Notes for Substituting Peace
Instead of the U.S.’s Militaristic Foreign Policy

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**The way you SEE the world will largely drive how you INTERACT with the world. Your understanding of reality will largely drive whether you act to reinforce a bad status quo or to create positive changes.**

A “worldview” is the overall perspective from which a person – or a group of persons or a society as a whole – sees and interprets the world. A “worldview” reflects beliefs and assumptions about what is real and what is good – and therefore about what we should do.

Let’s understand two very different ways of understanding the world. One worldview is greedy, corrupt, cruel, and oppressive. That worldview currently dominates the U.S.’s politics, economics, and power centers. In contrast, most people want public policies grounded in the OPPOSITE worldview – a worldview that values human rights, honesty, a fair sharing of resources, a clean environment, serving the broad public interest instead of selfish narrow interests, and so forth.

A person who believes the world is inherently cruel and unjust will likely behave cruelly and unjustly in order to fit in. The person will feel powerless to eliminate cruelty and injustice. But a person who believes that we can indeed solve problems can learn how to organize nonviolently from the grassroots to make the world a better place.

Powerful people have tried to get Americans to see the world as hard, nasty, and competitive. They want us to fear people of different nationalities, races, religions, and sexual orientations. They want us to be afraid, so we will blindly obey the rich, powerful forces that promote those fears, and so we will waste our nation’s resources on weapons and endless wars.

**A worldview that assumes the world is harsh and unjust and full of fear causes people to think they are ENTITLED to grab more than their fair share. People use that worldview to JUSTIFY their own individual corruption and cruelty.**

In the U.S., one worldview is dominant and largely controls our foreign and policies. Here are some of the assumptions and premises that drive the U.S.’s dominant worldview:

• You’ve got to look out for #1. It’s a tough world out there, so you must got to arm yourself and fight other people.

• The U.S. has a right to use violence against other nations and dominate them.

• Likewise, we must conquer nature and use all the natural resources we want.

On the other hand, we could change our nation to adopt the opposite worldview based on these assumptions and premises:

• Include everybody, and treat everybody fairly.

• Cooperate so we can meet everybody’s needs.

• Practice nonviolence.

• Respect nature and use resources sparingly.

Oppressors try to beat people down in order to make them feel powerless, so they will feel too weak to fight back. This is the “shock and awe” strategy that Bush/Cheney used against Iraq in order to conquer the nation and prevent any fighting back. (In that case it did not work, because people found ways to fight back anyway through methods that the U.S. refers to as “terrorism.”) Occupying armies, dictatorships, abusive husbands, schoolyard bullies, and other oppressors try to intimidate people and cause people to feel power-less so they will not have the self-confidence to fight back.

**U.S. foreign policy – and our endless, unwinnable wars – are based on the dominant worldview that keeps choosing violence instead of honestly seeking fairness and peace.**

The U.S.’s dominant worldview and our foreign policy have pretty much always been bi-partisan for a very long time, and our worldview and foreign policy continue to be bi-partisan now. Both of the big political parties – regardless of who runs Congress or who is Commander in Chief – have supported the U.S.’s military violence against other nations, and the CIA’s worldwide abuses, and the endless wars.

Empires are not sustainable. They always collapse. The bi-partisan U.S. Empire was already declining before Trump made it worse. The dominant worldview asserts the premise of U.S. foreign policy that the U.S. is GOOD and the nations we oppose are all EVIL, so WE are justified in using violence but THEY are not.

When nations – or any political groups – are in conflict, each side sees it in absolute terms and does not understand the other side’s perception of reality. Each new act of violence only reinforces the other side’s fear and anger. Then it feels self-righteous in defending itself by retaliating. This perpetuates the cycle of violence. Each side justifies its own violence at the same time as it denounces the other’s use of violence.

John K. Stoner, the Mennonite biblical scholar and author, wrote: “A country which has dangled the sword of nuclear holocaust over the world for (more than) half a century and claims that someone else invented terrorism is a country out of touch with reality.”

Since 1945 the U.S. has led a nuclear arms race that has come very close to destroying the world. Now the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists’ Doomsday Clock is showing that we are closer to Doomsday than ever. These scientists who are experts in nuclear weapons continually reevaluate the danger. They have identified Trump as a primary reason for setting their Doomsday Clock so close to midnight.

Indeed, Trump is making things worse in several ways. In late 2018 he is pulling the U.S. out of a very significant treaty that Reagan (the Re-publicans’ idol) and Gorbachev had signed in 1987. That Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) treaty had significantly reduced tensions in Europe, helped the U.S. and Russia interact more peacefully, and reduced the danger of global destruction. One expert called Trump’s decision “reckless and stupid,” and others called it “an epic mistake” and “a colossal mistake.” Another expert said, “By declaring he will leave the INF Treaty, President Trump has shown himself to be a demolition man who has no ability to build real security.”

Trump also opposes extending the 2010 New START Treaty, which has been limiting nuclear weapons. Also, now Trump is recklessly starting a new nuclear arms race with weapons that are specifically designed to be “more usable” – more likely to begin a nuclear war.

