In Theory

Long Peace or Long War: A Conflict Resolution Perspective

Louis Kriesberg

Since the end of the 1980s, both the incidence and severity of violent conflicts and of domestic and international wars have declined globally. These declines are attributable to the convergence of many developments that help prevent, limit, and stop large-scale violence, and the author suggests that those developments persist. Consequently, he suggests that the recent U.S. engagement in wars and recent surges in terrorist attacks are limited spikes in violence that can be overcome. The author discusses how the current violent events may be in part a consequence of behaviors of the U.S. government and other governmental and nongovernmental organizations that are contrary to the major developments that contribute to global peace and cooperation. Governments and peoples acting in concert with those ongoing changes can help reduce the current mass violence.

Key words: peace, violence, counterterrorism, foreign policy, George W. Bush.

Decreasing Large-Scale Violence

Presently, the world seems to be in a state of rising global antagonisms and violence. The U.S. government is engaged in a Global War on Terrorism,

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now renamed by some officials and analysts as the Long War (Safire 2006). But could this current state of affairs be only a limited regression among powerful and growing peace-supporting developments? Could all this war be interrupting a "Long Peace"?

Evidence indicates that this may be the case. In this article, I will first examine the overall decline in violent conflicts and wars since the end of the 1980s and the reasons for it. Next, I will discuss the nature of the current upsurge in wars and mass violence in the Middle East and Central Asia and its sources. Finally, I will consider policies that may build on powerful developments that nurture peace.

Despite ongoing violence in Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan/Darfur, and, of course, Iraq, and widespread intercommunal strife and terrorist attacks around the world, there is systematic evidence in many analyses that large-scale violence actually has decreased since the end of the 1980s. Recent studies report that the incidence of civil wars declined steeply beginning in 1992, after having increased steadily from 1946 until 1991 (Eriksson and Wallensteen 2004; Human Security Centre 2006b; Marshall and Gurr 2005). International wars did not vary as greatly, but they rose initially in the 1980s, and then they also declined, beginning in the late 1980s. (Wars are defined as conflicts with at least 1,000 battle-deaths in a year.) Smaller-scale violent conflicts, incurring at least twenty-five battle-deaths in a year, also declined.

Not only has the incidence of deadly conflict declined, the number of battle-deaths occurring as part of these conflicts also declined in the 1990s. The conflicts I have mentioned so far are state-based conflicts, whether waged between states or between a state and a nonstate challenger. Many deadly conflicts, however, are waged between nonstate actors, representing different ethnic, religious, or ideological groups. There is evidence that such conflicts have also declined since the end of the 1980s.

One form of deadly violence that *has* increased since the end of the 1980s is terrorist attacks. The terms "terrorist attack" or "terrorism" are disputed and often used by one side in a conflict as a way of condemning violence committed by its enemy (Schmid 2004). The data on trends cited here refer to attacks carried out by nongovernmental actors primarily targeting noncombatants. The incidence of significant international attacks, and also the number of casualties from such attacks, increased greatly between 1982 and 2003 (Human Security Centre 2006a,b).

The incidence of armed conflicts decreases when their occurrence is prevented, when they are ended quickly, and when their recurrence is avoided. Since around 1990, many large-scale conflicts were prevented from escalating destructively, for example, when the Czech and Slovak republics separated and when Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia became independent of the former Soviet Union. Many protracted and bloody conflicts were trans-formed and settlements negotiated in the 1990s, for example, in the

conflicts in South Africa, Northern Ireland, Mozambique, and in Central America (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua) (Wallensteen 2002).

Nevertheless, obviously, several extremely bloody conflicts erupted in the 1990s and afterwards, and some that began earlier have persisted. This is evident in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and the Congo. Indeed, systematic studies reveal great regional variations in incidence and severity of violent conflicts. Sub-Saharan Africa had a rising number of armed conflicts after the end of World War II, which remained high in the 1990s, but then declined. Central and South Asia increased sharply in the 1990s, reaching as high as Sub-Saharan levels in some years (Human Security Centre 2006a).

Many explanations have been offered to account for the widespread decline in wars and other violent conflicts since the end of the 1980s. There is no consensus about the relative importance of the various explanations, but it is likely that several developments have converged to account for the global decrease in international and domestic violent conflicts, and, in conjunction with particular policy choices and local circumstances, to account for variations in the declines and also for particular increases in violence, where such increases have occurred.

Eight recent developments that are generally conducive to peace warrant attention here. Their magnitude and relevance vary in different places and at different times, and in particular circumstances they may conversely contribute to the outbreak and persistence of violent conflicts. Of course, other events and developments have tended to exacerbate conflicts, and they will be discussed later in this essay.

