

Achieving Peace by the Year 2000: Some Further Thoughts

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"Achieving Peace by the Year 2000" is the title of a short essay published in book form in 1988. Though it contained some discussion of the causes of war, its main focus was on an integrated 12-point proposal which might be used as a base for consultation on how to achieve an end to war between nations by the end of the century. It was addressed to a general audience, not just Baha'is, and was inspired by "The Promise of World Peace", the statement of the Universal House of Justice in response to the UN's declaration of 1985 as "The International Year of Peace". Its purpose was to follow up, as an informal footnote, the grand themes of that statement with some tentative suggestions on practical and technical aspects of the first steps towards a permanent end to war between nations.

In making these suggestions, the Baha'i Teachings on the first stages of the Lesser Peace were, in particular, born in mind: Abdu'l-Baha's statement about the First Candle of Unity – a confederation of the nations of the world responsible for fixing of frontiers, making war illegal, overseeing disarmament, and suggesting sources of income for the world confederation [these subjects are discussed in *The Prelude to the Lesser Peace* by Kathy Lee, India Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1989]. The twelve point proposal was as follows:

1. The various peace movements around the world should unite into a single "peace constituency", which would have as its main purpose the persuasion of all national governments that achieving peace should be their highest priority.
2. A world assembly should be convened which would have representation from all the governments of the world and which would have as its purpose the establishment of a permanent peace between nations by no later than the year 2000. The agenda might include seven draft international treaties.
3. The first TREATY, which would reinforce previous international agreements, would make it illegal, without exception, for nations to attack other nations. Such a treaty would remove any remaining ambiguities on this subject and provide a firm moral and legal basis for collective action against an aggressor.
4. The second TREATY would require every nation to abolish all its offensive weapons [experts acknowledge that increasing specialization has made it relatively easy now to distinguish offensive weapons from defensive weapons], including weapons of mass destruction, whilst permitting each one as many defensive weapons as it may consider necessary for its security, bearing in mind the other treaties that are proposed. Clearly such an arrangement would reduce the risk of aggression.
5. The third TREATY would strengthen peaceful sanctions that would apply against aggressor nations, by making adequate arrangements for equitable sharing of costs; by focussing on measures that would hurt the aggressor government, especially in the case of dictatorships, rather than the general population; and by application of secondary sanctions to nations that break international sanctions against an aggressor.
6. The fourth TREATY would establish a new "World Peace Council, to be appointed by the Security Council. The Council would be selected in such a way that it would have a global perspective rather than simply be representative of a collection of national interests [as has already been achieved in selection of the judges for the World Court]. Its main functions would be to enforce the decisions of the World Court, to manage the main-

tenance of peace, including declaration of the beginning and ending of sanctions, and to have authority over the World Peace Force [as mentioned under Point 8 below].

7. The fifth TREATY would strengthen and broaden the authority of the World Court. Arbitration of disputes between nations would be made compulsory rather than voluntary. The Court would also have the power to try war criminals and officials accused of gross human rights violations, and to hear charges brought by individuals as well as by governments. The strengthening of the authority of the World Court is a vital element in persuading grievant nations and others that they have a credible alternative to violence in resolving their grievances in an acceptable way. The professional and objective reputation already established by the Court adds, it was suggested, to the feasibility of this proposal.

8. The sixth TREATY would establish a "World Police Force" strong enough to separate national military forces on the verge of conflict, and if necessary to resist even the most powerful aggressor, bearing in mind Point 3 above [it was suggested that the Force should be at least a million strong]. Initially, such a force should be composed of earmarked and specially trained national units grouped around core units of elite, directly recruited troops [50-100,000 was suggested]. However, the objective would be to gradually expand the core group so that it could ultimately meet all needs. The very existence of an effective world police force would be another important factor in persuading nations to reduce their armaments as discussed in Point 3.

