

“What Can a Pacifist Say, Today?”

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Wednesday, January 19, 1:00 p.m.
Goddard Auditorium, Earlham College

Today, in the United States of America, we believe—nearly every one of us—that our country’s security depends in the main, and certainly in the end, on our own military might. All but a tiny fraction of us believe that our security *should* depend upon our country’s ability to threaten and to wage war. Let us note that the citizens of no other country in the world believe the same thing: that *their* security rests, in the main and in the end, on their country’s ability to threaten and to wage war.

I believe we should look elsewhere for our security, and you will each have to speak for yourselves. This afternoon I want to articulate a different conception of U.S. foreign policy, one that begins by rejecting war as barbarous and morally indefensible. I want to address this question: what is a pacifist prescription for the foreign policy of the United States?

The anchor of NPR’s “Weekend Edition” is Scott Simon. He became a Quaker and a pacifist when he was in his teens, during the Vietnam War era. A month after 9/11, in an op-ed page piece in the *Wall Street Journal*, Scott Simon wrote the following:

“It seems to me that in confronting the forces that attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, American pacifists have no sane alternative now but to support war. I don’t consider this reprisal or revenge, but self-defense: protecting the world from further attacks by destroying those who would launch them.”

Almost every war leads some who had considered themselves pacifist to come to realize that they are not, in fact, pacifists. A very high percentage of Quaker young men, for example, enlisted in the armed forces during World War II. In this article, Scott Simon now declared himself no pacifist.

Of course many wars lead some young women and men (and some not so young) to realize that they are, in fact, pacifists. That’s what happened to me during the Vietnam War. I realized my opposition went well beyond opposition to that particular war, and I realized that I needed to go beyond opposition to a positive and active commitment to a world without war. That’s been my commitment for four decades.

To declare oneself a pacifist in these United States is to make yourself a pariah. Most people consider pacifists to be naïve fools. In times of war, pacifists can become

lightning rods for sharp anger; we are attacked as cowards and traitors. And pacifists make convenient foils for those who encourage war. You can find many articles that castigate pacifists. But over the last few years, from the position of pacifism, remarkably little has found its way into print about the so-called war on terror. We've let others speak for us. In fact the Scott Simon piece is about the only article I found that reached beyond the audience of the three historic peace churches—and he declared himself a pacifist in favor of the war.

As I read about U.S. foreign policy during my recent sabbatical, I found myself wondering what would I say, as an American pacifist, about what we should be doing in the world today.

What Pacifists Believe

At its core, pacifism is very simple. It is the personal commitment not to take up arms in war. All of the great world religions, I believe, have a central call to peacemaking, but let me speak today as a Christian, because that is my faith. For Christians, pacifism arises from the clear recognition that God calls each and every one of us to be peacemakers. Not one word of what we hear from Jesus in the four gospels supports participating in war. *Not one word.* Many hoped the Messiah would appear as a warrior wielding the weapons of war to bring the Kingdom of God to earth. Instead, he appeared as a carpenter urging each of us to love our enemies. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, “for they shall be called [children] of God.”¹

Jesus does not add, “except when our cause is just.” He does not add “except when we are fighting on God’s side, for God’s kingdom.” “There is no way to peace,” said A. J. Muste “Peace is the way.” You cannot bring about peace by war, and then pursue peace. And Gandhi said, “The only people on earth who do not see Christ and his teachings as non-violent are Christians.”

The earliest Christians understood and lived this call to be peacemakers. But after the first few centuries, Christians found ways to apologize for war, to embrace it, to wage it, and to mount arguments justifying war.

The first Quakers saw themselves as a renewal movement within Christianity, calling for a return to the radical, vital gospel of Christ. They believed (and Quakers today believe) that God speaks to each and every one of us, if we will only still ourselves and listen. Because each of us has this capacity, Quakers believe that all lives are sacred. We should treat one another as sacred vessels, as children of God. And that means we should not take up arms against one another.

When asked to take a position in Cromwell’s army, George Fox (the founder of Quakerism) said "I told them I knew whence all wars arose, even from the lusts...and that I lived in the virtue of that life and power that took away the occasion of all wars."

And in a famous declaration from 1660, Quakers declared "our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace and ensue it; to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God; seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all." And they declared: "All bloody principles and practices, as to our own particulars, we utterly deny; with all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under an pretense whatsoever; this is our testimony to the whole world."