The eight recent developments or "peace factors" are:

1. The end of the Cold War, which was marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, made immediate and long-term contributions to peace. The Cold War had aided the emergence and the perpetuation of conflicts in Central America, parts of Africa, and elsewhere; its end resulted in the settlement of many of these conflicts (Kriesberg 2006b). The end of the Cold War also had longer-term effects. Most dramatically, the United Nations and other international governmental organizations, which were often unable to function effectively to prevent, stop, or recover from wars because of the Cold War, were able to undertake peace missions after the Cold War had ended. U.N. and Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) operations increased greatly and with significant peacemaking effect.

    The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 following the end of the Cold War unleashed many national and ethnic conflicts, some of which escalated violently, within and between ethnic groups in Central Asia and the Caucuses (in Azerbaijan and Chechnya, for example). That the increase in violent conflicts in the former Soviet Union was not even

greater than it was is largely due to other consequences of the end of the Cold War, particularly the growth and efficacy of the OSCE and other international organizations (Ramsbotham 2005; Wallensteen 2002).

2. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the U.S. emerged as the single global superpower and was able to assume a more dominant role in Eastern Europe and around the world. During the administrations of Presidents George H. W. Bush and William Clinton, however, the U.S. government, in managing the end of the Cold War and through the 1990s, engaged in policies that gave considerable weight to international organizations and multilateral diplomacy. They made considerable use of great American "soft power" capabilities (Nye 2004). This may be seen in the peaceful withdrawal of Soviet military forces from Eastern Europe and the peaceful reunification of Germany.

3. The remaining developments had begun decades prior to the 1990s. The intensification of globalization, marked by increasing economic integration and by the expansion of transnational communication, tends to make international wars less worthwhile. The economic benefits from trade and investments are greater than what might be won by imperial wars, and the costs of war are greater because of the more extensive dislocations they cause. Furthermore, internal disorders are more likely to have external impacts, and, consequently, external actors are more likely to intervene to limit or end a violent disorder. These developments, however, do not uniformly contribute to peacemaking. Some groups in many countries have experienced economic dislocations and deprivations as a result of the rapid increase in global economic integration.

4. Particular philosophies and schools of thought about peace have developed and gained adherents, and include the development of norms for the protection of human rights, for tolerance of differences, and for opposition to recourse to wars and other large-scale violence. The adoption of these principles helps ensure domestic conditions that prevent conflicts from emerging and escalating destructively. Furthermore, they provide justification for external interventions to prevent or stop domestic and international outbreaks of violence (Walter 2002).

   These principles (including, e.g., the rights of women, workers, and ethnic and religious minorities) are seen by many, however, as threats to their traditional beliefs. Some religious true believers are offended by the secular and relativistic orientation of some of these principles and consequently resist them. In particular localities, a vigorous backlash may occur.

5. Democracies have lessened the likelihood of violent domestic strife and rarely, if ever, wage overt wars against each other. Between 1990

and 2003, the number of countries with democratic forms of government increased by nearly half (Human Security Centre 2006b). Thus, the increase in the number of democratic countries has also likely helped reduce the incidence in domestic and international wars, and other violent conflicts. The transition to democracy from authoritarian rule, however, is often difficult and sometimes violent.

6. National and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have proliferated, advancing the civil society in more and more countries, and linking them in a nascent global society. This expands communication, knowledge, and interdependence. In addition, NGOs are increasingly providing services to prevent recourse to violence as well as to help societies recover from destructive violence. Such NGOs include Human Rights Watch, Physicians without Borders, Oxfam, the International Trade Union Confederation, and the International Chamber of Commerce.

7. Feminism, both as a way of thinking and as manifested in a greater role of women in public affairs, has been a powerful ongoing social revolution. Because women's public engagement is associated with decreased likelihood of violent conflict, their increased political participation can be expected to dampen recourse to wars (Marshall and Ramsey 2005; Melander 2005). Systematic evidence supports this pattern despite the conduct of individual women leaders on occasion in such nations as Britain, Israel, and Sri Lanka.

8. Finally, the field of conflict resolution has grown greatly since the early 1980s. Certificate programs, training workshops, and graduate degree programs have rapidly proliferated in the U.S. and elsewhere. The ideas and the methods of contemporary conflict resolution have been incorporated into both training and practice in business organizations and government agencies in handling external as well as internal conflicts. Numerous NGOs, such as International Alert, Search for Common Ground, and the Carter Center, apply the conflict resolution approach at various conflict stages. The ideas of conflict resolution have been influential in many areas of social life and in countries around the world. They have been applied in helping adversaries to de-escalate their conflict, to negotiate effectively, and to implement agreements (Kriesberg 2006b; Ramsbotham 2005). Many people, of course, also practice sound conflict resolution methods because they seem sensible under the circumstances, without attending to the theory, research, or teaching about the methods.