**Practical procedures for resolving conflict are based on objective criteria and even-handed justice. In contrast, wars are based on overwhelming violence. War is simply the wrong tool to resolve conflicts. War is morally bankrupt, and it does not work!**

Some people think that peace supporters are naive. But for thousands of years wars have only led to more wars. (More than a century ago, World War I was promoted as “The War to End All Wars.”) So actually the people who really are naive and unrealistic are those who think that yet another war will solve the world’s problems.

In recent decades the U.S.’s foreign policy has diverged sharply from reality and has created its own bubble of alternative reality. In the early 1950s the Korean War ended without victory. Since then the U.S. military has been losing wars (*e.g*., Vietnam) and failing to win wars. Despite more than half a century of failing to win wars, the U.S. military keeps winning public opinion with very high ratings and increasingly gigantic budgets and political power. Something truly weird and dysfunctional is happening. This is more evidence that the dominant worldview diverges sharply from objective reality.

In 2017 and 2018 millions of people were upset that Russia seems to have meddled in the U.S.’s 2016 election. The October 2018 issue of Harper’s Magazine reported that the U.S. “intervened” in at least 18 foreign elections from 1990 to 2000. The U.S. has actually overthrown democracies in several nations. We’ve overthrown democracies in Iran, Guatemala, Honduras, and else-where, and tried to overthrow democracies elsewhere. When Vietnamese people kicked France out of their country in 1954, the Geneva Peace Accords required a nationwide election to occur in 1956, but President Eisenhower prevented the election because he knew Ho Chi Minh would win.

In addition to destroying democracy in other nations, the U.S.’s foreign policy also is seriously hurting democracy in the U.S. Two experts wrote, “American democracy is decaying because freedom has been mortgaged to bear the costs of empire.” Another expert, Chalmers Johnson, wrote, “A nation can be one or the other, a democracy or an imperialist, but it can’t be both.

Decades ago, Richard McSorley, a Jesuit priest, said that the taproot of violence in the U.S. is our willingness to use nuclear weapons. Yes, all of these issues are interconnected in the U.S.’s violent, militaristic foreign policy.

**The dominant worldview includes “the arrogance of power.”**

During the Vietnam War, U.S. Senator William Fulbright denounced that war and what he called “the arrogance of power.” Actually, “The arrogance of power” is a major factor in how the U.S. treats other nations, and it also is pervasive throughout U.S. domestic society.

When powerful people assume they are entitled to abuse people with less power, this is called “privilege” and “entitlement.” We saw this “arrogance of power” in 2018 when the Senate confirmed Brett Kavanaugh to become a U.S. Supreme Court Justice even though he had tried to rape a woman.

We see the arrogance of power over and over again throughout workplaces, the criminal justice system, and elsewhere. We keep seeing “white privilege,” “male privilege,” “heterosexual privilege,” “rich people’s privilege,” and other forms of power plays over people without privilege. The oppressors and abusers feel entitled to dominate and abuse.

Just imagine how pleasant and satisfying it would be to live in a society without such arrogance and abuse. We need a truly egalitarian society that respects the inherent human dignity of every person.

**Both of the big political parties support the U.S.’s militaristic foreign policy.**

U.S. foreign policy and all of our wars and nuclear weapons are truly bi-partisan. For decades one of the U.S. Senators from Washington State was Henry Jackson, a Democrat who was an extreme Cold Warrior. He always supported more military weapons and was known as “The Senator from Boeing.”

Clinton, Bush and Obama were cruel to immigrants before Trump escalated their cruelty. Obama deported millions of immigrants – more than any previous president. Clinton and Obama were Democratic presidents.

Democrat Hillary Clinton has been utterly subservient to Big Business. She kept supporting more wars and a violent foreign policy. Hillary Clinton supported the status quo with only a few minor tweaks. But the voters knew the status quo was broken, so they wanted a very different kind of person in the White House. Bernie Sanders was truly a populist who campaigned for a different worldview. Mainstream media refused to cover Bernie Sanders adequately, but he energized the voters and won their enthusiasm – especially people who had not voted before.

This is not a partisan rant about just the Trump regime, because the dominant worldview controls both of the big political parties. Rather, this is a hard look at changes that have been accumulating over a few decades, including the Bill Clinton years. Clinton, after all, maintained the brutal and deadly Iraq economic sanctions, illegally called large parts of Iraq “no fly zones” and bombed them repeatedly, bombed several other countries illegally, dismantled the welfare safety net, vastly expanded the death penalty and reduced defendants’ appeal rights, promoted horribly undemocratic “free trade” agreements, etc.

Such trends were well underway before the George W. Bush regime accelerated the pace of these abuses and carried them out more brazenly than ever before.

Barack Obama largely continued the Bush/Cheney foreign policy, escalated U.S. militarism into additional countries, especially with new military outposts in Africa, and yielded to his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and overthrew Libya’s government, with disastrous results. Trump, of course, is escalating the dominant worldview’s foreign policy recklessly. But this paragraph’s main point is that the dominant worldview’s foreign policy is bi-partisan.

We must change our nation’s foreign policy and dominant worldview, not just replace Republicans with Democrats.

**Our bi-partisan foreign policy opposes democracy and human rights in Latin America.**

Nearly two centuries ago – in 1823 – the U.S. imposed itself as Latin America’s oppressor through the Monroe Doctrine, the unilateral U.S. expression of entitlement to dominate Latin America. And dominate we have! The U.S. has been exploiting Latin America for U.S. business interests and opposing democracy – not supporting democracy, but opposing it – in order to serve U.S. business and geopolitical interests. This has been bi-partisan and consistent, right up to the present day.