Despite these simple, clear foundations, to know that someone is a pacifist is not, by any means, to know all that they believe about war-refusing and peace-seeking. There are many varieties of pacifism. The Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder wrote a clarifying book called *Nevertheless: The Varieties and Shortcomings of Religious Pacifism*, in which he distinguishes no fewer than 29 distinct positions.²

One point of difference concerns whether a pacifist refuses any and all uses of *force*. Some do, but others do not. Many pacifists believe it is legitimate to fend off a violent attack, or to protect family, friends or innocent bystanders in an immediate situation.

Isn't this a slippery slope towards justification of war? Cannot we see some wars as an exercise of self-defense? Pacifists who accept some limited use of force say that personal self-defense is very different from war, even a so-called war of self-defense. War always involves large-scale organized preparations: stockpiling weapons, amassing troops, developing plans and trigger points, building intelligence capabilities that allow one to be alert to provocation. Such preparations for war simply make war much more likely. And such preparations make war very different from an exercise of self-defense.

A related and more controversial question about whether the use of force can ever be justified concerns *police power*. Can a pacifist approve of the use of force by the police? Could a pacifist be a member of the police—in this or any imaginable world? Some pacifists would clearly say no. The use of force always involves the possibility of taking someone's life, and the taking of life is always wrong.

Other pacifists accept the necessity of policing. How is policing different from war? In several ways. Policing separates an arresting power from judging power. Policing makes use of the minimum force necessary. And police actions are framed by the rule of law and by respect for the rights of those accused of wrongdoing.³

Another important point of difference among pacifists concerns the question of *consequences*. Pacifists are routinely asked 'what if others behaved as you do?' (The question is generally asked with a nearly audible "you idiot" added at the end.) What if no one had fought the Kaiser? What if no one had fought Hitler? What if no one had fought Saddam Hussein? The questioners cannot even imagine that a pacifist has ever

thought about these questions. For a certainty, any pacifist has, but we won't all give the same answer.

Some pacifists care nothing about consequences. Consequences are in God's hands. My duty is to be faithful to God's will. And God doesn't assure us that this world will be a place of peace and justice in my time.

Other pacifists (and this is more my answer) will say that refusing to participate in war is the best thing I can do to persuade others not to participate in war. I don't have much optimism that I'll carry hundreds of people with me, let alone hundreds of millions, but it is the single best thing I can do. To participate in war is not only to defy the teachings of Jesus, but also to perpetuate the madness. Violence only begets more violence. Moreover, refusing to participate in war frees me—and obligates me—to work actively for peace. In choosing to become a pacifist I also chose to become a teacher concerned with issues of justice and peace.

The question of 'consequences' is one that gives rise to different answers among pacifists. A related question concerns 'policy.' If I make the individual commitment to pacifism, what *policy* do I urge for my country? What policy advice does a pacifist have to offer?

Some pacifists (especially those that do not want to talk about consequences) deliberately offer no policy advice. One basis for this belief is the view that the state is inextricably embedded in this fallen world, particularly because the state is always committed to using force. It is part of a fabric of sinfulness. While individuals can repent and commit their lives to living in God's grace, the state cannot. The believing Christian should submit to the law, unless the law would compel her to violate God's commandments. "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; render unto God those things which are God's."⁴ But the believing Christian has no policy advice to offer the state. The state is simply one more obstacle to be circumnavigated, one more source of temptation to be resisted along the road to living a life obedient to the will of God.

On this view, the believing Christian might be "a gadfly who constantly keeps uneasy the consciences of responsible persons as they accept the compromises necessary for effectiveness in daily political work." That phrase is from the Mennonite John Howard Yoder again, though the position he characterizes is not his own. But such a person must accept, Yoder adds, "the verdict of immediate irrelevance and [make] no claim to be able to suggest solutions and plan policies capable of being put into practice in the political realm."

The most substantial involvement of Quakers in government was in the colony of Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania was established as a colony by a grant from the King of England to the Quaker William Penn. For the colony's first several decades, Quakers made up a substantial majority of the colony's legislative Assembly. The Assembly refused repeated calls, both from Parliament and the governments of other colonies, to organize and arm a militia for actions against Native Americans and the French. In the 1760s, the Quakers in the Assembly proved impossible to sustain, and Quakers

withdrew from participation in the Assembly. Since then, many Quakers have been conflicted about whether they had policy prescriptions to offer.

This has not been the majority position among other Christians. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and adherents of other mainstream Protestant Christian churches have generally felt comfortable offering policy advice to the state. But then these are not pacifist churches. It is precisely some members of the historic peace churches—Brethren, Mennonites and Quakers—whose pacifism also leads them to principled silence on questions of policy.