The conflict resolution approach stresses that state or group representatives should carefully analyze a conflict before engaging in it, whether as a partisan or intermediary. This process of analysis should

include recognizing the various interests of all the parties in the conflict and acknowledging the diversity within the constituent members of each party as well as of the coalitions of which they may be a part. Such an examination may make it possible to disaggregate the enemy or to reframe the conflict. This approach also encompasses a wide variety of methods for waging and settling fights, such as proposing mutually beneficial solutions, using nonviolent means of struggle such as protests and boycotts, turning to problem-solving negotiation, seeking mediation, and establishing nonofficial channels of communication.

The convergence of these eight developments can account for the dramatic decline in international and civil wars, and other forms of intergroup violence since the end of the 1980s. They have not produced global harmony; rather, they have enabled some significant and dangerous conflicts to be managed constructively or at least without large-scale violence. In this article, I examine the possibility that these developments remain powerful, and that the current spikes in violence and threats of escalating violence actually confirm their relevance and durability. Such analysis provides the basis for my argument that policies consistent with the peace factors I have identified above will be effective in averting and limiting future destructive violence.

Accounting for Current Violent Conflicts

Although violent conflicts declined, they obviously did not disappear; some such conflicts undoubtedly arise from the relatively unchanging processes and conditions of human social life. Those factors include ethnocentrism, competition over scarce resources, and rivalry for power and status. Additionally, the high incidence of civil wars and oppressive regimes in African and Middle Eastern countries often have specific local sources, relating to ethnic, religious, and clan differences. Civil strife derives as well from those countries' legacies of colonialism and their marginal role in the world economy.

In the last few years, increased wars and outbreaks of sectarian violence have erupted in Central Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, and significant transnational acts of terror have occurred. These events include the violent struggle of the Palestinian Intifada and the Israeli suppression of it, the secessionist struggle in Chechnya, the wars in Afghanistan, and the al Qaeda attacks upon the U.S. As I already indicated, often global developments generally conducive to peacemaking can affect some groups in ways that conversely exacerbate conflicts. And still other recent global developments and nongovernmental and governmental policy choices have likely contributed to the spike of certain forms of violent conflicts.

Global and Regional Developments

Among the global developments that may be contributing to new and recurrent violent conflicts and the current spikes in them, two are worth noting here. First, in recent decades religion has increased in salience for people in many parts of the world, and a fundamentalist orientation has become prominent in many religions, including within Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Hinduism. Second, weapons technology continues to advance such that small military establishments or small nongovernmental actors can inflict considerable damage on civilian and military targets. The specter of weapons of mass destruction in unfriendly hands has aroused fear among people in countries with powerful military capabilities — a notable example is the fear that Saddam Hussein was developing weapons of mass destruction, which generated considerable initial support among the American public for the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition, the Cold War legacy of large amounts of arms and munitions in many countries can also contribute to violent conflict escalation, as happened in Afghanistan and in Somalia.

These particular developments can be combined with the previously discussed factors that tend to be conducive to peace to generate and to sustain violent conflicts. Thus, the growth of religious fundamentalism provides adherents with coherent worldviews that can encourage them to reject and resist such aspects of the eight peace factors as globalization, feminism, and religious tolerance. The diffusion of these secular ideas and practices is often seen as offensive and as an attack upon traditional ways. The dislocations and unequal burdens associated with growing global integration have aroused national and ideological organized resistance. In addition, the rapid social changes of the last several decades have indeed adversely affected communal solidarity and many aspects of social life, which can generate parochial and xenophobic reactions. Finally, the availability of destructive weapons and the increasing ease of transnational communication have enabled the formation of transnational networks that conduct criminal activities or armed struggles to promote ethnic, religious, or other communal agendas.

In the early 1990s, some observers wrote of the coming world anarchy, arguing that scarcity, crime, overpopulation, tribalism, and disease were destroying the social fabric of the planet (Kaplan 2000). Much attention was focused on failed states, where the government did not control its territory and lacked legitimacy, such as in the Ivory Coast, Somalia, and Sierra Leone (Foreign Policy 2005). Nonetheless, as I noted at the outset of this article, violent conflicts did not increase globally, although the violence associated with particular conflicts is indeed escalating.

