

US and Global History: The Arrows and the Olive Branch

By Wayne Lavender

Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. Citizens of the United States are proud of their history and place in the world, and with good reason. From small colonial outposts at Jamestown and Plymouth early in the 17th Century the nation grew and developed, first gaining independence from the British Empire, later surviving a bloody Civil War and emerging from the two World Wars as a super power. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union the US became the world's dominant power whose influence is unprecedented in world history. All of this took place in less than 400 years.

The US achieved its position as today's global power the old fashioned way – like previous empires the US achieved population and economic growth that fueled military expansion and conquest. Today the US dominates the world via its economic and cultural influence, backed by military strength. Make no mistake, as Adrian Lewis reminds us, “The United States became a ‘superpower’ through war, and has retained that status because of war.” (Lewis 2007:7) In a way, we can say that war became a friend of the US on its rise and to the top.

But the United States has always understood

itself as more than a military empire: like the two faced Greek god Janus who looks in separate directions, citizens of the United States have historically tried to balance the demands of defense and security with the desire for peace. The bald eagle

on the nation's Great Seal symbolizes this ongoing

tension: the eagle clutches in one talon an olive branch displaying 13 leaves and olives while in



its other it holds 13 arrows. The olive branch is a symbol of peace – the arrows, a statement that the US is also prepared for war. The eagle faces to its right, towards the olive branch and away from the arrows, indicating a preference for peace.

Recent history seems to demonstrate the US preference for peace has been replaced with a worldview more inclined to war – at least evinced by the US Federal Budget, through the large number of US military bases around the world and the frequent use of this military by US leaders. Today's US military spending exceeds the combined federal spending for international development and diplomacy by 20 times. Total military spending by the US dwarfs the military spending of every other country and is, in fact, larger than all of the other nations' military spending combined. (Kilcullen 2009:22) With 735 bases in over 120 nations around the world and a willingness to use this military prowess, the US is today's global empire. Symbolically speaking, the eagle on the Great Seal has shifted its gaze from the olive branch to the arrows. This "unbalanced" (R. M. Gates 2009) preference towards military spending as opposed to diplomatic and developmental projects is problematic. Policies that continue to support the arrow over and above the olive branch will likely fail in the long-term for two primary reasons: first, these policies and this great military spending is economically and morally unsustainable, and second, today's global issues and problems will require far more than military capacity to solve. Seeing the world and international conflict primarily through a militaristic lens and worldview is an archaic and counterproductive course that shows a poverty of new ideas, especially in light of the complex and dynamic problems within today's global village. Somehow, we must encourage the eagle to return its gaze to its right and embrace the olive branch, peace and the world's nations. Perhaps, a policy window has opened in which the US can lead the world towards a new reality and destiny: it is time for the US to lead humanity into

the golden age of peace and justice. But this policy window is small and likely to close if the US does not act quickly and decisively.

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Current Military Spending by the US is Unsustainable

The price to project military power and the ongoing expenses of maintaining a large standing army are enormous, as anyone who has ever considered this subject must acknowledge. Total US military spending is approximately double the official Department of Defense (DoD) budget because many line items associated with national defense are not listed herein. The War in Afghanistan, the Veteran's Administration, the Department of Homeland Security (clearly defense-related spending), the nuclear weapons program (these costs are listed under the Department of Energy's budget), the counterterrorism activities of the State Department, the National Intelligence Program, pensions of retired military and civilian employees and a percentage of the US federal interest on the debt are all expenses not listed, but should be considered part of the DoD budget. Robert Higgs calculated that total US military spending surpassed the \$1 trillion mark in 2007 (Higgs 2007) and that number has continued to increase in the years since. Chris Hellman estimates the total cost of the US military budget for 2012 at \$1.2 trillion. (Hellman 2011)

The cost to wage war is extraordinarily high. Expenses for any war carry on well beyond the time frame of the conflict itself as medical bills, pensions and other services continue throughout the lifetime of the soldiers – and beneficiaries (rightly so). Expenses for WW II service men and

women peaked in 1991 – 46 years after the conflict ended. US financial

3

obligations to its WW II veterans will continue until the last soldier, marine, sailor or airman or woman dies, likely in another 25 – 30 years (the last WW I soldier, Frank Buckles, died on February 27, 2011 at the age of 110. His death came 93 years after that war ended). The same rule of thumb applies to veterans of the other wars as well: US citizens will continue to pay the cost of the Wars in Korea, Vietnam, the first Gulf War and now the Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan well into the 21st Century.