The U.S. supported Latin America’s corrupt military generals who did our dirty work for us and kept their people subservient to the economic elites. But the U.S. did send our military troops there many, many times.

The U.S. military occupied Nicaragua from 1909 to 1933. In Nicaragua, three different members of the Somoza family ran the country off and on for a total of 30 years from 1937 to 1979. When populist leader Augusto César Sandino was leading an uprising for economic and political reforms to help Nicaragua’s poor people, the oldest Somoza lured Sandino to peace talks but murdered Sandino in 1934 and claimed the presidency. This is the Somoza about whom Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt said, “He may be an S.O.B., but he's our S.O.B.”

Another Somoza was Nicaragua’s president later, and finally another, who was finally overthrown by the grassroots Sandinista movement in 1979. The Somozas were not generals per se, but they did head the powerful National Guard military entity, starting with the first Somoza. They grabbed more and more power and put many of Nicaragua’s institutions under their direct control. Along the way the Somoza family practiced extreme corruption (including stealing much of the money sent to help the nation rebuild after the 1972 earthquake) and amassed a fortune of more than one billion dollars. The U.S. government kept supporting the Somoza dictatorship all along.

When the grassroots populist Sandinista group toppled Somoza’s dictatorship in 1979, the Sandinistas organized massive campaigns for literacy, public health, and local democracy. But the U.S.’s CIA organized and funded terrorists groups and pulled them together into what was known as the “contras” (counter-revolutionaries). The CIA and President Reagan vigorously supported these blatant terrorists. Reagan called these terrorists “freedom-fighters” and likened them to the U.S.’s Founding Fathers.

Likewise, for many decades El Salvador was dominated and exploited by a small economic elite (the “14 families”), so when poor people rose up to promote democracy and economic justice, El Salvador’s brutal government used its cruel, violent military to kill the nation’s dissidents, and the government also supported “death squads” that supplemented El Salvador’s military in terrorizing poor people and their allies. The U.S. knew El Salvador’s military and death squads were slaughtering people, but Democrat Jimmy Carter and then Republican President Ronald Reagan generously funded El Salvador’s slaughter.

Wikipedia reports: “In February 1980 Archbishop Óscar Romero published an open letter to US President Jimmy Carter in which he pleaded with him to suspend the United States’ ongoing program of military aid to the Salvadoran regime. He advised Carter that ‘Political power is in the hands of the armed forces. They know only how to repress the people and defend the interests of the Salvadoran oligarchy.’ Romero warned that US support would only ‘sharpen the injustice and repression against the organizations of the people which repeatedly have been struggling to gain respect for their fundamental human rights.’”

On March 23, 1980, Archbishop Romero delivered a sermon in which he called on El Salvador’s soldiers, as Christians, to obey God’s higher order and to stop carrying out the government's repression and violations of basic human rights. On the very next day, El Salvador’s military shot Romero to death when he was say-ing Mass.

On December 2, 1980, members of El Salvador’s National Guard raped and murdered several American nuns and a laywoman. Although American military aid slowed briefly, Democratic President Jimmy Carter increased it again before leaving office. (Carter also supported CIA support for the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, the predecessor of the Taliban. Despite his rhetoric favoring human rights, Carter’s actual record was very mixed. He did not really act consistently well until after leaving the presidency.)

Chile was Latin America’s oldest democracy, dating back to the mid-1800s. But President Richard Nixon and his cynical Henry Kissinger and their CIA actively destabilized Chile’s democratic government – and then they helped Chile’s military overthrow their democracy on September 11, 1973, partly for Cold War geopolitical reasons and partly in order to serve U.S. business corporations that were mining minerals there. In a classic statement exemplifying the dominant U.S. worldview, Kissinger famously said, “I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its people. The issues are much too important for the Chilean voters to be left to decide for themselves.”

Nixon and Kissinger supported Chile’s military coup and their murder of the democratically elected president Salvador Allende, and the installation as dictator military General Augusto Pinochet. Pinochet brutally suppressed human rights and slaughtered and “disappeared” many, many, many people until 1990 when Chile returned to democracy.

Now as I write this essay in late October 2018 the tragedy of Honduras is in the news again – and it is yet another example of the U.S.’s dominant worldview of persistently abusing Latin America. A “caravan” of refugees fleeing Honduras are traveling through Mexico to seek refuge in the U.S. But instead of under-standing the context, Trump and mainstream media are deceiving us yet again.

After a very long history of oppression, Honduras developed a democracy and they elected a progressive president, Manuel Zelaya, who was making improvements to serve the general public. But in 2009 Honduras’s business elite and military staged a coup and overthrew Honduras’s democracy. They kidnapped the elected president and overthrew Honduras’s democracy in violation of international law. The Organization of American States unanimously denounced it. But Democratic President Obama and his Democratic Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported the coup.