The U.S. and the Middle East

One source of violent conflict is the relationship between the U.S. government and some militant Salafists seeking to establish a true Muslim state (Sageman 2004). As the dominant global power, the U.S. is often perceived as the driver of the predominant global developments; moreover, its great engagement in Middle East affairs makes it appear to be responsible for situations that various groups in the region find objectionable. Many Arabs feel deprivations that many experts argue can be attributed to the increasing economic, cultural, and social integration of the world and to the corruption of their autocratic rulers.

American world dominance and globalization's perceived negative impacts have increased, for many Muslims, the attractiveness of particular radical Islamic views (Kepel 2004). Some Salafists argue that the transformation of the impure governments of the Middle East requires attacking the primary entity propping up those governments, the U.S. (Sageman 2004). Aided by the new technologies of communication and the diffusion of old and new weapons, nonstate actors can carry out terrifying attacks around the world and such transnational NGOs as al Qaeda have emerged as major actors in international and intranational conflicts.

These transnational Salafist groups are acting contrary to the major developments nourishing peace. Their intolerance of those who do not share their faith and practices, and their recourse to violence, particularly violence against noncombatants, limit their appeal and yet encourage their overreaching. If the analysis presented in this article is valid, the groups will ultimately fail to achieve their goals.

Much depends upon the way the U.S. government manages its relations with the Salafist organizations, the Arab peoples, the Middle Eastern governments, and the larger Islamic communities of the world. Conflating all those relationships to fit the construct of some kind of larger civilizational conflict between the West and the Muslim world, as discussed by some observers,[1] would exacerbate each relationship. Instead, I argue that Americans, within and outside of the government, should adopt orientations and specific policies that have great potential to improve U.S. relations with many players in the Middle East and to reduce the likelihood of terrorist attacks and other violent conflicts both in the Middle East and in the U.S.

U.S. Government's Role

In this section, I focus on those U.S. government policies that I believe have exacerbated many existing conflicts. George W. Bush, who became president in January 2001, did not campaign for the presidency as an international activist. But the actions that his administration pursued after the attacks of September 11, 2001 followed doctrines that run counter to the peace factors that I have previously described. The U.S. government

asserted it is waging a "war against global terrorism" in response both to the attacks of 9/11 and other terrorist attacks that have been carried out in many countries.

The results of this war have been mixed. Such precise government operations as traditional police investigations, preventive security measures, covert actions, and interference in the financing of hostile NGOs have reduced the ability of the al Qaeda network to function as an organized body. The U.S. government has also engaged, however, in more massive and less-discriminate responses that are generally inconsistent with trends and developments that encourage peace (cessation of the Cold War, multilateralism, growing democratization, global integration, conflict resolution principles, etc.). These measures, I believe, have been counterproductive.

Multilateralism in international affairs was generally put aside, and U.S. unilateralism ruled. The Bush administration's foreign policy became marked by extreme reliance on coercion and military force. The government pursued these policies to defend the country by maintaining global American military and economic dominance, to install democratic political systems and open market economies in the Middle East, and to change the regimes of "rogue" states. The administration's foreign policies have been influenced by the concerns of various domestic political, economic, ideological, and religious supporters. Consequently, different groups, with different interests and concerns have supported particular policy decisions, but for different reasons. This seems to have been the case in the decision to go to war against Iraq and the decisions about dealing with its aftermath (Risen 2006). As a result, trying to advance some goals undermined others, as illustrated by relying on U.S. corporations and U.S. ideologically cleared advisors for many tasks in Iraq and thereby minimizing the participation of Iraqis in their own governance (Diamond 2005; Phillips 2005).

This assertive, largely unilateralist, and militarist foreign policy orientation draws from some longstanding American tendencies (Bacevich 2002; Daalder and Lindsay 2003). It blends Wilsonian idealism and American imperialistic goals and practices. However, belief in American power and morality has resulted in a particularly arrogant manifestation of these tendencies, with little regard for the risks that such hubris can create, an observation supported by numerous analyses of the neoconservative doctrines that have been so influential in the administration of George W. Bush (Mann 2004; Risen 2006). The foreign policies of the Bush administration, being so inconsistent with the global developments discussed earlier, in many cases have been unsuccessful and harmed American security and well-being. Even when elements of the policies and some of the justifications for them seemed to be consistent with the peace factors, the context provided by the administration's general policy orientations has undercut the effectiveness of those elements. As a result of its undeniable failures, the

Bush administration has tried, even if reluctantly, to modify certain policies, making them more congruent with the new global realities.

