this ideas, morals, and preferences (Marsella, in press).

I see the value of this definition in its acknowledgement that culture is both external and internal, and that it is always constructing our realities through the shaping of shared meanings and behavior patterns, a point I will discuss further in the next few pages. The fact that cultures can be transient and emerge in all social settings (classrooms, conferences, military, hospitals, gangs) is also important because it enables us to consider these settings as contexts for constructing shared realities that may be in conflict with others. Thus, the exportation of popular Western culture to Middle-Eastern cultures becomes more than the "harmless" importation of clothing, food, and entertainment, it becomes a threat to a traditional fabric of life rooted within a culturally constructed reality embedded in a religion that penetrates all aspects of daily life and behavior.
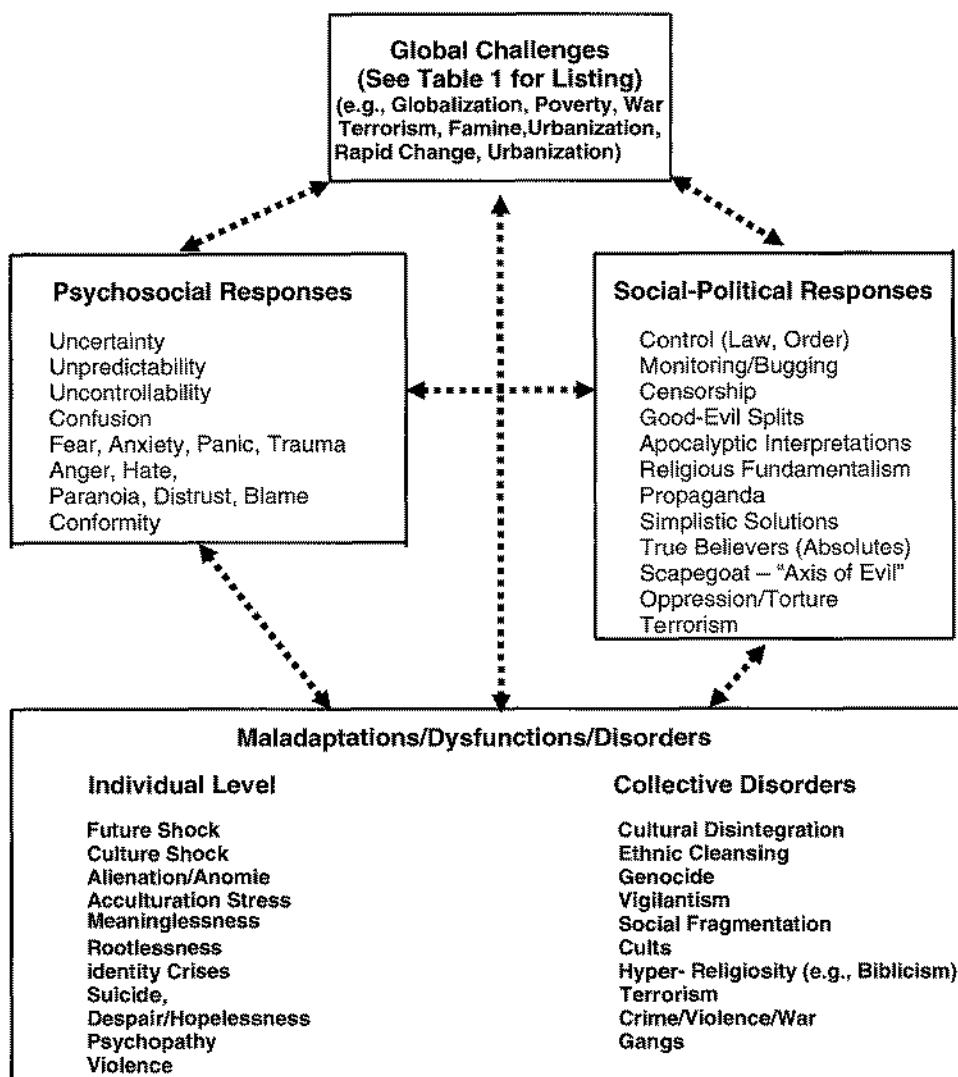
Fig. 1. Complex ecology (i.e., interactive, reciprocal) of global crises and consequences. (Causes and effects become one another as formative, precipitative, exacerbative, and maintenance events and forces causes become locked in an endless cycle of self-perpetuation.)