I am clear that I am pacifist because of what God calls me to do, not because of the likely consequences of my commitment. Nevertheless, I do want to talk about consequences, I do want to participate in discussions about what others should do, and therefore I do want to engage in considerations of policy.

What, then, does a pacifist have to suggest as basic elements of U.S. foreign policy today? What can we do to carry ourselves towards a world without war?

Five Core Principles of a Pacifist Foreign Policy

The central proposition of a pacifist foreign policy, I believe, can be simply stated. In order to have a world without war, we need to construct on a world scale the kind of institutions, policies and practices that have eliminated war within the domestic boundaries of most countries of the world. In these domestic settings, we have not eliminated conflict or wrongdoing. Rather, we have developed mechanisms for dealing with conflict and wrongdoing that are widely viewed as legitimate and that do not have individuals or groups taking matters into their own hands. We have organized governance, the rule of law, policing, and social norms that allow us to deal with conflict and wrongdoing without war. A pacifist foreign policy looks for us to develop these same institutions, policies and practices across the whole world.

This is a simple, powerful conception. It has been articulated before, and eloquently, but not recently. Discussions of U.S. foreign policy today proceed without any reference at all to the possibility of constructing a world without war. I want to sketch this conception again today, in very broad strokes, because I believe there has never before been a greater need for us to take this possibility seriously, and because I believe there has never before been such a good opportunity for making it a reality.

Let me give a more shape to this simple conception by articulating five core principles of a pacifist foreign policy.

PRINCIPLE ONE: To make a world without war, we need to create *international (or world-scale) institutions* that work towards dispute resolution and limitation of armed conflict.

The scale of death and suffering during World War I, inflicted not only on soldiers but also on civilians, led many in this country and in Europe to see that war as “the war to end all wars.” Good intentions would not be enough, however. In the decade after World War I, there were deliberate efforts to create international arrangements to put an end to war.

Chief among these was the League of Nations. Though Woodrow Wilson received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1919 for his work on establishing the League of Nations, the U.S. Senate refused to approve the United States joining. That weakened the League of Nations, but it also had other institutional problems that undercut its effectiveness.

It is also worth mentioning the Kellogg-Briand Pact, a 1928 treaty by which all the major countries of the world—including the United States—declared, categorically, that “they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

The failure of the League of Nations and the failure of the Kellogg-Briand Pact teach two simple lessons: that effective institutional arrangements for peace-making must embrace all the countries and peoples of the world, and that they must be much more than just statements of good intentions.

Pacifism as a movement grew stronger in the 1920s and 1930s, but as World War II unfolded, it seemed to many—even many who had considered themselves pacifists—that here was a good and necessary war. A gathering international understanding that war was unacceptable under all circumstances was turned towards an understanding that there were circumstances, perhaps unusual ones, under which war was necessary and appropriate.

The creation of the United Nations shows learnings from the previous two and a half decades. The United States did join, and the U.N. had stronger institutional mechanisms for reaching and implementing decisions. But the U.N. Charter is also less categorical about war-making. Article 51 says that “nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations.” Under the U.N. Charter, war is justifiable so long it is justified as an act of self-defense. Two steps forward, one step back.

During the Cold War, the United Nations struggled to have an effective role in peace-making. Either the U.S. or the U.S.S.R. could and would use its veto in the Security Council to block meaningful action in any conflict in which one had an interest—and hardly any conflict fell outside the sphere of interest of both. Of course the U.N. lacked the capability to challenge either superpower.

With the end of the Cold War, the United Nations was no longer stalemated by superpower competition. The potential of the United Nations system could be much more fully realized on one condition: that the United States government invests the same

commitment and support that it invested in the United Nations immediately after World War II. A rare moment of possibility is once again upon us.

A dilemma that has preoccupied the United Nations over the past dozen years is whether and when to intervene in situations of genocide, ethnic cleansing or violent anarchy *within* countries. Should the United Nations respect sovereignty and do nothing to stop mass killing, or should it intervene in the internal affairs of member nations to prevent massacres? In Croatia, in Somalia, in Rwanda, and in Kosovo the United Nations found it difficult to come swiftly to a clear and effective answer. Through these horrifying cases, the world community appeared to be moving towards a conclusion that the United Nations must act when a government cannot or will not protect the lives of its own citizens.⁵ As the ongoing crisis in the Sudan shows, however, we have not yet shown that we can act in a crisis in a timely and effective manner.