The failures have strengthened the critics of those policies who have grown in numbers and conviction, as was made evident by the results of the 2006 U.S. midterm elections. Policies more congruent with trends conducive to peace are gaining support. Thus, the U.S. government has become, at times and briefly, somewhat more multilateral in dealing with North Korea but less with Iran, after the initial policies in the first years of the Bush administration, but the goal of regime change lingers ambiguously. According to a conflict resolution approach, the U.S. government faces fundamental difficulties in effectively coercing North Korea and Iran to behave as it wants them to and forego developing nuclear weapons. It should be evident that threats to change a regime are unlikely to induce that same regime to foreswear self-defense. Some assurances that a regime would be safe if it were to cease the problematic behavior (e.g., building nuclear weapons) seem more likely to increase the chances of working out arrangements precluding the proliferation of such weapons.

Evidence abounds of the failures resulting from the Bush administrations' militarized and unilateralist approach to foreign policy. The rejection of the Kyoto Accords and the International Criminal Court has contributed to perceptions of U.S. actions as arrogant and bullying, and resistance to U.S. policies has increased (Bennis 2006; Walt 2005). In response to the American overreaction in the Global War on Terrorism, public opinion around the world has turned against American international policies.[2]

Furthermore, not only have many of these policies failed, but some have backfired, as did many past interventionist American projects that resulted in "blowback" (Johnson 2000 and 2004). For example, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations in 1953 in Iran and in the early 1980s in Afghanistan seemed initially successful, but in later years the effects turned out to be harmful to the U.S. In Iran, the elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh was ousted and the Shah of Iran was restored to his throne, but subsequent anti-American sentiments were exploited by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in seizing power in the 1979 Iranian revolution. In Afghanistan, the CIA assisted the Mujahedeen to fight the Marxist Afghan government, which was aided by Soviet military forces, and succeeded in forcing a Soviet withdrawal, but subsequent fighting among Afghan anti-Soviet groups resulted in Taliban rule there.

In response to U.S. foreign policies, particularly the launching of the war in Iraq, the U.S. government has faced growing opposition from other governments and numerous political and diplomatic defeats, which is possible even for so militarily and economically dominant a power (Walt 2005). For example, in Latin America, in just the last few years, Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina have elected presidents and parties that oppose the trade and investment policies, as well as

international stances, favored by the U.S. government. The Bush administration, facing widespread resistance, has been repeatedly defeated in international governmental organizations where the U.S. government earlier had great influence. Thus, in 2004, the U.S. government dropped its efforts to ensure U.S. troops had immunity from prosecution by the International Criminal Court (Hoge 2004). In 2005, the candidate preferred by the U.S. to head the Organization of American States was not selected, and the governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency reelected Mohamed El Baradei as director-general despite previous U.S. opposition to his selection.

The invasion and occupation of Iraq have unleashed immense problems for Americans, for Iraqis, and for Iraq's neighbors, revealing in the process the poor judgment involved in setting overly ambitious goals that could not be met with the means chosen. The Bush administration apparently believed that it could speedily impose through a high-tech military action a friendly democratic government that would allow outsiders free economic entry, provide permanent U.S. military bases, and serve as a model of democratic change that would transform the region. The obvious failure of overreliance on military force with little international support strengthens arguments in favor of more constructive conduct, which is more in line with those peace factors I identified earlier.

Reliance on military force and ignorance or disregard of basic and generally accepted conflict resolution insights has resulted in the recurrent failure to mount a credible public diplomacy campaign. Repeated attempts to tell the Islamic world how "nice" Americans are has failed to promote understanding or to diminish the antagonism aroused by the war in Iraq, as official U.S. study groups have reported (Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy 2004; Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy 2005; Defense Science Board Task Force 2004; United States Government Accountability Office 2005).

These failures have resulted neither from simple incompetence nor from President Bush's reported lack of knowledge and curiosity nor from his alleged unwillingness to accept those realities that are in odds with his plans. Rather, they derive, I believe, in part from the president and his associates' faulty ideological beliefs, their cronyism, and their disdain for divergent opinions (Suskind 2006; Woodward 2006).

More fundamentally, the policies seem to have been intended to attain goals that derive from overly self-centered concerns, such as assuring U.S. business interests in the global economy, demonstrating U.S. military dominance in the world, securing oil supplies, and also domestic political calculations — various members of the Bush administration or within U.S. political leadership have given different priority to these several goals (Danner 2006; Risen 2006; Suskind 2006). That the invasion and occupation of Iraq and the efforts to establish a U.S.-friendly government there were so

tragically mishandled is a manifestation of the U.S. government's frequent adoption of overreaching goals and its use of inappropriate means.