For nearly a decade now, Honduras’s military and police have been murdering journalists, environmentalists, labor organizers, human rights defenders and other people – all with the blessing of the U.S. government. People who want democracy – or merely want to live without brutal oppression and violence – are fleeing Honduras as refugees. Trump’s U.S. is blatantly violating international law by denying people’s right to seek asylum and refugee status here. Trump is sending some of those people back to their countries of origin where they will almost certainly be murdered. These dangers exist in a number of countries besides Honduras. Now – in late October 2018 – Trump is sending the U.S. military to our border with Mexico to prevent those refugees from entering the U.S., even though international law guarantees the right of refugees to seek asylum in other countries.

**Here are more insights about Americans’ fears, terrorism, and foreign policy.**

The so-called “war on terrorism” fails to address the underlying causes of terrorism. Instead, the Bush-Cheney regime and subsequent administrations have exploited the September 11 attacks to frighten the American people into supporting more militarism, giving up our constitutional rights, and letting the government claim dictatorial powers – all in the guise of “protecting” us. Militaristic and repressive reactions only turn more people into enemies and escalate the cycle of violence. Ironically, the U.S.’s militarism is actually among the root causes of the U.S.’s problems.

After 2001, Bush/Cheney and congressional Republicans and Trump did to Muslims what Senator Joe McCarthy and the fear-mongering McCarthyists did to “communists” in the early-to-mid-1950s.

Oppressors often provoke the public to fear the people that the oppressors want to target. This familiar scheme is rampantly pursued now – against Muslims, Mexicans, immigrants, LGBTQ people, atheists, socialists, and other groups.

A classic propaganda technique is to tell a lie so often that people will believe it to be true. (Cold War propaganda, “the Free World,” “Islamic Terrorists,” etc. Voltaire wrote, “Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.”

**The U.S.’s foreign policy is horribly cruel and wasteful. It backfires.**

The premise of U.S. foreign policy is that the U.S. is GOOD and the nations we oppose are EVIL, so WE are justified in using violence but THEY are not allowed to defend themselves from our attacks.

When nations – or any political groups – are in conflict, EACH side sees it in absolute terms and does not understand the other side’s perception of reality. Each new act of violence only reinforces the other side’s fear and anger. Then it feels self-righteous in defending itself by retaliating. This perpetuates the cycle of violence. Each side justifies its own violence at the same time as it denounces the other side’s use of violence.

**War is the epitome of the currently dominant worldview. War is simply the wrong tool to resolve conflicts.** War is based on overwhelming violence. It is morally bankrupt, and it does not work! In Vietnam the U.S. won if you only consider the “body counts,” but actually the U.S. lost the war.

**In contrast, the procedures for actually resolving conflicts are based on a strong desire to solve problems through empathic listening, objective criteria and even-handed justice.**

Some people think that peace supporters are naive. But for thousands of years wars have only led to more wars. (World War I was promoted as “The War to End All Wars.”) So actually the people who really are naive and unrealistic are those who think that yet another war will solve the world’s problems.

A longstanding feature of the American worldview is our mistaken notion that the U.S. is “the beacon of liberty” – “the promised land” – and therefore that the U.S. is so righteous and pure that we are **ENTITLED** to dominate the world. This notion of **“American exceptionalism”** causes many Americans and our government to think that the U.S. is exempt from international law and other realities, such as the laws of science that would alert us to the climate crisis if only we would listen to science.

Here is an example of “American exceptionalism” related to foreign policy: Some years ago at our Wednesday noon-hour peace vigil, I was holding a sign asking, “Is war really necessary?” A man walked by without pausing to engage in conversation, but merely strode past and declared, “Yeah. Sometimes you’ve got to beat them up.” As an American, he was assuming the entitlement to beat up people in other nations. He would never have said this about himself or his nation: that sometimes he and his nation should be beaten up. No, he assumed that – as an American – he and his nation were entitled to be the “beater,” not the “beatee.”

**So violence becomes “normalized” in foreign policy and in policing.** How else does violence become “normalized”? Some men feel entitled to control and use violence against women. Some whites and straights feel entitled to create and use laws and regulations that use violence and oppression against racial or sexual minorities. Some states have passed “stand your ground” laws to give explicit for people to use gun violence. And so it goes.

**The American gun culture is part of the problem of “normalizing” violence.** In a 2007 study of 178 countries by the Geneva-based Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, the U.S. ranked number one in the number of guns per person (88.8 per 100), far ahead of all the other countries in the study. Yemen was a distant runner-up with 55 guns per 100 people, 40 percent less than the U.S. rate.

**Militarizing our culture can happen when massive amounts of fear are injected into it** – fear of Communists, fear of foreigners, fear of Muslims, fear of terrorists, fear of dark-skinned Americans, fear of homeless people, etc. General Douglas MacArthur said this on May 15, 1951: “It is part of the general pattern of misguided policy that our country is now geared to an arms economy which was bred in an artificially induced psychosis of war hysteria and nurtured upon an incessant propaganda of fear.”

**War is terrorism with a bigger budget!** The dynamics are the same: Militarism – just like terrorism – threatens populations and uses violence against people in order to frighten and dominate them into submission.

**The older Bush’s 1990-1991 “Gulf War” utterly devastated Iraq.** The U.S. targeted water treatment plants and sewage treatment plants, so Iraq could not provide clean, safe water for its people. After the war supposedly ended in 1991, the U.S. continued its punishing economic sanctions against Iraq, so they could not buy the equipment they needed to repair those plants. Raw sewage flowed in city streets, and microbes in drinking water also caused an epidemic of illnesses. The U.S. was deliberately causing water-borne diseases (“biological weapons”) that – along with other deliberate abuses such as prohibiting Iraq from buying medicines or even replacing windows and sheets in hospitals – caused more than half a million innocent Iraqi children to die in the next several years.