3.2. Cultural construction of reality

3.2.1. Efforts after meaning

Our views of reality are culturally constructed (Marsella, 1999)! Our world views—our cultural templates for negotiating reality—emerge from our in-born human effort after meaning, an effort that reflexively provokes us to describe, understand, predict, and control the world about us through the ordering of stimuli into complex belief and meaning systems that can guide behavior. Our brain not only responds to stimuli, it also

organizes, connects, and symbolizes them, and in this process, it generates patterns of explicit and implicit meanings and purposes that promote survival, growth, and development. This process occurs through socialization and often leads us to accept the idea that our constructed realities are in fact realities. The "relativity" of the process and product is ignored in favor of the "certainty" provided by the assumption that our way of life is correct, righteous, and indisputable (e.g., ethnocentricity).

In brief, as we come to culturally construct our realities, we become grounded and inflexible and certain in our assumptions and behaviors. We become both the beneficiaries and the victims of our cultural constructions. We come to act as if our constructions are real, accurate, and not to be questioned. This sense of ethnocentricity often combines with nationalism, religious fundamentalism, and a cultural ethos leading to conflict and violence because of the perception that they are "right" and deserving of defense in the face of threats to their veracity and existence. It is here, in the name of patriotism, national defense, religious and moral ascendancy, and even financial profit, that we often rise to conflict, violence, and war.

3.2.2. Codification of reality

Cultures differ in the ways they codify and know reality. There are cultural variations in the use and emphasis of words, feelings, images, visceral, proprioceptive, skeletal means for handling "reality" content and processes. In the mediation process, it is critical to attend to the vocabulary of emotion. Among the words that I have learned to attend to as a therapist are the following: absolve, acceptance, apology, exonerate, forgiveness, healing, heart, images, meaning, memories, pain, pardon, reconciliation, regret, remorse, repentance, self, sorrow, and trauma.

Understanding the subjective experience of a cultural construction of reality requires sensitivity to the heavy metaphorical basis of some languages because methaphors provide immediate, poetic, sensory constructions of reality awareness. Marsella (1985) wrote:

> In this respect, a metaphorical language provides a rich, immediate sensory experience of the world that is not diluted by being filtered through words that distantiate the cognitive understanding from the experience. In a metaphorical language system, the understanding and the language are one. Concrete metaphors link sensory experience and cognition together (Marsella, 1985, p. 292).

In a subjectively oriented cultural frame (e.g., embedded, contextualized, field dependent), communication is based on relational negotiation in which there are presumptions of interpersonal sensitivities, hierarchy, and roles. There is a strong emphasis on reading non-verbal cues and "what is not said," as much as what is said. Indeed, the very nature of the self in this cultural milieu can be considered unindividuated (e.g., relational, collateral, diffuse) in which self as process and self as object become fused (Marsella, 1985). I cite this material to emphasize the importance of recognizing the profound variations that may exist when parties with different cultural constructions of world-views may be in conflict and may need of mediation or negotiation. The differences in the emphasis on verbal versus non-verbal cues, concepts of justice and related terms such as forgiveness, retribution, apology, revenge, and a host of other emotion and image laden ideas, become critical in building trust and reconciliation. What is involved is not only what we know, but how we know it, what is means and implies to us, and how we can translate our experience for others to understand and value.

3.3. Assessing and understanding cultures

Given this view of culture and how our realities may be culturally constructed, what can we do to describe and to understand cultures that are transitional or enduring. That is to say, how can we assess them? These steps are often part of complex ethnographies, and the brief summary that follows is offered only as an example of what is required for cultural understanding and culture learning for both transitional and enduring cultures:

People and relationships:

- Who are members?
- What are the patterns of relationship...power, status, control hierarchy?

Activity settings:

- What are the activity settings in which the culture is created, promoted, and sustained? What is the history of the culture? When and how did it come into being? How has it changed, if any?

Ethos, meanings, values, social axioms:

- What is the ethos, shared meanings, values, social axioms? How firm or fixed are they and how are they reinforced and shaped or punished?

Behaviors:

- What and how are the communications and their patterns?
- What is the sense of identity and/or pride in membership among members?
- What is considered deviant and/or unacceptable behavior? How is it controlled?

Qualities:

- Is the culture supportive, caring, concerned for its members or is it tough, harsh, and into means of differences?

4. On becoming a culture of violence: the United States

As we examine the long list of national and international conflicts that characterize our time, it becomes clear that many of the sources for these conflicts reside in the many human cultures that are juxtaposed to one another, cultures that extend from national and global cultures to those of small subgroups whose ethos and world view guide behavior as much as do those at the level of national cultures. In all instances, the failure to grasp the importance of culture as the essential template that frame our realities leading to countless egocentric and ethnocentric mistakes that result in violence and war. In my opinion, the United States is becoming a culture of violence that poses a great danger for itself and for other nations. If we examine any single determinant in this process in isolation from others, the outcome may not seem serious or imminent. But taken as a collection of events

and forces that are converging, it is apparent that we are embarked on a course that can only result in destructive consequences.