The Peace Factors Remain Powerful

Despite the ongoing war in Iraq, the impacts of the events and trends identified earlier as "peace factors" endure in many ways. Indeed, the Bush administration has implicitly acknowledged that and has sometimes tried to exploit them. In many ways, too, nongovernmental actors within the U.S. and governmental and nongovernmental actors around the world continue to conduct themselves in ways that support peace-fostering developments.

Usage by U.S. Government

Officials in the Bush administration have indeed used rhetoric that reflects some of the trends discussed earlier in order to justify U.S. militancy. Such use actually accords legitimacy to the trends. Furthermore, U.S. officials have at times even engaged in practices that in some degree are consistent with the developments associated with making and sustaining peaceful relations.

The rhetoric and the conduct have indicated support for ideals of democratic governance, nongovernmental engagement, protection of human rights, advancement of women's rights, and reliance on international governmental organizations. As U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said on the release of a report to the U.S. Congress entitled "Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The U.S. Record 2004–2005," "We are working tirelessly to support democracy and human rights in every country where these principles are not completely fulfilled" (United States Department of State 2005). Such assertions and actions by U.S. officials, who are generally regarded as ideologically conservative, can strengthen and broaden support for factors furthering peace.

The rhetoric about spreading democracy as a way of advancing peace indicates support for the thesis, which has been supported by research evidence, that democracies do not make war against each other. (See Rummel 1985; Gates, Knutsen, and Moses 1996; Oneal and Russett 1997; Russett 1993 and 1995; Russett, Oneal, and Cox 2000). Such rhetoric further lends support for actions to foster democracies rather than support authoritarian regimes. This is also true for the references to the protection of human rights generally and, particularly the rights of women. The U.S. government supports various NGOs that seek to advance human rights and democracy, for example, with funds from the U.S. Agency for International Development and the National Endowment for Democracy. Some organizations so funded have fostered freedom in several countries and have even helped reform or remove oppressive and autocratic governments. American support for large-scale public demonstrations and other nonviolent actions that have driven autocratic leaders from power in such countries as Serbia

and the Ukraine has lent credibility to the power of civic organizations and of nonviolent resistance (Cohen 2000; Sharp 2005).

Yet despite some rhetoric and conduct indicating support for peacemaking, many critics of the U.S. government's policies believe that the ways in which they are carried out actually undermines the achievement of peace. For example, when U.S. government officials declared their intentions to expand democracy by removing Saddam Hussein's regime, they ignored the vast literature and research on the preconditions for democracy and the violence of transitions to democracy. In addition, the U.S. government has supported groups seeking to overthrow popular leaders — a recent example is in Venezuela — who are pursuing economic and international policies that American leaders find objectionable. Regional critics view such American efforts to be self-serving and hypocritical.

Many leaders of the women's movement welcomed the efforts of some U.S. administrations to support women's rights internationally, but objected when the plight of women in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and elsewhere was used to rally support for the war on terror and invasion of Iraq. Nonetheless, some advocates of women's rights have commended the Bush administration's attention to the place and treatment of women in Islamic societies. That the administration has accorded attention to the role of women in democratizing Islamic societies serves to enhance the credibility and legitimacy of feminist views and concerns in general, and can be expected to contribute to reducing violent conflicts in the long run.

The Bush administration has also justified some of its actions in terms of protecting human rights. The crimes against humanity committed by the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein and his government in Iraq gave critics of the Bush policies reasons for supporting regime change with which they could sympathize. Furthermore, the claim to be acting to protect human rights gives legitimacy to such conduct in international affairs more generally.

However, an emphasis on human rights also draws attention to those instances when the U.S. fails to meet such standards itself, for example, when prisoners are detained without charges or even public identification, or when they are tortured under interrogation or sent (via a process known as rendition) to other countries where they may be tortured. Such behavior, as well as very *selective* efforts to protect human rights around the world, undercuts the Bush administration's claim that human rights protection is a fundamental U.S. foreign policy principle.

The U.S. government has increasingly adopted a variety of methods from the conflict resolution field, especially in its work in countries recovering from large-scale violence, as in the Balkans, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Conflict resolution efforts have included supporting democratic institution building; providing training to members of local NGOs in methods of conflict resolution, nonviolent practices, and reconciliation; and consulting

on electoral, curricular, and governance matters. High-level official support for such efforts is an indication of growing recognition of the field.