When Democratic President Bill Clinton was elected in November 1992 he vigorously continued that brutal war against Iraq’s innocent civilians by continuing and enforcing the economic sanctions. A journalist publicly asked Clinton’s Secretary of State Madeleine Albright whether killing half a million Iraqi children was worth it, and she said yes.

Democrats hurt innocent people, just like Republicans do. Even Democrats who say nice-sounding rhetoric such as Barack Obama have been guilty of horrible war crimes because they buy into the dominant worldview.

Why do we have this kind of foreign policy? When the U.S. was founded, President Washington and Congress and the public opposed getting into wars, because they saw how Europe suffered from its many wars. But over the years, the U.S. developed its own sense of imperialist “entitlement.”

The world is interconnected in many ways, so “isolationism” is not practical. But we do need to interact with other nations based on **fairness and diplomacy** instead of oppression and war.

**The nationalistic worldview started long ago and has persisted through both of the big political parties.**

Nearly two centuries ago – in 1823 – President James Monroe issued a national policy (the Monroe Doctrine), which threatened Europe to stop colonizing the Americas, because that was an area the U.S. wanted to control. This was an imperialistic sense of “entitlement” and “arrogance of power” as described earlier in this essay.

But the U.S. imperialism expanded across the Pacific Ocean when the U.S. fought a ten-week war with Spain (the Spanish-American War) and the U.S. stole Spain’s colonies (the Philippines, Cuba, etc.).

After World War II the U.S. emerged as the world’s most dominant military and economic power. Those two features of the dominant worldview – military and economic power – are summarized in a statement made in 1948 by George Kennan, head of the US State Department’s Policy Planning Staff. He said:

“We have about 60 per cent of the world’s wealth but only 6.3 per cent of its population. In this situation we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity. ... The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts.”

Although the official propaganda says the U.S. wants peace and democracy, actually the U.S. government has overthrown democracies in Iran, Guatemala, Chile, Venezuela, and elsewhere, because those countries had democratic governments that wanted their own people to benefit from their own oil, minerals, and natural resources.

The U.S. has installed extremely brutal dictators who would serve U.S. political, military and economic interests, and the U.S. has armed them with extremely deadly weapons and allowed the dictators to slaughter their own people over many years. The U.S. has prevented the United Nations from stopping the abuses that the U.S. was enabling.

If we were to ask the public whether they want peace, nearly everyone would say yes. But **violence and war have become so “normalized” that many people think war is the way to achieve peace.**  (In fact, another passerby at a very recent peace vigil told us exactly that.) This mistaken that war is the way to achieve peace is part of “the myth of redemptive violence,” which I’ll discuss later in this essay.

In our daily lives, we have better sense than to choose violent ways of solving problems. If your neighbor’s dog is barking, you do not shoot your neighbor’s dog. If you disagree with your spouse or partner, you do not assault him or her. During my decades-long career of working in a Washington State agency that interacted with other state agencies, we sometimes disagreed with another agency about how to solve a problem, but none of my co-workers ever said, “Let’s get a bunch of guns and go over to their headquarters office and start shooting people until they surrender and start agreeing with us.”

In ancient times the writers of Greek tragedies referred to this as *hubris*, the kind of arrogance that led to tragic outcomes. The U.S. keeps acting on the *hubris* of “American exceptionalism,” and we will increasingly reap the tragic consequences.

**The U.S. has become a “rogue nation” that violates international standards of decency.**

The U.S.’s many wars and the U.S.’s support for dictators and military coups in other nations have made the U.S. into a “rogue nation.” Now this is getting worse, because Trump is pulling the U.S. out of international treaties and agreements that have been protecting peace and the climate.

In June 2018 Trump even pulled the U.S. out of the United Nations Human Rights Council. No nation had ever voluntarily left it. The only other nations that refuse to participate in the Council’s work are Iran, North Korea and Eritrea.

Trump has made the U.S. an outlier among the world’s nations, notable now for its ignorance, depravity and cruelty. No longer is the U.S. a “beacon of liberty” or a role model of democracy and freedom and prosperity for other nations. The self-congratulatory rhetoric is so blatantly false that everybody else in the world sees it. Now our people suffer with widespread poverty and despair without adequate health care or hope for the future.

The dominant worldview that has been imposed upon us wants us to fear “The Other.” During the Cold War the people running the U.S. wanted us to fear Communists and Russians and Cubans. They wanted us to fear Third World liberation movements. Now they want us to fear Muslims and Immigrants. Trump has militarized the U.S.’s southern border and is kidnapping children and imprisoning them. Recently he has been tear-gassing them in Mexico. Immigration policy should be figured out by the American people and Congress, but Trump has been acting like a dictator and militarizing it.