4.1. Policy and power in the hands of militarists

The culture of our current governmental leaders reflects their unique developmental, historical, and situational constructions of reality. They seem to have been oblivious to the possibilities that their views and subsequent decisions would not be widely shared, especially by people from differing cultural milieus. Fueled by a group-think process in which like-minded people encouraged similar thinking, "The Vulcans," a self-named collection of defense department members and advisers (e.g., (Cheney Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Perle, Adelson, Feith, Kagan) helped launched the US on an Iraq invasion with little justification and little awareness of the political, economic, moral, and life-death consequences of the act. Nor, it should be added, with little understanding of how to extricate ourselves from the nightmare. Indeed, in the opinion of many people, the world is now in greater danger of international terrorism than it was following the events of 9/11.

An example of the promotion of virulent nationalism is the Project for the New American Century (PNAC, 1997). This project is supported by a non-profit educational organization dedicated to a few fundamental propositions, including the following: (1) American leadership is good both for America and for the world; (2) such leadership requires military strength, diplomatic energy, and commitment to moral principle. The project intends—through briefs, research papers, advocacy journalism, conferences, and seminars—to explain what American world leadership entails. It also strives to rally support for a vigorous and principled policy of American international involvement. http://www.newamericancentury.org/ (Retrieved: 4/22/05). The problem, of course, is that the ideology of "America First" does not fit well into a global era that requires cooperation because of interdependency. Indeed, it symbolizes a selfish and ethnocentric nation that encourages an antagonistic and competitive response.

Thus, the unfolding pages of history once again dooms us as a nation for whom violence and war seem to be part of our very identity. Unfortunately, decades, or even generations, may pass, but our sense of guilt and culpability will remain part of our collective and individual psyches. No subsequent admissions of error, no subsequent confessions of guilt, no subsequent apologies by government leaders can erase the permanent stains on their individual soul and psyche or on the soul and psyche of the United States and its citizens.

4.2. Our past history: a heritage of violence and genocide

The war in Iraq has encouraged many to reflect upon the history of the United States as a nation committed to war, imperialism, genocide, and exploitation. Past actions are now assuming a new valence as people around the world attempt to document past militarist actions of our nation. These past actions are raising questions about a side of the United States that has often been denied, and one that suggests we need to consider our sense of conscience and principle. Among the actions that are particularly notable are the following:

- *Slavery* (1500–??): Millions of slaves died and were brutalized.
- *Indian wars* (1620–present): Decimated American Indian populations—millions died and are still in poverty.

- *Philippines* (1898–1947): America's attempts at colonialism led to the deaths and torture of thousands of Filipinos in the "bolo" wars.
- *Native Hawaiian conflicts* (1897-present: 90% of Native Hawaiian population died—estimates from 850,000 to 50,000 by 1878. Royalty was de-throned and the legitimate Hawaiian Kingdom destroyed.
- *Internment camps* (1941–1945): Internment of Japanese-Americans, Italian-American, and German-Americans because of war hysteria.
- *South/Central America* (1950–present): Support for rightist regimes and dictatorships that led to death and torture of thousands.
- *Military power* (current): Build up of massive military–industrial complex and arms industry. Create power brokers with selfish interests. Sales of arms to third world countries.

What is interesting is not only the way that ethnic and racial minorities in the United States are calling attention to US history without the usual blinders of patriotism and nationalism, but the fact that foreign nations are now reminding the US of its own sullied history as the US critiques and condemns other nations. Our house is now made of glass, with all that that implies for throwing rocks.

4.3. A culture of unilateralist decisions and actions

An emerging tragedy in the international image of the United States as a violent society concerned only with itself is our failure to sign and support international treaties. Tehranian (2004, p. 3) cites the following list of treaties and conventions that the United States has failed to support thus suggesting an "exceptionalism" that we do not tolerate in others.

- International Treaty to Ban Landmines
- International Criminal Court
- Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties
- Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- Convention on Laws of the Sea
- International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
- Kyoto Protocol on Global Warming
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty

Kitagawa (2004) warns of the dangers we face as a nation by our continued unilateral approach in foreign policy. As the strongest military and economic nation in the world—indeed in human history—we have a special obligation to model civility, cooperation, and harmony. Instead we are doing the opposite. Kitagawa writes:

> The United States is setting a dangerous precedent for other states by retreating from commitments under treaties. These treaties and the regimes that implement them provide the legal and institutional basis for ensuring minimal compliance with international norms and standards. Furthermore, refusal to enter into treaties that are designed to build global security will ultimately be to the detriment of the United

States. Current global challenges will require stronger, not weaker, frameworks for cooperation (Kitagawa, 2004, p. 19).