There are risks, however, that conflict resolution ideas and practices can be implemented in ways that contradict basic understandings of the approach. For example, some local groups may be excluded from a conflict resolution endeavor because the groups are deemed unacceptable according to official U.S. policy. Furthermore, as NGOs become increasingly dependent on U.S. funding, some may be tempted to perform in ways they believe are desired by those who fund them. They may try to apply the techniques that they know to types of conflict for which the techniques are inappropriate (Kriesberg 1995). In general, conflict resolution services, aiming to maintain good local relations, also run the risk of behaving in ways that are consistent with the prevailing local power structures — they and their work can then become co-opted in ways that are inconsistent with important conflict resolution principles (Coy and Hedeen 2005).

A comparison of Bush administrations policies in Afghanistan and Iraq illustrates the pertinence of the particular conflict resolution approach. On the whole, the efforts of the U.S. and its allies have been more effective in Afghanistan than in Iraq, at least until those efforts were weakened by the invasion of Iraq. This is at least partly attributable to a much greater support and engagement by the U.N. and the international community generally and by greater reliance on local groups. An Afghan government was quickly established with the assistance of U.N. mediation, utilizing such local traditions as the *loya jirga*, a form of grand tribal council. NATO forces had specific tasks to maintain order and help in the reconstruction. Finally, the policies were arguably more successful because the goals in Afghanistan were not as grandiose as those for Iraq.

The Bush administration has, on occasion, acted in concert with the peace factors I have identified here and has achieved some success in doing so (Kriesberg 2006a). Thus, the transformation of relations with Libya was the result of a long multilateral diplomatic process, which the Bush administration continued. Regrettably, however, the administration does not credit that process and its continuation of it, but rather cites the U.S. military's attack on Iraq for the transformation (Jentleson and Whytock 2005).

Relations between the U.S. and Libya had been antagonistic and even violent for decades. Colonel Muammar al-Qaddafi, who took control of the Libyan government in a military coup in 1969 (St. John 2002), used oil funds to support militant revolutionary organizations around the world. President Ronald Reagan's increasingly intense efforts to stop Qaddafi's support of terrorist groups and to overthrow his regime in the 1980s included U.S. air attacks on several targets, including the barracks where Qadaffi resided. (Qadaffi survived, but his two-year-old daughter was killed in that attack.)

Later, the U.N. imposed sanctions on Libya after police investigations in several countries implicated Libyan agents in the 1988 explosion of a Pan

Am flight over Scotland that killed 270 people. After lengthy negotiations assisted by mediation, in March 1999 Qaddafi agreed to yield the two suspects and U.N. sanctions were suspended (but not lifted). The trial was held in the Netherlands under Scottish law, and in January 2001 one agent was found guilty of murder and one was not.

Without threats of regime change, the Libyan government took additional steps to achieve the permanent end of sanctions and to restore normal relations with the U.S., including compensating the Pan Am families and accepting responsibility for its officials' actions. In 2003, the U.N. sanctions were removed. Finally, negotiations yielded an agreement to both end U.S. economic sanctions and to verifiably dismantle Libya's chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons programs. With that, American–Libyan relations completed their transformation and economic ties were renewed.

Other Peacemaking and Peacebuilding Actions
The prospects for recovering from the foreign policy disasters of the last several years are enhanced by changes outside of the U.S. Many groups that seek to undermine and attack the U.S. undermine themselves, as they refuse to recognize the realities of the recent peace-fostering developments. Consequently, they often overreach and isolate themselves. Their tactics that rely on violence against civilian targets are widely regarded as objectionable by those who might otherwise support them and thus limit their influence in many settings.

The U.S. remains a powerful country with immense capabilities, and al Qaeda and other Salafist groups do not seriously threaten its global primacy. The risks of American overreaction may be greater than those of underreaction. Even the dangers of nuclear proliferation can be managed by comprehensive multilateral actions. The possibilities of international cooperation to overcome these dangers are vast, and the U.S. government can play a global leadership role more effectively by acting collaboratively and taking the interests and views of other countries into consideration. Multilateral and relatively nonviolent methods are used increasingly by various governmental and nongovernmental organizations to manage and resolve large-scale conflicts. The U.N. carries out numerous peacekeeping missions, helping to prevent new outbreaks of violence. The OSCE continues consulting and mediating conflicts to prevent their disastrous escalation. Individual governments perform effective mediation, as the Norwegian government has done for Israeli–Palestinian relations and in Sri Lanka.

How Nongovernmental Actors Contribute to Peace

In this final section, I focus on American nongovernmental actors, particularly members of the peace and conflict resolution communities. Although the ideas and practices developed in these communities are winning more attention and adherents, they are also sometimes used in ways unintended

by their proponents. I am reminded of research conducted by the sociologist and activist Richard Flacks in the 1960s. His articles analyzing the characteristics of student activists drew many requests for reprints, but they were from college admission officers. Presumably, they were trying to screen out potential activists, so he redirected his research to focus on the societal structures generating the movements.