9. The seventh TREATY would establish independent funding for the World Police Force. The existing system of financing UN peace forces through national contributions is totally inadequate and unreliable because governments routinely are in arrears and sometimes simply do not pay up. This is no way to manage a serious international function on which the lives of millions may be dependent. Possible sources of funding which were suggested as equitable and practical included a global tax on use of non-renewable natural resources, including oil and other minerals, or a flat percentage tax on all sales.

10. Three supplementary actions were proposed, in addition to unification of the world peace movements, a world peace conference and seven international treaties. The first was renewed encouragement of women to play a much more equal role in public affairs and in particular for women's organizations to focus on peace as a high priority goal. For a variety of reasons, women everywhere have always tended to peaceful ways of conducting collective affairs, and this inclination is potentially a major factor in achieving a lasting peace.

11. A second supplementary suggestion was that peace studies should be included on a systematic basis in the education curriculum of all nations and at all levels: primary, secondary and tertiary, as a long term investment in a peace-oriented global culture, another vital factor in building a lasting peace.

12. Finally, it was suggested that there should be a conscious and comprehensive elimination of the rhetoric of war and the use of covert or subversive activities which have done so much in recent times to create a climate of suspicion and mistrust between nations.

These proposals were made at a time when the Cold War was still in operation, although there were strong indications that it was becoming less intense and might even come to an end at some point. Reflecting on them six years later, following a period in which there has been unprecedented progress towards the establishment of the Lesser Peace, I have the sense that they are still essentially valid. It might be argued that Point 12 is no longer necessary with the end of the Cold War regime of "dirty tricks" and hate-filled rhetoric but this practice could easily return and, in any case, still persists in certain areas of regional conflict. Others might argue that disarmament [Point 4] is a less critical issue than it was; but we are still threatened by the existence of a vast array of weapons of mass destruction, the possibility of proliferation of such weapons, and the risk that some grievant

government would be tempted to use them. Others might think the proposal for a World Peace Council [Point 9] is unnecessary now that the Security Council is apparently working more effectively and all that is needed is some expansion of the permanent membership to accommodate Japan, Germany and possibly India, and, say, Brazil. It seems to me this overlooks the possibility that the present apparent success will come to an end as new differences arise, particularly as a result of the perception, already evolving, that the Council is being used to promote, unduly, the interests of the rich industrial nations.

Finally, some may think that there is no longer a need for a united peace movement [Point 1]; but without such a movement, governments will most likely try to evade the major effort required to implement a comprehensive and systematic program to establish a lasting peace, as seems evident from the news each day.

Beyond all this, I will go further and suggest that the events of the last few years have, if anything, reinforced, rather than negated, the case for some of the proposals, most notably the "World Police Force" [Point 8], independent funding for that force [Point 9], improved policies and procedures with regard to non-military sanctions [Point 5], strengthening of the World Court [Point 7], and the convocation of a world conference on peace [Point 2]. I should like to briefly discuss these issues in turn.

First, with regard to "The World Police Force", it is apparent from experience with recent UN peace keeping and peace making operations, that the present system of creating, in response to each crisis as it arises, *ad hoc* forces from national units volunteered by various governments is highly inefficient and ineffective. One problem is the reluctance of governments to see "their boys" put in harm's way when their immediate vital interests are apparently not at risk, and as a result action is excessively slow and cautious, hardly a formula for military success. A second problem is that sometimes, as in Yugoslavia and Somalia, there is lack of unity in command and individual national units do not fully support one another. A third problem is lack of accountability, which can result, as in Cambodia, in ill-disciplined national units, nominally under the UN, abusing the country they are supposed to be assisting. A fourth problem is that occasionally a national unit under UN command is suspected of favoring one side or the other during a peace keeping operation, as has happened in Yugoslavia. A fifth is that sometimes a national unit will be sent to serve with UN forces without proper equipment to carry out its assignment. This has happened at least twice, in Somalia and in Yugoslavia. All these problems could be overcome if there were a World Police Force as suggested, a fact which is gradually being acknowledged, albeit reluctantly by "experts," in spite of their defensive skepticism about anything to do with world order [see, for instance, Brian Urquhart, the former UN Under Secretary for peacekeeping, in the New York Review of Books, 6.10.93].

