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**A Peaceful and Just Foreign Policy
Would Make Us Much More Safe**

A nationalistic worldview started elsewhere long ago and has persisted through both of the U.S.’s big political parties.

The world has a variety of problems, but sensible, humane people do NOT see the world’s problems as “just the way things are.” Instead, we work to solve those problems.

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.

However, at a deeper level, most Americans want our nation to be guided by a worldview that is humane, compassionate, peaceful, fair to everyone, and environmentally sustainable.

I like what the World Social Forum affirms: “Another world is possible!” Yes, we can imagine a better world and work with other people to organize to bring it into being.

**Alternatives to the dominant assumptions:**

This article identifies some dominant assumptions and proposes that we enact their OPPOSITES into public policy:

1. Polarizing into “us” vs. “them,” and fearing “them” does not work. Instead, we must recognize that ALL people are ONE human family, and that our safety depends on helping other people feel safe.

2. The U.S. is NOT entitled to bully other nations. Actually, NO nation should bully any other nation. We would be more secure if we promoted compassion, fairness and cooperation among nations.

3. Violence does NOT solves problems, but only makes problems worse.

4. Everything is interconnected, so when the U.S. treats other nations badly, the karma returns as
refugees, enmity and “blowback.”

5. Instead of assuming “zero-sum” games with winners and losers, let’s recognize that we’re all in this
together so we can nonviolently create “win-win” solutions.

6. Let’s replace the U.S.’s selfish, ineffective “national security” model with an egalitarian, compassionate “TRUE security” model.

**Let’s flesh these out:**

**1. Polarizing into “us” vs. “them,” and fearing “them” does not work. Instead, we must recognize that ALL people are ONE human family, and that our safety depends on helping other people feel safe.**

We have been polarized into thinking in terms of “us” vs. “them.” Oppressors polarize us by nationality, just like they polarize us by race, religion, sexual orientation, and other factors. Oppressors use this “divide-and-conquer” strategy in order to keep oppressed people – including ordinary people from all nations – from joining together into a large powerful majority to nonviolently fight the oppressive elites.

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.

**2. The U.S. is NOT entitled to bully other nations. Actually, NO nation should bully any other nation. We would be more secure if we promoted compassion, fairness and cooperation among nations.**

A longstanding problem within the U.S. is our mistaken notion that our nation is “the beacon of liberty” –that the U.S. is so righteous and so blessed by God 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 try to warn us about the climate crisis.

Nationalism and “American exceptionalism” allow powerful Americans to feel entitled to exploit other nations and their natural resources. Instead, let’s recognize that other nations’ PEOPLE – not their elites or the U.S.’s elites – have the right to determine what to do with their nations’ natural resources.

Our militaristic foreign policy has “normalized” war and violence – both in how we treat other nations and in how police function within the U.S. Defining “victory” in militaristic terms is stupid. The U.S. kept saying that Vietnam’s “body counts” showed that we were winning the Vietnam War, but actually the U.S. lost the war.

During the Vietnam War, U.S. Senator William Fulbright denounced what he called “the arrogance of power.” The specific context was the Vietnam War, which he strongly opposed. The U.S.’s “arrogance of power” persists throughout our foreign policy.

Let’s reject the cynical, militaristic assumption that “might makes right.” Instead, let’s support honest, profound ethics and replace militarism with an egalitarian worldview that seeks every person’s well-being.

**3. Violence does NOT solves problems, but only makes problems worse.**

Many movies (Westerns, crime movies, spy movies, etc.) end with a big shoot-out or explosion or other violence at the end. In these fictions, violence resolves the problems just before the movie ends. This is called “the myth of redemptive violence.” Mainstream public opinion – and both big political parties – base our foreign policy on “the myth of redemptive violence.”

We waste hundreds of billions of dollars on endless, unwinnable wars that only make problems worse, because of the widespread and mistaken assumption that violence solves problems.

Let’s help people understand that violence does NOT solve problems. Violence ITSELF is the problem! Let’s create a foreign policy that affirms truth, fairness and peace. Let’s convert to NONVIOLENT ways of solving problems – at both international and the domestic levels.

**4. Everything is interconnected, so when the U.S. treats other nations badly, the karma returns as refugees, enmity and “blowback.”**

When we study the environment, we learn that everything is interconnected. We cannot practice “isolationism” from other nations. We must interact with them based on fairness and diplomacy instead of exploitation and war. Whatever we do to other nations produces feedback loops.