It is important to do solid research, but necessary also to consider the context of research findings and their policy implications. For example, analysts of the relationship between democracies and peace, sensitive to the policy inferences that might be drawn from the findings, should refer also to matters such as the preconditions for the establishment of democracies, how societies can peacefully transition to democracy, and what are indicators of democracy. A long-term perspective is essential (Paris 2004).

Recent U.S. foreign policy failures should be examined thoughtfully and not treated simply as mistakes attributable to incompetence. They reflect, I believe, not only poor strategy choices, but also ill-conceived goals, ideologically driven and unchecked by external reality. The choices were guided by overconfidence in military power and too little regard for the views and interests of other nations. We must accurately explain these failures to overcome them and avoid repeating them.

Many Americans in the conflict resolution field may feel uncomfortable taking a stance critical of our government's foreign policy goals. Moreover, we generally focus more on the mediation or negotiation *process* and less on the justice of the outcome. However, many of us are also increasingly concerned about both the justness of the goals chosen and the appropriateness of the means employed in conflicts; we are also concerned that negotiated outcomes respect human rights and fulfill the basic needs of all the contending parties (Babbitt, forthcoming).

Analyses that provide the bases for alternative policies — and even reformulated goals — are needed and are legitimate endeavors for workers in the conflict resolution field. Objecting to mistaken U.S. policies and ill-chosen goals is proper, but offering alternatives increases the chances of being heard. Choosing the audience for the alternative strategies is also important, and different members of the conflict resolution community quite properly focus on different audiences. They range from high-ranking government officials, opposition figures, critical analysts, leaders of diverse civic organizations, and the attentive public. Different efforts can complement and reinforce each other and produce substantial change, as evidenced by the recent shift of opinions among the American public and many elected officials.

Another approach is to directly engage in alternative peace-advancing projects, working in and with nongovernmental actors. These projects include training and consulting with NGOs in countries where destructive conflicts are emerging, under way, or from which recovery is needed. They

also include participating in some form of mediation or track-two communications channel, helping to develop curricular materials or mass media productions, and assisting in the construction of political institutions. They include as well, monitoring and otherwise assisting in the implementation of agreements that have been reached by adversaries. Furthermore, direct engagement in projects advancing international peace can be conducted within the U.S. For example, this includes organizing or joining NGOs that conduct dialogue work among different faith or ethnic communities; this is particularly important given the importance of diaspora groups in the U.S. This also includes working with NGOS undertaking international service projects or improving American understanding of foreign affairs, such as the Rotary International or the United Nations Association.

Conclusions

I do not argue that global forces are moving the world inexorably toward peace. The dangers now confronting people around the world are grave and will not easily be overcome. Because the U.S. government has exacerbated those dangers, changes in its conduct also have the potential to ameliorate them. Strong forces exist that also make it possible to overcome many of the pressing dangers threatening the U.S. and the world. Appropriate actions taken by officials and also by private citizens, particularly in the U.S., can help reduce those dangers.

Those who try to destroy all enemies indiscriminately often create more enemies in the process. Actions that contradict the peace factors discussed here are likely to continue to fail and to produce unwanted consequences. Goals and strategies more congruent with those developments have greater likelihood of success.

The greatest dangers confronting the U.S. are global ones that affect all humans and require cooperative international actions; they include global warming, epidemics, demographic pressures, poverty, and increasing global inequality. Working together with other countries to meet these challenges could provide superordinate goals that reduce conflicts (Sherif 1966). Attention to transnational shared interests can reduce the salience of interstate conflicts, just as an escalating international conflict sometimes de-escalates an intrastate conflict. Meeting the challenge of global problems can generate new conflicts; nevertheless, the emergence of new crosscutting conflicts tends to reduce the intensity of the old conflicts. Furthermore, working together to solve shared problems can help build ties and institutional bonds that generate peace. U.S. attention to widely shared transnational challenges can be the basis for overcoming many antagonistic relations; this is plausible, for example, in dealing with a variety of environmental problems. The power and relevance of those trends that I identified as "peace factors" at the outset of this article enhances the plausibility of such an approach.

NOTES

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1. See Huntington 1993 and 1996. But this view is not supported by systematic empirical analyses. See Henderson and Tucker 1999; Russett, Oneal, and Cox 2000; and Chiozza 2002.

2. This has been well documented in numerous surveys. For example, see Pew Research Center 2002; Chicago Council on Foreign Relations 2002; and Zogby International 2004.

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