A good example of unilateralism and its consequences for world peace are the actions of the United States at the recent United Nations conference on nuclear weapons held on May 2, 2005 to review the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The purpose of this meeting of 150 nations was to limit the development of nuclear weapons, to limit the stockpiles of existing nuclear weapons nations (e.g., US, Britain, Grance, Russia, India, Pakistan, Israel), and to prevent nuclear weapons from becoming accessible to international terrorist groups.

4.4. Radical religious fundamentalism

In the face of global pressures and their attendant fears, the citizenry of the United States is at risk for becoming a nation of "true believers" in the face of authorities that fan hate and distrust. As Fig. 1 indicates, "true believers" emerge as a widespread population force when individual and collective psyches can no longer tolerate the uncertainty, unpredictability, and instability generated by the times. In these times of duress, comfort and security are pursued and attained by turning to the simplistic and easily grasped conclusions of close-minded authorities (including governments) that sanction hate, prejudice, stereotypes, and distrust through media control and propaganda. Amidst the social upheavals of our times, it is essential that we encourage a willingness to tolerate doubt and to use it as a motivation for explore and better understand the uncertainties rather than a impulse to retreat to naïve and close-minded beliefs that distort and deny realities in favor psychic comfort (Marsella, 1999).

Early writers such as Eric Hoffer (1951/1963) and Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, and Sanford (1950/1964) identified a configuration of personality characteristics that could emerge and be sustained within a culture by leaders seeking to promote blind commitment to authority. These characteristics included low tolerance for ambiguity, xenophobia, ethnocentrism, obedience, dehumanization, self-righteousness and moral justification, ideological simplicity, and the blind acceptance of certain beliefs because authorities endorse and sanction them.

These same qualities are actually found in many radical fundamentalist religious groups and are part of what makes them dangerous as a national collection. They reject any questioning of the belief systems advocated, and they promote absolute conformity and order. Because of this, dictators and demagogic leaders in the 20th century created the most violent and destructive period in the history of humanity. More people were killed, permanently injured, and psychological traumatized in wars and governmental oppression than in all of the previous centuries of recorded history (Dutton et al., 2005; McCauley, in progress; Marsella, & Noren, 2003).

The power of blind belief associated with religions cannot be underestimated as a major source of hate, anger, violence, and prejudice in our world. Beliefs provide a justification—an articulated and intuitive sense of self-righteousness—which make destructive behavior acceptable, whether it is in a religious terrorist or a hate-filled neighbor down the street. Fundamentalism favors absolutes, simplistic solutions, and thus becomes a foundation that defies reason and logic, and ultimately peace.

Followers of the major Abrahamitic world religions (i.e., Christianity, Islam, Judaism) who are contesting one another's existence cannot have it both ways. They cannot preach they are the one true faith while others are in error (e.g., in sin) without excluding those who do not believe as they do. This exclusion sets them apart and creates the identity of "others" who are "unfavored" in the eyes of god and thus targets for conversion, violence, or retribution. It is clear from history and from current examples that violence in the name of religious beliefs is one of the greatest threats to human survival and when a nation chooses to place a religion in a central position of privilege because its is advocated by a president, legislature, or other visible officials, the risks of violence for everyone are increased. We need to hold all religions responsible for hate-mongering, violence, and war in their names. We need to call attention to their inconsistencies, their violent tenets and dogma, and their reliance on faith as an excuse for tolerating ignorance. We need to restrict the political and economic power of religions because of their abuses and this includes separating church and state across the world. If they wish to be political-ideology institutions then they must pay taxes and cease operating under the guise of religions— they can become "theocrats," but they no longer have a claim to be "theologians."

4.5. Popular American culture ethos

Yet another source of violence in our culture is the very popular culture that we sustain and now export around the world. The ethos of popular American culture is rooted in unbridled individualism, competition, materialism, consumerism, commodification, rapid change, celebrity worship, and an endorsement and support of violence as a positive value as evidenced in sports, commerce, entertainment, and computer games. This ethos is in conflict with traditional ways of life that emphasize collective, spiritual, and cooperative orientations. It becomes a threat when it is exported and a danger even within our own nation because the ethos is not geared toward supporting peace and harmony.

4.6. Flawed national leadership

National leadership is a critical determinant of our culture of violence and war. Current leadership obviously endorses and supports conflict in a number of ways, including the following:

- Ethnocentric assumption of "universal" acceptance of US values across the world. Evidences no little of cultural variations or dismisses them. Does not appear to value cultural diversity. Promotes cultural homogeneity.
- Openly supports and endorses evangelical and fundamentalist Christian viewpoint on morality, history, and future. Justifies actions via religious conversion experience and "selective" use and interpretation of Biblical passages. Justifies killing, torture, human rights abuses, arms dealing, failure to sign international treaties while condemning as immoral issues such as abortion, gay marriages, and stem cell and cloning research and use. Openly accepts role as arbiter of national and international morality via fundamentalist religious precepts.
- Displays a lack of knowledge and wisdom regarding international and global matters. Communicates US nationalism with arrogance and disdain of other nations and groups.