An important and promising recent initiative with regard to international organizations is a new emphasis on *prevention* of deadly conflict. The United Nations has had a reactive posture with regard to international conflict. Many now believe the U.N. will be much more effective if it develops a culture and the capabilities of preventing conflict in the first place.⁶

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington D.C. elbowed aside this new approach. Whatever its other consequences, the U.S. invasion of Iraq will make it much more difficult for the world community to come to clarity about when and whether the U.N. should intervene in situations of conflict, and about how to act effectively to prevent war.

In the aftermath of the September 11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, the United States declared a “war on terrorism.” We were attacked, we said, and our response would be a justified war of self-defense. I believe a much more constructive approach would have been to speak of these attacks as a crime and to call for full and prompt exercise of international police and judicial capabilities to bring those responsible to justice.

To many, that suggestion may seem very odd. International police and judicial capabilities may seem hopelessly inadequate or ineffective—and indeed they are. I still believe it would have been much better for us to think about our response to 9/11 in terms of crime and punishment rather than war. The more we think in terms of war-making, the more we strengthen the impulse to think of war as inevitable and justifiable. But war is *not* inevitable or ultimately justifiable. We do not have wars *within* the United States because we have mechanisms for resolving conflicts that are ultimately grounded in the law and the means for enforcing it. A vision of a world without war must include the development of mechanisms for resolving conflict that work on a world scale.

On the other hand, there is a great deal of work to be done, stretching over decades at least, to create world-scale mechanisms for resolving conflict. We can articulate this as a second principle of a pacifist foreign policy:

PRINCIPLE TWO: The animating spirit of world-scale institutions that work on dispute resolution and limitation of armed conflict must be an *international rule of law*. We need to work towards establishing, in the international realm, the same basic understandings that animate the domestic rule of law in many countries of the world.

It is well beyond my capabilities to sketch, even in broad terms, what such an international rule of law would look like. But we can articulate some basic features of such an international rule of law. Here are a few:

- No person or organization or country would be judge in its own case.
- Adjudication of cases would be strictly separate from punishment of wrongdoers.
- No person, organization or country would be above the law; there would be impartiality toward all.
- Use of force would be kept to the minimum necessary and would recognize that even those against whom force is used have certain basic human rights in all cases and circumstances.

These are all elemental features of the rule of law. Respecting these would also require a striking change in the conduct of foreign policy by many countries—especially by the United States of America.

We do have a substantial body of international law that guides and regulates many important matters. This is codified in a great many treaties and conventions. What we lack today is a shared vision of a larger normative framework for developing this further. International law has become the agreements to which countries have agreed rather than a developing conception of a world well regulated by principles of law.⁷

The United States originally signed the convention that created the International Court of Justice in 1946. In 1984, when the Court ruled that the U.S. was in violation of international law with regard to our support of armed insurrection in Nicaragua, the U.S. declared we would no longer accept the compulsory jurisdiction of the Court. When the International Criminal Court was created in 1998, the United States was one of only seven countries to oppose creation of the court.

In rejecting the International Court of Justice and in rejecting the International Criminal Court, the United States stands against the creation of an international rule of law. More broadly, in insisting that there are justifiable circumstances for war, the United States currently insists that it be judge in its own case, that it decide when force is to be used and also be the one to exercise that force, and that it decide when and whether it should be held to the same norms as other countries. All of these positions have been fully insisted upon in

our country's current proceedings against Iraq, and our conduct there raises serious questions about what rights we recognize for those who are not citizens of the U.S.

Put another way, the insistence upon sovereignty is a standing block to the recognition of an international rule of law. We will not move from an insistence on sovereignty in all matters to recognition of an international rule of law in one giant step. We will move there by a series of small mutual steps in which the countries of the world will design mechanisms for resolving conflicts or for achieving common purposes and then commit themselves to abiding by these.

Today, our country is a major roadblock in the world's taking these mutual steps. This second principle of a pacifist foreign policy would insist that the United States take the lead in designing these mechanisms and ratifying them.

PRINCIPLE THREE: We need to build institutions for oversight of the global economy that incline towards fairness and justice.

A pacifist foreign policy must include attention to issues of economic and social justice. We know that deprivation and unfairness fuel rancor and fan the flames of armed conflict—but many who proclaim that they want peace do not act as if they understand this linkage.

Before World War II, there was relatively little international machinery for oversight of the world economy. What mechanisms we had for regulation or steering of the economy were domestic institutions were neither designed for nor capable of giving oversight to an economy increasingly organized on a world scale. The Great Depression of the 1930s showed the limitations of such an approach.