Joseph Stiglitz and Linda Blimes calculated in 2008 that the immediate and long-term cost of the War in Iraq was \$3 trillion. (Stiglitz and Bilmes 2008) The War in Iraq continued another three years after Stiglitz and Blimes completed their work. Further, their calculations did not include the immediate and long-term costs of the War in Afghanistan. It seems likely that if we were to add three more years of expenses from the War in Iraq plus the total expenses of the War in Afghanistan (which continues today) the total cost to the US taxpayers for these two wars will be well beyond the calculation of Stiglitz and Blimes.

This is not new information: even Adam Smith recognized the high cost of war. He wrote these words in his seminal work, *The Wealth of Nations*:

Such are the people who compose a numerous and splendid court, a great ecclesiastical establishment, great fleets and armies, who in time produce nothing, and in time of war acquire nothing which can compensate the expense of maintaining them, even while the war lasts. Such people, as they themselves produce nothing, are all maintained by the produce of other men's labour," (A. Smith 1991:306)

And

No foreign war of great expense or duration could conveniently be carried on by the exportation of the rude produce of the soil. The expense of sending such a quantity

of it to a foreign country as might purchase the pay and provisions of an army would be too great. Few countries produce much more rude produce than what is sufficient for the subsistence of their own inhabitants. To send abroad any great

4

quantity of it, therefore, would be to send abroad a part of the necessary subsistence of the people.” (A. Smith 1991:389)

There are many fallen empires that validate Smith’s position on the subject of war. Consider the Middle East, which has been a graveyard of empires for millennium. Think of the Medes, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks (under Alexander the Great), Romans, the Umayyad Dynasty, the Abbasids, Ghenghis Khan and Timur, the Ottomans and, in more recent centuries, the Russian, British and Soviets. If you read history you will find that these and other empires all followed a similar pattern: economic and population growth foster military strength and conquest which in turn leads to overextension, decline and fall. (Kennedy 1987) Although no one can tell the future, history can be used as a guide: unless the US finds an alternative paradigm of war making, its time at the top will likely end just like the others.

If the goal of bin Laden and his colleagues were to draw the US into the Middle East for a protracted, expensive and ultimately negative experience for the US, then they were successful. This is what bin Laden and other al Qaeda leaders said beginning in 2004. (Wright 2006) But al Qaeda never had the means or capacity to threaten US sovereignty, freedom, independence or dominion. That they were capable of great damage and a horrific loss of life was demonstrated on that fateful September day, but the US has overacted and as a result has paid far more than was lost during the attacks. The US needs to acknowledge, as Eric Hobsbawm stated, that, “the actual dangers to world stability, or to any *stable state*, from the activities of the Pan-Islamic terrorist networks against which American proclaimed its global war, or for that matter the sum

total of all the terrorist movements now in action anywhere, are negligible.” (Hobsbawm 2008:49 – 50)

5

But the cost of these wars is anything but negligible. Currently the US total debt is approaching 100 percent of its GDP, and is well over \$1 trillion per year. The US Congress, politicians, members of the media and citizens debate endlessly about the need to cut US federal spending and / or the need to raise revenues, but rarely is military spending brought into this equation. As a matter of fact, there are numerous situations in which the DoD has recommended cost saving measures and the US Congress has “over ruled” the Pentagon, placing the items the military leaders feel are obsolete, redundant or ineffective back into the budget. Notable examples of this include military base closings (BRAC), the F – 22 Raptors and a third DDG 1000 destroyer. (J. Smith and Nakashima 2009)

Further, those who argue that the US can reduce its military spending are often treated as naïve, un-American, ignorant or weak. Even Robert Gates, former Secretary of Defense under George W. Bush and Barack Obama, was put on the defensive when the proposed DoD budget for 2010 showed only a six percent increase over the 2009 budget. He quipped: “Only in the parallel universe that is Washington, D.C., would that [an *increase* in the DoD budget for FY 2010 but not as large an increase as some argued for] be considered ‘gutting’ defense.” (R. Gates 2009) US military spending is the elephant in the budget, taking up by far the greatest portion of the US federal discretionary budget.