- Promotes a US culture as a global model with emphasis on conformity, certainty (absolutism), selective self-righteousness, selective biblical justification, Manichean splits between good and evil, messianic salvation, Christian soldiers fighting crusades. ("You are either with us or against us!").
- Hypocrisy and inconsistencies in preached values and behavior (e.g., Among largest arms dealer, condemns corruption, but fails to address same in USA).
- Supports oppressive regimes around the world but speaks of human rights and democracy (e.g., Russia, Uzbekistan, Central American nations).
- Violates human rights treaties (e.g., torture of prisoners, prolonged arbitrary detention, systematic racial discrimination).
- Fails to grasp Islamic and Arabic perceptions of US and Western historical and cultural abuses of their culture and religion and promotes hatred toward these groups via his actions.
- Endorses exploitation of the natural environment for corporate profits rather than advancing safeguards and alternative energies.

4.7. A nation of greed

By any other name, greed is a form of violence because it drives its pursuers to achieve wealth, power, or fame at the expense of others (see Goldberg, 1994). I am not speaking here of the "normal" motivations of most people seeking comfort and position through hard work and even entrepreneurial activities. Rather, I am speaking of the selfish extremes that lead to countless abuses including economic exploitation, violations of ethics and morality, indifference to human suffering and pain that one causes, and the tendency to be consumed and driven by greed above all things—the obsessive drive to accumulate wealth and power long after significant levels of these have been achieved.

The United States has become a breeding ground for both this characterological pattern and the commercial and political contexts that sustain and promote it. Indeed, as a nation we seem to prize greed, often elevating those who are greedy to a high status—icons to be modeled rather than vilified (Muzaffar, 2002). One of the most popular values to emerge from the Reagan era of government was the notion that that the poor are responsible for their plight because they have personal and moral character flaws, lack ambition, shame, determination, and a willingness to work hard. And so, welfare and social programs were cut while wealthy and corporate sectors received increased federal benefits and a presidential dusting of virtue and morality. Shame! What can be said in defense of the recent spate of dishonesty among CEOs at scores of corporations and government officials who use their positions for personal gain? Unbridled and unprincipled capitalism has now become a major source of global injustice, inequity, corruption, and violence (Callahan, 2004; Nassar, 2005).

Agnivesh (2002) words capture the growing distressed global view of American economic–political hegemony. He writes:

> Greed is integral to the hegemonic spirit of the dominant elite in religion and politics. It seeks to exclude as many people as possible form sharing the fruits of development. This is possible only if they are frozen in underdevelopment and their identity is socially redefined to deny them the right to share the resources available. This involves ascribing different scales of values and different sets of rights to people (Agnivesh, 2002, p. 43).

In the same publication, Muzaffar (2002), writes:

> The contemporary world has legitimized, sanctified, and normalized greed as no other epoch before us had done. The ability of a single individual to accumulate billions of dollars is often celebrated...
> That there must be something fundamentally wrong with a system that can allow such vast inequities to perpetuate themselves is a thought that does not occur to us because we have come to accept the global economy as some sacrosanct edifice...(Muzaffar, 2002, p. 157).

The conclusion is clear. Greed too is violence, and the United States, as a nation, culture, and way of life, is considered to be the most visible source of greed by the global community.

4.8. At issue

And so we are left with a global context in which national and international conflicts are continually fostered and sustained by culturally constituted realities that are in opposition and antagonism. For purposes of global survival we must move toward the construction of cultures of peace that seek to reduce conflict and to promote peace and harmony through increased emphasis on consciousness, conscience, and conciliation. The arms industry and the emphasis on martial solutions cannot continue to expand without destructive consequences. We must replace this with the essential ingredients for pursuing and negotiating peace, including a willingness (1) to understand, empathize, sympathize, and to expand our consciousness about the consequences of violence and war, (2) to expand our sense of conscience in responding to the perils and horrors of war, and to expand our willingness to apologize, (3) to forgive and to conciliate with those with whom we have fought.

5. Building cultures of peace

5.1. Cultures of peace

Is it possible to create cultures of peace—cultures whose daily life contexts promote harmony and understanding and solutions to conflicts through non-violence, cultures that expand consciousness, support conscience, and encourage conciliation through values, institutions, and socialization processes? Now that is something to think about! Can we create cultural blueprints to promote peace and non-violent resolution of conflicts and violence—templates, prototypes, and plans? I think we can.