Similarly, continued experience with present funding arrangements which have put some recent peacekeeping actions in jeopardy, as in Rwanda, has persuaded many that something has to be done to put the financing of UN military operations on a reliable basis. Suggestions have been made at the UN and in the press for capital endowments from the private sector, a "micro" tax on all international financial transactions, earmarking of peace dividends, etc. [see "Agenda for Peace", a report of the UN Secretary General to the Security Council, January, 1992, and, for instance, Lincoln Bloomfield in the Boston Globe, 10.13.94].

With regard to the application of non-military sanctions, there have been disturbing instances of the innocent poor being especially hard hit, as in Haiti and Iraq, whilst powerful guilty parties have actually been able to profit from sanction-induced shortages. Neighboring countries have made little effort to make sanctions watertight, either because this would cause them undue discomfort from lost trade or because of secret political sympathy with the offending government. Ill-directed and half-hearted sanctions bring the UN into disrepute and

thereby reduce the chances for peace. Again, experts are beginning to look for ways to make for more precise targeting of sanctions and for fairer sharing of their costs, as suggested in Point 4 of the 12-point proposal. Experience in the last six years has also prompted interest in broadening the function of the World Court, especially with regard to trials for war crimes. It is recognized that trials in the nation where the crimes took place may not be seen as fair, i.e., victors' justice, or they may be empty exercises which allow the criminals off without real punishment. The idea of having a standing arrangement for international trials of war crimes and other crimes against humanity would represent a logical step forward from the Nuremberg Trials after the Second World War, and would give strength to the machinery of international peace keeping.

Resistance to the idea of compulsory arbitration of disputes between nations by the World Court, although still strong in some countries, does, however, seem to be less hysterical than during the Cold War, and it is an issue that has to be pursued if a realistic approach to peace maintenance is to be established. ["Agenda for Peace" suggests that all nations should agree to accept arbitration by the Court by the year 2000].

Finally, I should like to address the question of a world peace conference. Though, as noted earlier, there has been a major advance in the last few years towards the Lesser Peace as many long standing conflicts around the world, linked directly or indirectly with the Cold War, have been brought to a more or less satisfactory conclusion, it has also been obvious that handling of new disputes has been disappointing due largely to systematic failures. Correcting this situation alone would justify a world peace conference. But beyond that, a conference would be more than justified to review the whole international system to see what needs to be changed to take advantage of the end of the Cold War, with a view to making war once and for all an impractical option for any nation. The possibility for success seems much greater than the last times such reviews were made at the end of the two other great global conflicts of our time, the First and Second World Wars, not least because today the imperial empires are gone, as are the great ideological divides, and democracy, which tends to be more law abiding and peaceful than authoritarian forms of government, prevails around the world for the first time in history.

On the other hand, there is no guarantee that such positive conditions will continue indefinitely, indeed there are already signs of new fault lines developing, for instance between Asia and Europe/America, between the rich and the poor countries, and between religious fundamentalism and secular consumerism. This suggests an urgency to make reforms before it is too late. An opportunity to stir the imagination is offered not simply by the precedents of 1919 and 1945, or by the fiftieth anniversary of the UN [1995], but by the fact that we are close to the end of the twentieth century. Why not win popular interest in the idea that war, that great scourge of civilization, can and will be abolished this century, just as slavery, that equally abhorrent institution which had seemed also to be an inevitable price for civilization, was voluntarily abolished in the nineteenth century. To give the conference and its deliberations even more weight it should be more than a conventional conference of representatives of all the governments of the nations, but, a true parliament of the people of the world, on the model described by 'Abdu'l-Baha, with directly elected representatives confirmed in office by their respective national governments.

A useful step in this direction was taken at the 1992 Rio Conference on the Environment, which was attended, not only by representatives of 175 governments, including 105 heads of state and national administrations, but also by some 30,000 interested and committed "world" citizens.