**Let’s understand and debunk “the myth of redemptive violence.”**

Many movies (Westerns, crime movies, spy movies, etc.) end with a big shoot-out or explosion or other violence at the end. This violence resolves the problems just before the movie ends. This is “the myth of redemptive violence.” Mainstream public opinion believes in “the myth of redemptive violence.” Our foreign policy reflects that myth. The US government – on a bipartisan basis – believes that the US military can threaten violence and actually use violence – and this will bring peace. But in reality you CAN’T “fight fire with fire.” You must fight fire with WATER. Let’s fight violence with nonviolence.

The mistaken assumption that violence solves problems results in overkill – including killing innocent by-standers. (Even the death penalty kills innocent people.)

At the local family or neighborhood or community level, people know that violence does not work. When I worked at a professional job for a Washington State agency, sometimes we disagreed with another state agency. But in our staff meetings, nobody ever said, “Let’s get a bunch of guns and go over to their office building and start killing people until their agency will agree with us.” We knew better than that.

But at national and international levels, many people do believe “the myth of redemptive violence.” They don’t see the immorality and stupidity of thinking violence will solve problems. **Let’s practice globally what we want to see locally on our jobs and in our families.**

**Let’s de-militarize U.S. foreign policy. Let’s practice peace, fairness, human rights, etc.**

**Militarism is steeped in violence, bullying, domination, cruelty and vindictiveness. Militarism is the OPPOSITE of any legitimate way to solve problems.** The militaristic mindset and worldview lead to violent policing, harsh prison sentences and the death penalty. Even the police uniforms and hierarchy (sergeant, lieutenant, and captain) are based on a military model. The militaristic model focuses on dominating and punishing people rather than actually reducing crime and increasing public safety by using humane methods that have been proven to work. The dominant worldview chooses to bully people instead of solving the actual problems.

**Peace – and peaceful problem-solving – must be based on a nonviolent model.** If we want our society to be civilized, safe and free, we must debunk the heavy-handed punishment-oriented criminal justice that does not help victims, causes prisoners to commit crimes again when they are released, and fails to protect society. Instead, let’s recognize that evidence-based research has proven that more humane strategies work better. Investing in better services for at-risk children and families will prevent crime and save tax dollars.

**We must publicly expose and vigorously oppose militarism – and we must promote an ethical and humane alternative.** In order to really engage the public on these hard and frightening issues, we must deliberately strategize how to address the public’s fears, feelings of powerlessness, and other psychological barriers that inhibit them from learning about and acting on these issues. In order to make progress, we must pay at least as much attention to the public’s psychological factors as we do to the issues’ hard facts. I wrote this one-page flyer to help us understand this and devise smarter strategies: <http://parallaxperspectives.org/outreach-ideas-for-hard-scary-issues>

**For many years, public opinion polls have continually showed that most Americans think our nation is “on the wrong track.”** This is because the worldview that has dominated our nation for a number of decades is grounded in negative values and beliefs that have been hurting people, our environment, and our souls.

**I believe that most Americans have better values.** Indeed, public opinion polls keep showing that most Americans want good quality health care for every-body, better wages for low-income workers, equal rights for LGBTQ people, a clean and sustainable environment, and other positive alternatives that are really the opposite of what the dominant worldview has been imposing upon our nation for several decades. Let’s help people discover and act upon their best values. Let’s help people explore their individual consciences and their religious/spiritual faith, so they can let go of our culture’s militaristic assumptions and commit themselves to peace.

**Let’s reject all polarization into “us” vs. “them.”**  Let’s affirm that ALL people are ONE human family. Let’s affirm that we are ALL in this TOGETHER. As the World Social Forum says, “Another world is possible!” We can replace the dominant worldview with one that is thoroughly positive and humane.

**Let’s reject the mistaken assumption that violence solves problems.**  Let’s help people see that violence is the problem, not the solution. We must stop individual acts of violence and also the systemic, institutional violence. Let’s replace that with a commitment to truth, fairness and peace.

**Besides protesting against what we oppose, let’s also organize to create the positive goals we want instead.**

We need to keep protesting against the cruelty, corruption, injustice and violence that continually assault us.  But if we spend most of our time and efforts fighting the bad stuff, the oppressors will continue to have the upper hand because they can keep throwing bad stuff at us and we will always be on the defensive.

**We need to spend most of our time and efforts taking the initiative to organize for the positive goals that we want instead.**  We need to be proactive, envision the future we want instead of the current mess, and organize to achieve the positive goals.

**Nonviolence uses both of our hands:**

• One hand holds a STOP sign and says, “We will not allow this violence and injustice to continue.”

• The other hand shows a WELCOMING sign and says, “Let’s work together to create better alternatives.”

We need to use both hands of nonviolence. Organize nonviolent movements to (1) stop the bad stuff and also to (2) organize good alternatives.

**Let’s create a new foreign policy based on peace, fairness, human rights, diplomacy, international law, environmental sustainability, and so forth.**

Making positive changes will create synergistic feedback loops toward creating a positive new worldview, which – in turn – will make further positive changes possible.