Total US military spending is helping to draw the US further into debt, depriving its citizens of necessary resources and taking the nation down a road previously taken by other powerful

nations towards decline. In 2008 Miriam Ehrlich Williamson wrote: “My town is one of the smallest in Massachusetts, with a population of just over 750 people. The National Priorities Project says we will pay \$1.8 million of the funds Congress has already appropriated for the war on Iraq. Coincidentally, that’s the amount of this year’s municipal budget, voted at a

6

real town meeting.” (Williamson 2008) If we extrapolate from Williamson’s small town in Massachusetts to every town and city across the US we will begin to have an understanding of what the cost of war really is like for every citizen of the US and how these same funds could be repurposed for other priorities. How could this have happened? The US has for too long and too much embraced the arrow and made friends with war. While this strategy helped the US in its climb to the top new strategies must now be employed if the US is to remain as the world’s leading nation.

But we are not changing directions. Speaking just three days after the al Qaeda attacks on 11 September President George W. Bush declared: “Our responsibility to history is already clear: to answer these attacks and rid the world of evil.” While this might have been powerful emotional and political rhetoric, it proved to be impossible. Besides, does anyone believe that military invasions are a viable means in which to “rid the world of evil?” To be sure some men who were responsible for inflicting great suffering on innocent people (notably Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein) have been removed from the global stage, but at what price? The invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan have cost these nations hundreds of thousands of lives (some estimate the total killed in these nations over one million), forced the displacement of millions of persons and ruptured social and economic development for decades. Rather than “ridding” the world of evil it could easily be argued that US military actions have increased the iniquity,

immorality and injustice within these countries.

President Bush later said these words: “We will export death and violence to the four corners of the earth in defense of this great nation.” (Woodward 2002:352) This is, by definition, a promise to export evil (death and violence) to foreign nations. How can the US in one moment want to rid the world of evil, while in the next moment indicated it will do so by exporting death

and violence. Isn't this in and of itself the definition of evil? Instead of ridding the world of evil, the US has exported death and violence to two Middle Eastern nations, actions that in themselves can be described as evil and that have led to great human suffering and tragedy. The blowback potential from these wars is obvious.

That there will be further attacks against the US and its allies is likely. Despite the best efforts of the CIA, FBI, DHS (Department of Homeland Securities) and collaboration with international agencies dedicated to the protection of its citizens, the quest to eliminate the possibility of any and all attacks is impossible in a society as large and free as the United States. In fact, the level of anger against the US in the Arab and Muslim worlds is higher than it was before the al Qaeda attacks as a result of the military invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan. In a simple “if – then construct,” if the level of anger and hatred against the US in the Middle East has increased, then it is likely there will be more attacks against the people of the US.

The best way to reduce the level of anger and hatred in the Middle East and around the world and mitigate future “evil deeds” would be to embrace the olive branch, to turn from arrows, war, death and destruction. Only then will the US be able to create the so-called *Pax Americana*, a peace built through cooperation, collaboration and justice. How the US can achieve this is the subject to which we will not turn our attention.

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The Real Axis of Evil

When President George W. Bush identified Iraq, Iran and North Korea as the “Axis of Evil” during his State of the Union speech in 2003, theologian William Sloan Coffin countered with these words: “President Bush Jr. rightly spoke of the ‘axis of evil’ but it is not Iran, Iraq, and

8

North Korea. Here is a very likely trio calling for Herculean efforts to defeat: environmental degradation, pandemic poverty, and a world awash with weapons.” (Coffin 2004:111) If we accept, for the sake of this essay, a broad definition of evil as the violation and / or intent to violate a moral code or standard and as the dualistic opposite of good, we are left to ponder whether the statement by President Bush or William Sloan Coffin is closer to the truth. Whose axis of evil will prove more deadly in the 21st Century? Will it be Iran, Iraq and North Korea, or environmental degradation, pandemic poverty and a world awash in weapons? From a cosmopolitan perspective, Coffin is most likely correct. While Iraq, Iran and North Korea had, at the time of President Bush’s 2002 State of the Union speech, dictatorial, repressive regimes (and still do today to varying degrees), their actual threat to the US and / or their own people are small in comparison to Coffin’s list. Global climate change is already playing a significant and negative role in the lives of many of the world’s people, and is likely to create enormous problems in the coming decades. Further, the World Health Organization estimates that 10 million children die annually from the effects of extreme poverty – a staggering figure, and millions more are killed from weapons with both small and great destructive capacities.