A few years ago, Elise Boulding (2000), a major figure in peace studies and peace movements, called for the building of cultures of peace, which she defined as:

> A mosaic of identities, attitudes, values, beliefs, and institutional patterns that lead people to live nurturantly with one another, and the earth itself without the aid of structured power differentials, to deal creatively with their differences and share their resources (Boulding, 2000, p. 196).

Oddly enough, Boulding's suggestion has been contested on a number of grounds from naivete to cultural bias in the definitions of peace (e.g., De Rivera, 2004). Yet, in my mind

what is most important is the idea that we can create a "culture"—a way of life, a shared sense of meanings and behaviors—that can promote and sustain peace rather than violence and war. In my consideration of a comprehensive approach I would like to propose a number of suggestions. These include the following:

5.1.1. Step forward and be counted

Peace is everyone's personal responsibility. We must all step forward and be counted. Heroes and heroines of human rights and non-violence like Mohatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Caesar Chavez, Ka Hsaw Wa of Myanmar (Burma), Rigoberta Menchu Tum of Guatemala, Sister Diane Ortiz of the United States, Mairead McGuire of Northern Ireland, the Dalai Lama of Tibet, and Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa can serve as our models, for they embody the willingness to be counted. Kennedy-Cuomo (2004) in her book, Speak Truth to Power, summarizes the work of a number of everyday human rights heroes and heroines around the world who have stepped forward to be counted even at the risk of their own lives. Franklin (1998) coined the term "full capacity global citizens" to describe people moving beyond their occupational and professional roles to help advance peace and humanity:

> For me these are heartwarming examples of people stepping into the role of what I call "full capacity global citizens"—people willing to take on the twin challenge of deepening their personal capacities (intuitive, spiritual, intellectual) as well as assuming responsibility for the planet and the whole of humanity.... These examples, and those from countless other groups and individuals demonstrate that we are capable of a societal vision that transcends unbridled individualism and materialism—one that is more sustainable, equitable, and multifaceted, and includes spiritual and psychological, as well as economic growth.... The shift in consciousness that seems to be required includes an accommodation of our interdependence and our need to find a basis for shared meaning and purpose (Franklin, 1998, p.3).

5.1.2. World citizenship

Yet another consideration is the possibility of world citizenship, an idea that has long has currency. For example, Brody (1987), cites the efforts of the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH):

> The question must be faced as to whether survival is possible without adapting human institutions so that people can live as world citizens in a world community, in which local loyalties are rendered compatible with a wider allegiance to mankind as a whole.... World citizenship means an informed, reflective, responsible allegiance to mankind as a whole. The movement toward world citizenship is one which fulfills, rather than goes counter to, the trend of history.... It is possible to envisage a world community built on free consent and on the respect for individual and cultural differences. (WFMH, 1948. Quoted in Brody, 1987, p. 4).

Imagine if everyone in the world was issued a card at birth that gave them a number and also included a list of human basic human rights, values, and responsibilities. Is this too idealistic or is it in fact a viable option for promoting internationalism?

5.1.3. Shared human values

Although there are considerable variations in human values, beliefs, and social axioms across the cultures, there remains the possibility of some shared values that could gain widespread appeal and commitment. The pioneering work of Otto Klineberg, Gordon Allport, Clyde Kluckholm, Milton Rokeach, Abraham Maslow and others has given rise to exciting new research exploring the universality of human values by Solomon Schwartz (1992, 1995) and the worldwide nature and meaning of social axioms by Kwok Leung and Michael Bond (2004). While discussing the differences between values and social axioms is beyond the task of this paper, it is sufficient to point out that both are critical determinants of human behavior and predict behavior. For our purposes, however, we can begin to point to the possibility that humanity may be heading toward a shared or common commitment to certain values and social axioms that may even include world citizenship. Among the values I have proposed as possibilities are "satyagraha" (non-violence), "engi" (interdependence), human rights, "gemeinschaftsgefuhl" (social interest), sustainability, justice/equality, diversity, spirituality (connection, awe, reference), and participation. This group of values is arbitrary. Its value resides in provoking discussion on the possibilities for exploring some common values among humanity.

5.1.4. Arthur Koestler and the Janus principle

Arthur Koestler (1905–1983), the famous author and social commentator, suggested an essential duality of all living things. In his remarkable book, The Ghost in the Machine (1967), Koestler proposed that all living things exist both independently and as part of something larger. They face both ways hence the name Janus principle. He suggested that there is simultaneously an assertive tendency and an integrating tendency in life forms, and that while a form can exist on its own (e.g., a liver cell), it can only achieve its true nature when it becomes part of a larger whole—when it becomes a part of something larger (i.e., when the liver cell joins with other liver cells to become a liver). It is the emergent quality (i.e., the whole being greater than the sum of its parts) that yields a new nature and possibility. While I have used the example of the liver cell and liver to demonstrate Koestler's insight, it is obvious that the same principles apply to human beings as well.