Some religious traditions refer to ***karma*** –whatever we do comes back to us. So, for example, more than half a century ago the Pentagon and CIA recognized that people elsewhere would retaliate against the U.S. because of what we have done to them. They call it “blowback,” which includes terrorism. That’s bad karma.

The U.S.’s greed, exploitation, and other sins against the earth’s environment also come back to hurt us in the form of the climate crisis, and refugees fleeing dictatorships and environmental devastation.

We must stop grabbing more than our fair share of the world’s natural resources – and stop using threats and violence against other nations. Then we would have more friends, and we could solve global problems through diplomacy and mediation and nonviolent strategies.

**5. Instead of assuming “zero-sum” games with winners and losers, let’s
recognize that we’re all in this together so we can nonviolently create
“win-win” solutions.**

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.

Many of our nation’s political, economic and social problems were caused by a shortage of empathy – a failure to recognize other people’s needs and our common humanity. We need to replace selfishness and oppression with a humble appreciation for every person’s inherent value, dignity and rights. We can solve conflicts 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 actually are naive and unrealistic are those who think that military violence will solve the world’s problems.

**6. Let’s replace the U.S.’s selfish, ineffective “national security” model with an egalitarian, compassionate “TRUE security” model.**

The U.S.’s militaristic foreign policy 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 and desperation, protecting the environment, developing “green” energy, etc.
3. It misleads the public into thinking that violence solves problems, when the real solutions are nonviolent.

Instead of military violence we need worldwide fairness and peace. Only that would provide real “national security.” Below I propose a radical alternative to “national security” that would provide “TRUE security,” which would be more profound and more truly secure.

Nationalism and militarism are false idols. 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. Behavior that is greedy, domineering and cruel will end up hurting us. But if we act with wisdom, compassion and fairness, everyone will end up better off.

Many politicians want us to fear other races and other religions. Instead, let’s recognize that all people are one human family, and we all share one earth. NOBODY can be secure until EVERYBODY is secure. Let’s focus on “TRUE security” instead of selfish “national security.”

We would be more secure with less military! We’d be more secure by pursuing “the common good” globally and a nonviolent foreign policy. In order to achieve TRUE security the U.S. shout stop bullying and dominating other countries, and instead work with them fairly and cooperatively.

Instead of assuming that “national security” is a zero-sum game in which we compete with others, let’s instead help all nations enjoy friendly relationships, self-determination, human rights and sustainability.

Instead of military violence, let’s practice creative nonviolence worldwide.

Let’s replace fear and animosity with love and compassion. Let’s replace raw power with profound justice and peace.

**Conclusion:**

Ironically, while the whole world becomes more afraid of violence, militarism is actually a major root cause of the violence – a root cause of people’s fears in the first place! We cannot achieve security by making other nations insecure. A good first step is to recognize our common humanity and refuse to let people make you afraid of “the other” (other nations, religions, sexual orientations, etc.). We must promote love, compassion, nonviolence, human rights and egalitarianism.

The U.S.’s militarism is deeply bi-partisan, so merely replacing Republicans with Democrats will not solve the underlying problem. Let’s:

* Close ALL of the U.S.'s 800 military bases in 80 countries.
* Support the United Nations Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.
* Teach nonviolent conflict resolution in all schools from the K-12 level on up.

To achieve peace – and be safe – we must eliminate all or nearly all of the military. Then we can use the financial savings to help people become even more secure by ending poverty, providing everyone with education, safe drinking water, good health care, a sustainable environment, and a safe climate. De-militarizing would help EVERYONE be safe and secure.

Let’s replace cynicism and despair with empowerment and hope! Read what I wrote about this and posted to my blog: <http://parallaxperspectives.org/we-can-replace-cynicism-and-despair-with-empowerment-and-hope>

From time to time I offer a series of six workshops on “Nonviolent Grassroots Organizing” that will strengthen your ability to organize nonviolent grassroots movements for social and political change. Contact me at (360) 491-9093 or glenanderson@integra.net

See relevant parts of my blog [www.parallaxperspectives.org](http://www.parallaxperspectives.org), such as the categories for “Peace” and “Nonviolence.”