Let’s close ALL of the U.S.'s 800 military bases in 80 countries. <http://fpif.org/us-military-bases-80-countries-must-close/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2-1-18>

In 2015 Tom Engelhardt posted to [www.domdispatch.org](http://www.domdispatch.org) his article titled “10 Things America Must Do to Stop Ruining the World.” It addresses some of the worldview issues I’ve mentioned in the essay you are reading now. Here is a link to his article: <https://www.alternet.org/world/10-things-america-must-do-stop-ruining-world>

**Whatever the U.S. does to other nations returns in a moral cycle of *karma*.**

When we study the environment, we learn that everything is connected. This pertains also to worldviews. Some religious traditions refer to ***karma*** – whatever we do comes back to us. The U.S.’s foreign policy produces feedback loops. If we do bad things, harm comes back to us, but if we do good things, good feedback loops will occur.

So, for example, the U.S. has been inflicting military violence upon other nations, and about half a century ago the Pentagon and CIA recognized that people elsewhere would retaliate against us because of what the U.S. has done. They call it “blowback,” which includes terrorism. That’s **bad karma**.

Powerful American business leaders inflict greed, exploitation, and so forth upon people in other nations and upon the earth’s environment. That cruelty comes back to hurt us in the form of terrorism, the climate crisis, and refugees fleeing the dictatorships and environmental devastation. These American business leaders’ **bad karma** blows back to hurt the U.S. itself.

**We need to choose a better worldview for ourselves and for our nation. Then our better worldview will produce better consequences and better feedback loops.**

Martin Luther King knew that “violence multiples violence ... in a descending spiral of destruction.” He said that instead, “We must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”

Nonviolence works because the means we use must be consistent with the ends we seek. Everything we do sows the seeds of the world that will grow. War sows the seeds of future violence. **To build a world that is peaceful and just, we must use methods that are peaceful and just.**

“The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World” is a substantive critique of the worldview that has been dominating the world in recent decades. “The People’s Charter” is quite comprehensive in listing dozens of international problems that result from the currently dominant worldview. Then it identifies eight aims of a nonviolent strategy to mobilize ordinary people in solving the problems. I am one of many people from 105 countries who have signed “The People’s Charter to Create a Nonviolent World.”

You can read it at this link -- <https://thepeoplesnonviolencecharter.wordpress.com/charter> and see much more information at: <https://thepeoplesnonviolencecharter.wordpress.com/>

**This current example about refugees points out the problems and a sensible solution. The U.S. abuses other nations, so people flee there as refugees, but the U.S. refuses to admit responsibility and refuses to accept refugees.**

Parents teach children to clean up their messes. We must teach our government the same lesson.

The U.S. keeps attacking other nations, making it impossible for victims to live there, but the U.S. refuses to accept those refugees. Survivors in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Libya, Yemen and many other nations cannot live safely in their home countries. The U.S. has a moral obligation to invite our wars’ refugees to settle here.

The U.S. arms dictators and other abusive governments that abuse and kill their people. But the U.S. government refuses to take responsibility for the violence we cause.

After many years of oppression, Honduras created a democracy and elected a progressive president who was making improvements that helped the general public. But in 2009 Honduras’s business elite and military staged a coup and overthrew Honduras’s democracy in violation of international law. President Obama and his Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported the illegal coup.

For nearly a decade now, Honduras’s military and police have been murdering journalists, environmentalists, labor organizers, human rights defenders and other people – all with the blessing of the U.S. government – first Obama and now Trump.

Survivors are fleeing Honduras as refugees. Trump’s U.S. is violating international law by denying people’s right to seek asylum and refugee status here. Trump’s racist propaganda denies the reality and victimizes them again.

We need a federal law prohibiting the U.S. from hurting people in other nations and absolutely requiring that we welcome our victims as refugees.

**Replace the “national security” model with nonviolent TRUE Security.**

The U.S. is obsessed with “national security.” That concept immediately assumes a reliance on military violence.

Instead, we need an alternative worldview that focuses on “**TRUE security**” – the ways to achieve a more **profound** and **realisti**c kind of security.

* People in Flint, Michigan, and other places are **in**secure because the dominant worldview knowingly polluted their water, not because of anything Afghanistan or Iran or North Korea has done.
* People who are homeless or who are dying for lack of health care are **in**secure because the dominant worldview repeatedly says their lives do not matter. More nuclear weapons will not restore their health.

**We must BOLDLY CHALLENGE nationalism as a false idol. We must challenge the simplistic thinking about “national security.” We must pay attention to what really would make our nation and our residents truly secure.** We need fresh thinking and a fresh model to rescue our nation and our world from its current misery and deadliness. This fresh model would help us achieve an **alternative worldview** with more profound democracy, a nonviolent society, and “the common good.”

The 1980s mantra to “look out for #1” and Trump’s “America First” doctrine are selfish and actually counter-productive. Wise people know everything is interconnected. Whatever we do will cycle back to us. If we act wisely and humanely, we will end up better off. But if we act with greed and cruelty, our behavior will end up hurting us.

MANY politicians keep telling us to be afraid of other races and other religions. NEARLY ALL politicians tell us to be afraid of other nations. The gigantic military-industrial complex is built upon fear of other nations in order to seek economic and political power over them and over the American taxpayers.

Let’s debunk the dominant myths and recognize that **all people are one human family**, and **we all share one earth**. NOBODY can be secure until EVERYBODY is secure. **We need a new way to think about “TRUE Security.”**

If the U.S. did not grab more than its share of the world’s natural resources, and if the U.S. did not threaten and use violence against other nations, we could get along with other people, and we could solve global problems through diplomacy and mediation and nonviolent strategies.