Environmental Degradation / Global Climate Change

An essay published by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (PNAS) in June 2010 reports that 97 percent of all scientists involved in global climate change research are convinced that global climate change is real and is caused (or made worse) by human activity. (Anderegg et al. 2010) Here is an update:

- The arctic ice cap is melting.

9

- The great ice field and glaciers on Greenland are melting, as are the glaciers in the Himalayas, Andes, and western North America.
- The oceans are warming.
- The oceans are becoming more acidic.
- The edges of the Amazon Rain Forest are dying and the center is in danger of the same. • The great boreal forests of North America are dying.
- The Canadian and Russian permafrost is melting and releasing methane into the atmosphere, creating a feedback loop that is exacerbating climate change. (McKibben 2010:45)

Exactly what this means is unclear since this is unprecedented in human history. What it could mean, however, is that during the 21st Century ocean rises of up to 20 feet can be expected and that the pH level of the ocean will continue to drop (they have already dropped from 8.2 to 8.1 and are estimated to drop to 7.8 by mid century.) (McKibben 2010:9 – 10) Global temperatures will continue to rise and increase by 6 – 8 degrees Celsius, which will lead to the destruction of much of the land now used for agriculture and the death of most sea life as we know it.

The Pentagon is aware of this threat, and commissioned a report on the threat to the US and world from the effects of global climate change in 2002. An unclassified version of this report

was released to the public under the leadership of Peter Schwartz. Included in the summary of that report was the following: “As the planet's carrying capacity shrinks, an ancient pattern reemerges: the eruption of desperate, all-out wars over food, water, and energy supplies. As Harvard archeologist Steven LeBlanc has noted, wars over resources were the norm until about three centuries ago. When such conflicts broke out, 25% of a population's adult males usually died. As abrupt climate change hits home, warfare may again come to define human life.” (Stipp 2004)

10

It was Ben Franklin who coined this proverb: “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” If the US is to lead the world into the 21st Century it must come to grips with the reality of global climate and its potential for devastating consequences for the human family in the present and coming decades and take preventative actions now that will reduce the potential impacts to populations.

Pandemic Poverty

The news today on CNN, BBC and across the world's newspapers is the ongoing conflict in Syria, one of the nations affected by the Arab Spring but where the government of Bashar al Assad stubbornly clings to power. An article in the New York Times from April 13, 2012, citing sources from the UN, reports that an estimated 9,000 persons have died from the conflict and that thousands more have fled. (Anon 2012) Other news includes a local murder, teen suicides and a drowning. Earlier this year I recall two leading stories that dominated the news cycle for a few days: one, a train crash in Poland that claimed 15 lives and injured 60 while tornadoes touched down in the United States killing another 35. Tomorrow's news may lead with a ship sinking off the coast of a Central American nation or a typhoon in Asia that killed 100 persons, the next day

about hikers lost somewhere in a freak blizzard or a bus accident in which some persons were killed. These stories – significant global events that capture our attention – pale in comparison to the ongoing daily death toll of 26,000 children who die as the result of extreme poverty. Invisible to the world's press, the majority of these children die from preventable causes, ranging from HIV / AIDS, malaria, malnutrition, dysentery, disease and war.

Imagine 26,000 children dying on a daily basis. This is over eight times the number of persons killed on September 11, 2001, and almost three times the number of persons killed so far

11
in Syria. *This is the number of children who die every day around the planet.* This number, 26,000, equates to 10 million on an annual basis. Ten years since the attacks on 9-11 has resulted in approximately 100 million children dead from extreme poverty – a truly staggering statistic, and certainly far worse than anything Iran, Iraq or North Korea are capable of. The US, along with other nations, lack of a viable response to this staggering human tragedy is an indictment of its moral character.

A full 40 percent of the world's population lives in abject poverty. The gap between the rich and poor, between the haves and have-nots, presents “natural incubators of grievance and instability.” (Hobsbawm 2008:50) Policies that continue to ignore or deny this reality fail to recognize that tomorrow's terrorists, wars and conflicts are likely to emerge from these settings. Addressing the root causes of extreme poverty is costly, but in relation to the cost of war is an ounce next to a pound.