In 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,⁸ which includes powerful, substantive statements about what all individuals across the globe should expect as a matter of right regarding not only civil and political rights but also rights to food, shelter, education and work. By its fiftieth anniversary a few years ago, 171 countries of the world had ratified the Universal Declaration.

The design of the United Nations included organs and institutions focused on economic and social issues, including the Economic and Social Council, the International Labor Office, and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. These parts of the United Nations system were given, however, neither the authority nor the tools to be effective. It has remained an open, unanswered question who will insist on full respect for the assurances of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the same time frame they created the United Nations, the victorious allies created a new set of institutions for overseeing the world economy in order to manage their common interests. The rapid emergence of the Cold War meant that two sets institutions

were built, one for the Soviet Bloc, and the other for the United States, United Kingdom, France and their allies.

Focusing just on the set of institutions created by the U.S. and its allies, these included the International Monetary Fund, to oversee currency and debt transactions among countries; a World Bank to provide loans for reconstruction and development, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (later the World Trade Organization). As the need arose, other, more specialized institutions were created, such as the World Intellectual Property Organization, to oversee issues around copyrights and patents.

The organizing focus of these institutions was on stabilization. They were designed to prevent wild swings in the economy that led to periods of boom and bust, like the Great Depression.

In the design of these institutions, there was no organizing focus on issues of minimal provision (human rights) or equity. The assumption was that if an emerging global economy could avoid wild swings of boom and bust, the consequences for individuals would work themselves out in roughly adequate ways. Standards of living would improve in most places, and if some individuals did better than others, the overall functioning of the world economy would be better than it could be under any other circumstances. Justice and the observance of human rights were left to the marketplace. In the design of these economic institutions, there was also no attention paid to how persisting injustice and deprivation can fuel armed conflict.

Sixty years later, we should observe two things. The first is to note the substantial progress towards political decolonization of the world. In 1945, much of Africa and Asia were ruled by western powers as colonies. Nearly all those colonies have now become independent countries. In 1945 there were 51 countries in the world; today there are 191. Independence brought hope for greater prosperity, but by and large that has not happened. Independence also brought these countries expectation for greater substantive voice in world affairs. In economic matters, this expectation has been frustrated. The economic institutions created by the victorious powers after World War II find their legitimacy under attack.

The second observation is that while there has been substantial growth in the world economy, tremendous prosperity for some and genuine improvement in the life circumstances of many people who had once been very poor, hundreds of millions of others are trapped in circumstances where they cannot enjoy the most rudimentary expectations of a life with dignity. The World Bank estimates that one billion of the world's five billion people live on less than one dollar a day, the Bank's threshold for extreme poverty. So far we have avoided another world depression, but for too many we have not delivered on basic human rights.⁹

In 2000, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the United Nations Millennium Declaration, a bold statement of commitment towards a world providing human rights for all. The Declaration resolves, by the year 2015, to cut in half the proportion of the world's population whose income is less than one dollar a day, to cut in half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, and to cut in half the proportion of people lacking access to

safe drinking water. The Declaration also resolves that by the same year, 2015, all the world's children, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.¹⁰

The goals are remarkable, but I share the optimism that we could indeed realize those goals. And we should. But we will not realize them without significant reform of the international organizations that provide guidance and oversight of the world economy to make them more attentive to and responsible for the human rights outcomes for individuals.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: We must work to reduce the availability of weapons of all kinds.

An important part of what makes war possible and also more likely is the systematic stockpiling of weapons for war. The more weapons (of all kinds) are available to be used, the more likely they are to be used. Conversely, an important element of a pacifist foreign policy is an energetic effort to reduce and eliminate stockpiles of weapons.

During the late 19th century, the focus of arms control was on limitations of warships among the major powers. The goal was not so much reduction, as preserving a balance of power through a balance of armaments.

During the Cold War, the focus was on nuclear weapons, especially in the form of nuclear warheads that could be delivered by missiles of various sizes and accuracy. Beginning in the 1960s, the United States and the Soviet Union negotiated a series of treaties that limited atmospheric testing, limited stockpiles of warheads and missile launchers of various sizes, and began towards the end of this series of negotiations to reduce the numbers of nuclear warheads and delivery mechanisms. Nevertheless, both the United States and Russia today possess huge stockpiles of nuclear weapons, more than 2000 nuclear warheads each.

In 1965, a Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed outlawing acquisition and transfer of nuclear weapons and technology to make them. The aim was to limit the number of nuclear powers to the five who already possessed them: the United States, the former Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, France and China. Today, about 190 countries are signatories to the Treaty. Notably, India, Israel and Pakistan remain outside the treaty, and North Korea has declared its intent to withdraw. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty was an important accomplishment, but it also ratifies some states (including the U.S.) continuing to hold arsenals of nuclear weapons. It is unthinkable that such weapons ever be used again; we need to disarm.