**The real dangers are nationalism, militarism, racism, an unjust economic system, violations of human rights, and damage to the environment.** Those dangers **cannot** be solved by military methods. **We need to understand where Americans’ feelings of insecurity REALLY come from. Then we can re-define TRUE security and promote positive alternatives.**

Let’s take the moral and political high ground, and win the public over to our side with **a more effective way to be secure**! The peace movement, human rights movement, environmental movement, climate movement, and other multi-issue progressive movements can support each other and work together toward common goals.

People want security, but we can’t gain TRUE security through wars and sacrificing our civil liberties. TRUE security must be based on peace, social and economic justice, a sustainable environment, a vibrant democracy, civil liberties for everyone, and many other progressive values.

The current U.S. mania for more violent weapons and more killing in more nations does **three** bad things:

1. It turns world opinion against the U.S.
2. It takes money away from what would really make us more secure: ending poverty, ending homelessness, protecting the environment, developing “green” energy, etc.
3. It distracts and misleads the public into thinking that violence solves problems, when the real solutions are nonviolent.

We would be **more** secure with **less** military! We’d be more secure if we were to pursue “the common good” at a global scale – and adopt a **nonviolent** foreign policy.

Let’s contrast our nation’s current way to achieve “national security” with a humane alternative that would **really** achieve “**TRUE** security.”

This **TRUE SECURITY** table contrasts the **typical American way to achieve national security** with this **better way to achieve TRUE security**. *(I’m also posting this table to my blog as a stand-alone one-page link.)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Typical American Way to Achieve National Security** | **Better Way to Achieve****TRUE Security** |
|  |  |  |
| **Vision:** | U.S. dominates all other countries. | U.S. cooperates fairly with all other countries. |
| **Axis of Evil:** | George W. Bush accused Iraq, Iran, North Korea, which actually were **not** an “axis” working together. | Martin Luther King identified 3 evils: Racism, Militarism, and Poverty/Materialism. |
| **Goals:** | National security against other nations | Global security and equitable relationships among all nations |
|  | Political, military, economic, cultural dominance | Self-determinationEconomic well-being for allRespect for other cultures & religions |
| **Methods:** | Military action, arms sales, covert operations, selective diplomacy | Nonviolent direct action at international level (e.g., nonviolent peace force) |
|  | Unilateral action, coalitions that the US controls and others must endorse | Multilateral resolution of conflicts. Support the UN, international treaties, and international law. |
|  | Development initiatives linked to “good” governmentsEconomic practices that support US interests | Marshall Plan to eradicate global povertyUnconditional commitment to the poor |
|  | Volunteerism and acts of charity to help the poor without changing structural inequities | Short-term: Generous actions with no selfish motivesLong-term: Structural changes for justice |
|  | Minimum wage | Living wage. Guaranteed minimum income |
|  | Conflict management focused on violence as individual pathology | Nonviolent resistance to systemic violence. Interpersonal conflict resolution skills |
| **Motivation:** | Hatred | Love, compassion |
|  | Fear | Faith |
|  | Power | Justice |
|  | Self-centered (Greek word *porneia*: people as objects) | Other-centered for the other’s sake (Greek word *agape αγαπη*) |
| **Result:** | Global chaos | Global community |

TRUE security cannot be won by weapons. It’s rooted in social and economic justice, civil liberties, a vibrant democracy, a healthy environment, and humane values.

The practice of nonviolence says we must use methods consistent with the goals we seek. TRUE Security is consistent with that insight. TRUE Security must be part of the alternative, civilized worldview I want for our society.

**A few more ideas:**

Recent research by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan proved that during a huge number of conflicts in different parts of the world during the 1900s, movements using only nonviolence worked much better than those that included some violence (euphemistically called “diversity of tactics” by some people who refuse to practice nonviolent self-discipline). See their book ***Why Civil Resistance Works***, and see Chenoweth’s many articles, YouTube videos, TED Talks, and so forth.

Certainly the facts from researchers such as Gene Sharp ([www.aeinstein.org](http://www.aeinstein.org)), Chenoweth and others can help people recognize that nonviolence works better than war or any kind of violence.

People in the U.S. and everywhere else need to see the world in new ways and help us discover many new possibilities. Grounding ourselves in positive values of nonviolence and human rights is a good first step. If we also understand the principles and practices of nonviolence and grassroots organizing, we will be able to build those into new realities in the society around us.

Creativity also helps! I have always appreciated Edwin Markham’s poem called “Outwitted.” It includes this amazing verse about redefining a worldview:

“He drew a circle that shut me out-

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But love and I had the wit to win:

We drew a circle and took him in!

This poem affirms that our own individual approach and demeanor in reaching out to other people would be crucial in whether we push other people away (dominant worldview) or welcome people in to enjoy living with a better worldview.

Many non-profit organizations and many books, websites and other informational resources urge us to convert to a peaceful worldview. For example, World Beyond War has a 95 page booklet that lays out alternatives to war. ***“A Global Security System: An Alternative to War”*** is a thoughtful, well organized resource with practical information and great quotations. The Executive Summary is at <https://worldbeyondwar.org/executive-summary-global-security-system-alternative-war/>

My blog, [www.parallaxperspectives.org](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), has much more information in several sections, including those for:

International

Nonviolence

Peace