Who could argue that peace begins when the hungry have food, when persons have access to potable water, decent housing, education, health care and sustainable employment? These basic human rights provide people with hope for a better future and allow for the rule of

law to be established and for the development of civil society. If it is true that peace begins when the hungry are fed, then the converse is also true. War begins when people are hungry. Wars begin when people lose hope. Free market globalization has led to dramatic global economic and social inequalities. Unless something is done to help those living in extreme poverty to break out of the poverty trap a “surge of inequality” will be at the root of social and political tension in the coming years. (Hobsbawm 2008:ix)

A World Awash in Weapons

12

The United States is, and has been since the end of World War II, the leading manufacturer and exporter of military equipment and weapons around the world. (Kolko 2002) Throughout the Cold War a “Donor – Recipient Relationship Model” was developed wherein the US gave or sold weapons to 160 different nations. (Mott 2002:iv, 57) Today, despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and end of the Cold War, military export contracts continue to grow:

The international trade in weapons is big business. In fact, it is currently worth in excess of \$25 billion per year. The United States is the world's biggest arms exporter (its exports totaled \$13.6 billion in 2003), followed by the UK (\$4.7 billion), Russia (\$3.4 billion), the Ukraine (\$1.5 billion), France and Germany (both \$1.2 billion). (Acton 2006)

We must also acknowledge that these weapons are the commodities of war. The exportation by the US of these weapons contributes to the deaths of innocent men, women and children around the world, from the deaths in Mexico to the jungles of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Further, US military exports seem to be fueling an arms race in the Middle East and could potentially lead to a catastrophic war in this conflict ridden, unstable region. The US gifts Israel with \$3.5 billion in weapons each year while selling to Saudi Arabia and its allies \$2.5 billion. The US provides military equipment and training to Egypt, Turkey and Jordan, and in the past decade transferred \$20 billion in military equipment to Pakistan. Recently the US signed a contract with Iraq in which 36 F-16 fighter jets will be sold to Iraq, of which the first 24 will be delivered in 2014. Add to this mix the recently completed war in Iraq and ongoing war in Afghanistan (with Iran in between) and we have the ingredients for a “perfect storm:” war waged by governments and quasi governments, sanctioned by religious leaders, supported by the populations and fought with weapons of mass destruction provided by the US. We are testing

13

Einstein’s prophetic hypothesis: “I do not know how the Third World War will be fought, but I can tell you what they will use in the Fourth – rocks!” (Calaprice 2005:173) Finally, weapons made in the US and sold legally by the US have been used against US troops in combat situations around the world. (Prestowitz 2003) “In almost every country where U.S. soldiers fought in the last two decades, they were attacked by weapons the United States had supplied.” (Stassen 2004:182) This is not a policy that makes sense.

It is clear that the availability of weapons and the great amount of weapons around the world has greatly contributed to “countless human casualties in global conflicts.” (Boese 2007) The lack of any international standards or regulations concerning the global trade of weapons tells us that the rich and powerful nations want these practices to continue. Amnesty International reports that “there’s more regulation on the global trade of bananas and bottled water than guns and bullets.” (Amnesty International Staff 2012) The US, the most powerful nation on the planet, could take the lead and change this pattern by reducing its arms transfers

and advocating for international standards and regulations. The fact that it does not, and has not, worked for these changes indicate an ongoing preference for the arrows instead of the olive branch. However, these exports, while financially profitable to those working in the weapons industry, can be considered immoral and do contribute to current unstable situations and future instability.

The Opening of a Policy Window

In his book *Agenda, Alternative and Public Policies* John Kingdon describes “policy windows.”

A policy window is an opening in which new ideas or solutions to existing problems may be brought to the table and considered. Kingdon argues that policy windows are often brought

about by chance or by external circumstances and thus those interested in changing policies will be more productive in generating change once the window is open than in attempting to trigger policy windows. (Kingdon 1984)

An example of the opening of a policy window can be seen in the post 9-11 United States. The attacks on the US opened a window in which many policies could be changed, including the creation of the Department of Homeland Securities, the passage of the Patriot Act and the US – led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Without the attacks of September 11 it is unlikely any of these policies would have been accomplished.