As our human consciousness of purpose and meaning grows, as our sense of conscience in the form of morality, integrity, altruism increases, as we come to see the power in forgiveness and compassion that is often part of conciliation, a special thing begins to happen—a state of being that is elevated beyond self and beyond the dictates of narrowly prescribed systems of belief and dogma, a state of being that grasps what is possible if only we are willing to act as individuals and as a collective body in favor of consciousness, conscience, and conciliation. It is then, the possibilities of the human potential that move me, that motivate me, that compel to grasp the promise that the future could bring not only for human beings but our entire planet if we can resolve the challenges we face, especially those that can result in suffering, destruction, and annihilation in the guise of conflict, violence, and war.

5.2. Some specific recommendations for promoting peace

While there are many reasons for hope and optimism because of the many new advances in understanding and applying principles of peace and justice throughout the world, there

is still much to do. Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobsen (2004), a leader in international peace training efforts with the TRANSCEND organization, wrote:

> Around the world, whether in London or New York, Kabul, Cluj-Napoca, Bogota, Fallujah, Ramallah, Colombo, Moscow, Johar or Pyongyang, many of us, when faced with conflicts—whether in our own personal lives or conflicts, violence and wars in our communities, countries and globally—feel powerless. Despite the rise in the number of peace studies programmes at universities across the world, and organizations, networks and institutions engaged in peacebuilding, conflict transformation, alternative dispute resolution, nonviolence, and peace education— to name just a few fields—the majority of us are often left with the feeling that conflicts and violence, global military and economic/political systems, are things over which we have little power and little say.

Brand-Jacobsen (2004) goes on to point out the many advances that are being made, but she notes that the struggles ahead are sizeable and will require a continued and sustained effort by everyone. She concludes with 128 things that can be done to promote peace and justice and also offers a series of poignant and moving quotes on peace by scholars and activists throughout the world.

I now join Brand-Jacobsen and the many others in the area of peace studies (e.g., Elise Boulding, Kai Brand-Jacobsen, Mary E. Clark, Johann Galtung, Daisaku Ikeda, Paul Kimmel, Glenn Paige, Majid Tehranian) who call for cultures of peace! We need to create life contexts in which there are opportunities for the fulfillment of the human potential for living in peace, harmony, and support concern of others and with our planet. To this end, we should work toward the establishment of those conditions that will initiate, promote, and sustain peace through non-violence. Here are my recommendations. They are neither new nor original. They are a continuing endorsement of the words and thoughts of the many who have spoken for peace, often a great costs to their personal comfort and security.

(A) *Cultural ethos:* We need to build cultural ethoses that support peace and conflict reduction. Each culture has an ethos(s) that is reflected in its macrosocial, microsocial, and psychosocial institutions. As I noted previously, some cultures such as the USA endorse and support a cultural ethos that serves destructive ends. Let us increase our global awareness and consciousness of cultural ethos and work to ensure that it will empower peace and reduce violence.

(B) *Peace universities:* We should build peace universities in which there are Centers or Institutes for Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution (PSCR). Create undergraduate and graduate degree majors in PSCR. Require all students to take at least one course in PSCR before graduation. Wherever possible, teach peace across the curriculum so that the students are exposed to peace issues in as many courses as possible. Have universities hold conferences in the areas of peace studies and conflict resolution.

(C) *Religions and houses of worship:* Make every church, temple, and mosque places for peace. Encourage the understanding and study of peace and conflict resolution in sermons, child and adult educational settings, and have leaders and members develop active programs that promote peace through charity and other forms of community action and support, especially among non-members. Imagine if followers would suddenly be asked to live their faith by promoting peace rather than competition and

war. In the words of Mairead Maguire, "In this inter-spiritual age, I believe, it would be immoral for any one church or faith to be declaring theological superiority, as this would not contribute to the urgent mission of peacebuilding in our world today." (Mairead Maguire (2005), Peace People, 224 Lisburn Road, Belfast BT96GE, N.Ireland, www.peacepeople.com email info@peacepeople.com)

(D) *Peace museums*: There are countless museums and places that honor military history. Build peace museums where the history of peace may be told and honored. These can include photos and memorablia of peace pioneers and displays of places where peace was achieved without violence. Highlight people, events, and achievements that promote peace and conflict resolution. The Martin Luther King Memorial Center in Atlanta, Georgia is a good example of what can be done locally and/or nationally.