A similar story can be told with regard to chemical and biological weapons. As early as 1925, we had a Geneva Protocol forbidding the use of chemical or biological weapons in war. In 1972, an international Biological Weapons Convention was passed banning the development or possession of biological weapons; and in 1993, an international Chemical Weapons Convention banning the development or possession of chemical weapons. These

are important landmarks, but there are countries that have not signed one or another of these treaties, and a number of others that are believed to have chemical or biological weapons programs in defiance of these obligations. The United States did not ratify the Geneva Protocol until 1975, 50 years after it was first signed. Our country is today conducting biological weapons research ostensibly for defensive purposes. And we possess today about 31,000 tons of chemical weapons.

It is possible to find, today, in *this* country, weapons of mass destruction.

We must do more than eliminate nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Look around the world to the many current sites of armed conflict. What are the weapons in use? They are not nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. They are conventional weapons, mostly small arms such as automatic rifles, machine guns, hand grenades, hand-held rocket launchers and the like.

To a large extent, such weapons are manufactured in the United States, in Western Europe, in Russia, and in other industrialized countries with relatively low levels of civil conflict. They are given, sold and traded to militaries all over the world. From there they are sold openly and in secret, legally and illegally; they flow in a torrent, within countries and across borders, into the hands of anyone who wants to kill anyone else. Think of all the pictures we have seen of 14-year-old boys in cities around the world leisurely cradling automatic rifles. The world is awash in small arms, and weapons created will likely be used. Disarmament must include small arms as well as weapons of mass destruction.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: We must make a much more substantial and sustained effort to understand people who live in other countries, people in other cultures, and people with different religious beliefs and practices.

I do not believe I need to say very much about this fifth principle and yet it is important as the others.

As a country, we put very little effort into understanding people and places beyond our borders. How many Americans can name both the President of Mexico and the Prime Minister of Canada—the heads of state of our closest neighbors? How many are comfortable speaking a second language? How many can give a simple account of the difference between Sunni and Shiite Moslems—despite how often we have heard those terms?

Earlham shows one aspect of its special value in this regard. However you might have answered those three questions, you are part of a college that puts unusual effort into graduating students who are citizens of the world, not just citizens of the United States. We should feel proud of what we do, but not feel satisfied. There is more we can and should do. Having committed ourselves half a century ago to working on reconciliation and mutual

understanding with Japan, are we not called to making a parallel commitment today to the Islamic world?

That is for Earlham, but what should we expect of our government and its foreign policy: that the government puts much more effort into mutual understanding. Every time the United States finds itself in an international crisis, we discover that we have far too few people who understand the language or know the culture and religion. Every time we are in the midst of another mess, we discover we have refused to listen to the guidance of the few who do speak the language and understand the culture and religion. And so it is today.

In the recent discussions of the failings of the CIA, much has been made of the failure to learn secrets. Much too little has been said about the inadequacy of our efforts simply to understand—and to show that we understand—the people of Iraq, their hopes and fears, what they value and the bases on which they accord respect to others.

- (1) International organization that works to prevent war and resolve conflicts.
- (2) International law that creates a common fabric of rights and responsibilities common to all.
- (3) Global institutions that work towards the realization of substantive human rights for every human being.
- (4) Disarmament covering all nations and weapons of all scales.
- (5) And sustained efforts to promote greater respect and understanding across boundaries of culture and religion.

I take these five positions to mark out the main goals or avenues of effort for a pacifist foreign policy.

These five positions hang together. Having stronger international organizations without a body of international law would little sense. To have both without some approach to greater economic justice would be like bottling dynamite. To do all the others and yet fail to disarm would be a standing temptation to tyrants and terrorists everywhere. Progress on each goal can strengthen the possibilities for making progress on the others. Conversely, failure to make progress on one weakens the possibilities of making progress on the others.

Consideration of Some Objections

Here's a big problem. In sketching this foreign policy around these five goals, I have said very little that would tell you what to do, today, about the war in Iraq. Should we pull U.S. troops out immediately? Or would that just cause more violence? Would that be responsible, even if I thought the war were a colossal mistake from the very beginning?

I have said too little to tell you, specifically, what course we should pursue with regard to North Korea's nuclear weapons program—or, for that matter, what course we should pursue regarding nuclear weapons programs in Pakistan, India, Iran or Israel. I have said too little to tell you what we should do about the on-going genocide in the Sudan. I have said too little to tell you what we should do about regarding our trade policy with China.