Another example of a policy window was the election of Barack Obama in November 2008. His election, concurrent with Democrat Party control of the US Senate and House of Representatives, enabled the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act enacted by President Obama in March 2010. Advocates for effective gun control legislation or laws that

would significantly lower CO2 emissions are still waiting for a policy window in which they might effect change in these areas.

It was mentioned above that a policy window might have opened in which the US can again turn towards the olive branch and create an environment more likely to lead to a future of peace and justice. This policy window has opened now, I believe, for three primary reasons, these being 1) War weariness – A decade of international conflicts in which the US has participated has left many US citizens weary and disillusioned with what has taken place within Iraq and Afghanistan and skeptical about the efficacy of military solutions to contemporary issues, 2) a growing global conscience fueled by technological advances leading in social networking, international travel and trade and 3) a growing list of individuals and organizations determined to work for international peace, justice and economic development.

15

War Weariness

The US experience of war through WW II was like that of other nations through history: wars were fought, victory and defeat were clear and times of peace followed. During the Cold War the distinction between victory and defeat became blurred. The Wars in Korea and Vietnam are evidence of this, as is the so-called War on Terror. Aside from regime change in Iraq and Afghanistan, just what have these wars been about and what have they achieved? Iraq is today led by Iran – backed Shia Nouri al Maliki whose corruption and dictatorial tendencies appear to mirror those of Saddam Hussein, and Afghanistan seems certain to remain a quagmire for the foreseeable future. What are the positive benefits these wars have contributed at the cost of thousands of lives, billions of dollars and ten years of warfare?

Persons who are asking these questions range from a retired 4-star general whom I have

interviewed down to the enlisted soldiers who are stationed thousands of miles away from home and who are simply trying to stay alive. Others pondering these same questions include news commentators, members of the clergy, elected officials and persons on Main Street. We have abandoned George Washington's farewell advice in which he warned of "foreign entanglements" and of interconnecting "our peace and prosperity in the toils of European ambition, rivalry, interest, humor or caprice?" (Washington 1796) We have ignored John Quincy Adams, who said: "[America's] glory is not dominion, but liberty. Her march is the march of the mind. She has a spear and a shield: but the motto upon her shield is, Freedom, Independence, Peace. (Kennan 1950)

In hindsight, it is likely that the turning point for US support of the War in Vietnam changed when Walter Cronkite delivered his personal analysis of the war during a broadcast on CBS news on February 27, 1968. His report followed both the Tet Offensive and Cronkite's

visit to Vietnam. Although the War in Vietnam lasted another seven years Cronkite's frank and honest statement opened a policy window in which a negotiated settlement to the war was finally put on the table.

US support for the War in Afghanistan is low, as shown in polls conducted in April and May 2012 by the Pew Research Center, Fox News and AP – Gfk. (Gearan 2012; Blanton n.d.; Pew Research Staff 2012) The AP – Gfk poll found that 66 percent of those surveyed were opposed to the War in Afghanistan while only 27 percent were in favor; the Fox Poll indicated that 78 percent of those polled were in favor of withdrawing troops from Afghanistan with only 16 percent saying the troops should remain; with the Pew Research Center indicating that 60 percent favored withdrawing US troops 32 percent said the US troops should stay until the

situation stabilizes.

These polling numbers indicate public interest for the creation of a new policy for Afghanistan. By a 2:1 margin US citizens want the US military to leave Afghanistan. This creates a policy window for withdrawal. It also creates the potential for a larger policy window in which war weariness is connected to military spending and a worldview wherein a new paradigm is offered as the solution to international conflict and tension.

Global Consciousness

Face Book's membership is fast approaching 1 billion persons, approximately equal to the total world population in the year 1800. Everyone I know, it seems, is on Face Book and most have friends from different nations. International exchange programs and study abroad have led to a true level of sharing and understanding that did not exist even 100 years ago when only the extreme elite could travel internationally.

17

Face Book, Twitter, YouTube and other "new media" outlets have been credited with spurring the Arab Spring in Northern Africa and the Middle East, and can be used to help bring the human family together under one large umbrella. Today's young generations are digital natives – having grown up in a world of computers, cell phones, Internet and access to virtually instant information from all over the world. This generation has made social contacts – relationships – with persons from different nations, religions, cultures and races. They are unlikely to support wars in which people they know are perceived as "the enemy."