(E) *Department/Ministry of peace:* All nations should create a department or ministry of peace and conflict resolution and this should be integrated with the justice systems and should be considered to be equal in power and influence to departments of defense, and other military offices. In all instances of national or international conflict, this department should play an active role in decision-making. It should also fund peace research and be a resource for peace through the nation.

(F) *Schools*: Schools must teach peace and conflict resolution at all levels. Bullying must be stopped. Children and youth must be taught specific skills resolving conflicts without force or violence. Identity with humanity must be promoted. Imagine the possibilities of a peace across the curriculum approach. Already there are proven "peacemaker" courses being taught in schools that have been shown to reduce conflict and violence.

(G) *Peace across the media:* It is clear that popular mass media endorses violence both directly and indirectly via advertisements and actual shows. The impact of the media on our thoughts and actions is profound and shapes our responses to the world across all age groups. The media is irresponsible in this regard. For the sake of profit, it uses violence and abuse to sell products and to acquire ratings. As one of the most powerful means for transmitting knowledge, values, and moral patterns, it is essential that the media consider its impact upon promoting violence.

(H) *PR campaign for peace:* Government, business, and the media can unite to promote a PR campaign for peace and non-violence: "Peace is possible." "What have you done today to promote peace?" "Peace begins at home!" "Seek inner and outer peace!" And let us use, more often, the phrases "Peace be with you", "Salam", "Shalom", "Aloha", "Pace", and the Japanese Buddhist word "Engi," meaning "Our shared interdependence." The media could flood the world with a "peace" mentality and perhaps, in this light, the foolishness of violence and the folly of war could be illuminated by its opposite.

(I) *Meet treaty obligations*: While meeting treaty obligations alone will not prevent violence or war, it does constitute an important step in reducing the risks. Treaties such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty can at least bring parties to the table and encourage a dialogue regarding nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The United States has blocked efforts among some countries to implement the Non-Proliferation Treaty and has violated the nuclear arms development, sales, distribution, and testing, and has given selective support to nuclear arms expansion in some favored countries (e.g., Israel).

(J) *Peace festivals*: We should celebrate peace and the resolution of conflicts far more than we do. We should celebrate it in festivals with song, dance, literature, and poetry. We should honor individual and groups that advance the cause of peace far more than we do with the Nobel Peace Prize and the Right Livelihood Award. Let us develop awards for students who promote peace in schools, religious leaders who promote peace in their flocks and beyond, workers who promote peace in the workplace. Awards, celebrations, and recognition all serve to raise consciousness about peace.

(K) *Wealth distribution, accumulation, and corruption*: The massive imbalance in the distribution of wealth leads to tremendous resentment and creates antagonisms that ultimately may promote violence in the forms of terrorism and other acts of hostility. There is a need for reductions of salary excesses for corporate leaders, professional sports figures, celebrities and a redistribution of wealth. The excessive concentration of wealth in the hands of a view leaves people powerless to control their own destinies. If we create a culture of survival of the fittest and use this to justify political, economic, moral and cultural domination then we must have violence, war, and conflict as survival tools.

(L) *Strengthen the United Nations*: For all of its faults and limitations, the UN remains the most viable institution and instrument for world peace. Unfortunately, special interests too often serve to limit its effectiveness. Strengthen the UN financially, militarily (peace making, peace keeping, peace building forces), and morally. Broaden security council representation.

(M) *De-emphasize carriers of militarism*: Large military budgets encourage and support violence as an option, as does the production of military toys, computer games, the celebration of media heroes who advocate and personify violence, liberal gun laws and arms sales, and media that offer gratuitous violence on TV.

(N) *Special violence-reduction and peace programs*: The violence directed toward specific groups such as homosexuals, women, minorities, immigrants/refugees, and HIV victims requires special peace and conflict reduction programs.

These steps, in combination with the other points presented, constitute a broad and comprehensive program for conflict reduction and the promotion of peace. What is critical here is the recognition that isolated programs do not have the power to correct the situation apart from the broader context of changes that are needed. At best, they constitute a "bandage" operation that ignores the complex interactive causes of conflicts and the need to develop a powerful support system of beliefs, values, and activities that can sustain peace. In brief, we need a support system that can create and sustain a construction of reality that both endorses diversity in cultural constructions of reality while supporting a consensual or common dedication to peace and justice. Will conflicts disappear if these steps are followed? No! Conflicts are inevitable between individuals, groups, organizations, and nations. They arise from different and often competing constructions of reality and can, as mentioned, actually serve a constructive function if handled with understanding and sensitivity to the varying constructions of reality that are their source and sustenance. This does not mean an "acceptance" of the differences, but rather a willingness to acknowledge the differences and to find in them the options and possibilities for negotiation, resolution, and reconciliation.

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