All I have done is articulate goals. I have only sketched, in the very broadest strokes, what outcomes we want to pursue. I have said next to nothing about what strategy we should use in pursuing these goals, or what means are appropriate to use in pursuing them. This is one kind of critical objection to what I am presenting. How we pursue these goals is every bit as important as the goals themselves.

In truth, in many of these situations I do not know what strategies I believe are likely to be appropriate or effective. This is precisely the debate we should be having, and I am eager to be part of that discussion. But first we need to agree that these are the right goals.

If you believe they are the right goals, then you already think very differently about U.S. foreign policy than almost everyone else in the United States today. And you are likely to think very differently about the appropriate strategies and means to pursue these or any other goals. For one thing, you will evaluate every potential strategy in terms of whether it will further or whether it will impede progress towards the five principles I have sketched. The discussions of foreign policy we are having in the United States give no weight to these five goals.

Of course as a pacifist I will say that we should not use military force in pursuing any of these goals. I know, and you know, that this posture will exclude me from being taken seriously in discussions of U.S. foreign policy. So why do I even bother articulating this position? For this reason: if pacifists will not argue for this vision of a future world order, no one will. We will continue down the road of always believing that U.S. security is best cared for by the United States making its own judgments about when, where and why it will exercise its military might. Right now, hardly anyone is arguing for this vision of a future world order. It is time we started. And in going down this road, we *do* have to have good answers for the question of what we should do, today, in Iraq, or what we should, today, with regard to North Korea or Sudan or China.

Actually, it is possible to find this vision of a future world order broadly sketched. You find it articulated, however, only by those who want to attack it vigorously. The

position is sketched, as a kind of ‘straw man’ argument, in conservative diatribes that see this as the wrong vision—the worst imaginable.

In an article called “The New Pacifism and World Government” written in 1983, for example, the conservative intellectual Walter Berns concluded “So much, then, for this idea of a world government’s deriving its powers solely from the fearfully given consent of the governed. It would almost certainly be, it would have to be, a tyranny of global proportion.”¹¹ When opponents imagine the broad outlines of a foreign policy grounded in international law and organization, they recoil from it in horror, and the horror they conjure is global tyranny.

On their view, only the United States, only its citizens, are to be trusted with the security of the United States. The upshot of these conservative diatribes is a determined opposition to any surrender of the sovereign power of the United States to anyone else.

This is an important worry to look fully in the eye: the claim that global governance and global rule of law will lead inexorably to tyranny on a global scale. This worry can be parsed into two possibilities.

One possibility (an ugly one) is that only Americans (or only those peoples who are very ‘like’ Americans) can be trusted with self-government. Only bad things can be expected if we share power with others. This possibility is racist or xenophobic on its face.

A second, less ugly possibility is that there are inherent risks in extending self-rule over a very large territory or population. Note, however, that this is precisely the worry that was advanced in 1787 by Anti-Federalist opponents of the new United States Constitution. At that time, it was widely believed that no republic could extend over a territory or population as large as the newly independent United States; tyranny would be the inevitable result. James Madison’s “Federalist 10” from *The Federalist Papers* was a bold response to this worry. He argued that with proper safeguards such as the separation of powers and a federal system, tyranny could be avoided.¹² Two and a quarter centuries later, Madison’s response looks pretty solid.

I do not mean to dismiss this objection lightly, but simply to note that we have encountered it before. This looks not so much like a fatal objection as an important problem to solve. The same considerations Madison outlined in defence of the new U.S. Constitution pertain today to the possibility of global governance and global law. It would have to be a federal system, where most decisions are made at local or national levels. And there would have to be carefully designed safeguards against tyranny such as separation of powers and guarantees of individual rights. At a first glance, the conservative worry about inevitable tyranny does not bear much weight.

There is a third objection: this vision of world order is impossibly naïve. Even many who are reluctant to have the U.S. solve problems through the use of military might want to reserve the possibility of our using our armed forces in serious or extreme situations. They have a hard time imagining that we would not reserve for ourselves the ultimate right to decide when and where to commit U.S. troops.

But isn't *that* the naïve view? Is it not naïve to think that we will ever have a peaceful world if the United States insists on maintaining its own armed forces insists on deciding on its own when and where to commit those troops? Doesn't this commit the world, deep into the future, to the rule of the strong? Won't others, less strong, live in fear of us? Won't some simmer in feelings of injustice, aching to weaken or even overthrow us? Isn't this a foolproof recipe for a world constantly at war or on the eve of war? Is that what we want for our children and our children's children: for us to be seen as the world's bully? Down that road there is no realistic possibility for achieving a more just and peaceful world.