Historically, nations have sought to dehumanize the enemy in order to facilitate the ability to wage war and kill others. It was somehow easier to kill Germans if US soldiers

perceived them as “Huns,” likewise for citizens of Japan who could be described as “Japs.” But electronic social medias are making it more difficult for leaders or governments to use discriminatory imagery against a foreign nation’s population when individuals can see postings, pictures and information about these people.

The creation, spread and widespread usage of electronic social networking could be used to help create a policy window in human beings move forward in seeing all the people of the world as members of one large, extended family. While “family feuds” may continue, armed conflict and war between members of the same family can be reduced and eventually eliminated under the umbrella of peace and justice for all of the world’s people.

International Non – Governmental Organizations (INGO’s)

There are an estimated 40,000 International Non-Governmental Organizations operating today around the world, and many more working within nation’s borders. Some of the leaders of these INGO’s include Bill and Melinda Gates, Oprah, Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Brad and Angelina

and Madonna. Other INGO’s have developed well known reputations for the good works they have accomplished, such as Doctors Without Borders, Save the Children, Oxfam, Habitat for Humanity, Amnesty International and many more. These INGO’s operate for a variety of purposes, ranging from eliminating malaria and other tropical diseases, to providing potable water, sustainable agricultural projects, caring for orphans, etc.

The INGO’s are joined in humanitarian work by national and international organizations, including the US Peace Corps, USAID, UNICEF, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the European Union Humanitarian Office and many more. These, in turn, link

with religious organizations such as Church World Service, Catholic World Service, Jewish World Service, the Friends Service Committee, The United Methodist Committee on Relief, Lutheran World Service, the World Muslim Network, the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and many more.

Together, these organizations are working to raise consciousness and improve the conditions of the world's poorest humans. We all know persons who have volunteered to work in domestic or foreign locations to deliver aid, build homes, offer medical expertise or teach – again creating a global village wherein individuals are participating in informal, indirect acts of “citizen diplomacy.” (Gopin 2009) Once again these actions and those involved are potentially opening a window wherein legislation and policies can be passed in which the US leads the world towards peace with justice.

Conclusion

Harry S Truman is the only person in human history to have ordered the use of a nuclear bomb against an enemy – and he did it twice, against civilian populations, at the end of World War II –

19

this same Harry S Truman once said: “Let us not become so preoccupied with weapons that we lose sight of the fact that war itself is the real villain.” (Gearan 2012)

But the US has lost sight of this insight. In its rise to the top war was a friend, an ally, allowing the US to conquer a continent and emerge late last century as the world's unipolar power.

Like other nations that used war to conquer and extend their power and territory, military expenditures in today's global village is a double-edged sword – taking resources that could be

used to improve the human condition and directing them towards weapons that kill. The cost to maintain military bases around the world is extensive – the cost to wage war is much higher. The US is financing a military that is too large and unable to meet the real needs of the world's people at the beginning of the 21st Century, needs based on global climate change, extreme poverty and an overabundance of weapons.

I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to travel widely. I have lived in London, Mozambique and Iraq and have visited 13 other nations. I can testify that, based on my experience and conversations with people in these regions, the citizens of the world have a great desire for the United States to provide active leadership in the 21st Century – but this leadership must be focused on freedom, democracy, liberty and peace – the ideals the US was founded upon, and not on military power and war.

I have long said that the US needs to stop exporting tanks and instead export tractors. What I mean is that US technology, know-how, expertise and generosity can be used to help the world's people at this critical stage in human development. It seems relatively simple: the US can shift resources from war making to peace making and help create a new world. There will, of course, be setbacks. There will other terrorists' attacks and innocent persons killed: but the

20

US must be resilient and determined. In the eternal swing between war and peace now is the opportunity to embrace peace, to return to the olive branch, to study war no more. Americans have a great amount of pride and patriotism. The US is known internationally as the land of opportunity and home of the free. It is the nation that in four centuries grew from a colonial outpost of Europe to the world's most dominant nation.

But it is also a nation that, like all other empires before it, is over-extended and at the

point of collapse. If there is something truly unique in American Exceptionalism this is the time for these characteristics to be demonstrated. Otherwise, a world of conflict and warfare are likely to be the future, with the predictable US decline and failure soon expected.

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