At Oxford University in 1937, there was an important ecumenical gathering that would bear fruit eleven years later in the founding of the World Council of Churches. Those gathered reached agreement about many important world issues, but not about war. (On the threshold of World War II, perhaps this is not surprising.) Those gathered articulated three different possible Christian positions toward war.

First. There are those who hold that, even though entering a war may be a Christian's duty in particular circumstances, modern warfare, with its mass destruction, can never be an act of justice.

Second. In the absence of impartial supranational institutions, there are those who hold that military action is the ultimate sanction of the rule of law, and that citizens must be distinctly taught that it is their duty to defend the law by force if necessary.

And third. Others, again, refuse military service of all kinds, convinced that an absolute witness against war and for peace is for them the will of God, and they desire that the church should speak to the same effect.

The first position and the third position can both, fairly, be called pacifists positions. The third rejects war at all times; the first rejects war in the modern age, given the scale of death and destruction. Only the second gives present-day legitimacy to war. But listen, again, to the opening words of that second position: "In the absence of impartial supranational institutions..."

What I am insisting today, is that we can and must create such "impartial, supranational institutions." Then, all three positions from the Oxford Conference—all three possible Christian options—will be pacifist positions.

All pacifists believe that the most important step any person can take is to renounce his or her own individual participation in war. We must begin by transforming ourselves. As Gandhi says, "Be the change you want to see in the world."

I am arguing today that we can imagine and strive for more than transformed hearts. Pacifists can also imagine and strive for a transformed world.

What about Scott Simon and his declaration that, once a pacifist, he now supports war? I think the best response comes from another reporter: longtime CBS Evening News anchor Walter Cronkite. Though he stayed silent about this commitment during his years as a reporter, Cronkite has been a lifelong supporter of the kind of vision I have been sketching. He said recently, “I believe the first priority of humankind in this era is to establish an effective system of world law that will assure peace with justice among the peoples of the world.” And he quoted Carl Van Doren, a celebrated intellectual and English Professor at Columbia as saying at the close of World War II, “History is now choosing the founders of the world federation. Any person who can be among that number and fails to do so has lost the noblest opportunity of a lifetime.”¹³

I do not know whether Cronkite would consider himself a pacifist. I doubt it. You certainly do not have to be a pacifist to believe that this vision of the future is the only sane and sensible one. To choose war is to choose madness.

This pacifist believes that we have before us the possibility of laying the foundation of a world that can resolve conflicts and solve problems without recourse to war. What do you believe?

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak with you today.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Matthew 5:9.

² John Howard Yoder, *Nevertheless: Varieties of Religious Pacifism* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1971, 1992).

³ See Gerald Schlabach, “Just Policing, Not War,” *America* v189, 1, July 7, 2003.

⁴ Matthew 22:21.

⁵ On this, see International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, December 2001.

⁶ On this, see Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, *Preventing Deadly Conflict: Final Report*, December 1997; and Kofi Annan, *Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary General*, United Nations, June 7, 2001. Most recently, and most importantly, see *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, Report of the Secretary General’s High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, United Nations, 2004.

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- ⁷ For a very helpful overview of development and change in international law, see Martti Koskenniemi, *The Gentle Civilizer of Nations: The Rise and Fall of International Law 1870-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- ⁸ “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” U. N General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III), December 10, 1948. <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>
- ⁹ The United Nations Development Program publishes a useful overview of the situation annually. The most recent is UNDP, *Human development 2003* (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2003. For a human rights perspective on the current state of affairs, see American Friends Service Committee Working Party on Global Economics, *Putting Dignity and Rights at the Heart of the Global Economy*, (Philadelphia: AFSC, 2004).
- ¹⁰ “United Nations Millennium Declaration,” U.N. General Assembly Resolution 55/2, September 8, 2000. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>
- ¹¹ Walter Berns, “The New Pacifism and World Government,” *National Review*, May 27, 1983, pp 613-620.
- ¹² Andrew Hamilton, James Madison and John Jay, *The Federalist Papers*, Number 10 (New York: New American Library, 1788, 1961).
- ¹³ Walter Cronkite, “The Case for Democratic World Government,” *Earth Island Journal*, v15, 2 (Summer 2000); from a speech upon his receipt of the Norman Cousins Award from the World Federalist Association, October 1999.