Richard Smoke with Willis Harman

PATHS to PEACE

Exploring the Feasibility of Sustainable Peace

Institute of Noetic Sciences
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Paths to Peace

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About the Book and Authors

A primer on thinking about peace in a nuclear age, this book describes the kinds of peace efforts that have been tried—and those that might be tried—from the highest echelons of government policymaking to the grassroots level of individual endeavor. Its primary goal is to enable the reader to understand ways of eliminating the threat of nuclear war and to be empowered to take action.

The book describes and compares nine basic methods people have used to achieve peace, ranging from such conventional approaches as the theories of deterrence and balance of power to more unconventional strategies such as nonviolent resistance. Essentially all significant ideas for achieving and maintaining international peace fall into one of these nine categories or combine features from several. Many have been tried, but all clearly have been found wanting.

Yet the authors' tone is one of optimism as they explore some of the major changes of the past quarter century. They contend that these changes alter the balance of advantages and disadvantages among the various paths to peace, so that what seemed partially workable in the past may not be appropriate to the present and what seemed totally impractical in the past might have a chance of working today. The book concludes with a scenario that may make a stable peace possible in the foreseeable future.

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Preface

by Willis Harman

The existence of nuclear weapons has presented us with a requirement for 100 percent reliability that is found nowhere else in human affairs. Human civilization cannot survive even one global nuclear war. In this sense our endeavor to achieve lasting peace and common security must succeed.

One might think that with this unprecedented challenge before us, there would be no effort spared in pursuit of the goal; that both governments and individual citizens would be unrelenting and single-minded in our common hour of need. Yet such is not the case. Our "national security" policies are confused and most certainly do not provide a feeling of security. Our stance toward peace is ambivalent and indecisive; in some circles the word "peace" has taken on connotations of weakness or of empathy with the Soviets. Much of the public seems disinterested, apathetic, and resigned or feels powerless to take effective action. Few people feel capable of thinking clearly about the issue; few have confidence in the ability of their leaders to guide them wisely toward a peaceful future.

It is this situation that is addressed by this book. We who are alive today, and whose future world is so at risk, typically do not think clearly about peace. Even the definition of the word is not thought through when we speak or write about peace. That is why this book is written as a primer. It is sophisticated, but simple.

The conviction that permeates the book is that peace and the general security of all are attainable goals. But to achieve them will require *a whole-system change:* the combined efforts of vast numbers of people around the globe thinking clearly about the issues and committing themselves to achieving those critically important goals. Paradoxically, the need for a whole-system change does not necessarily make the goal appear less achievable—whole-system change has happened before and could happen again—but rather indicates the kinds of actions that are likely to be effective.

A brief summary will adequately serve to remind us of what is almost obvious: Peace is a whole-system issue. The production of weaponry was once carried on almost exclusively by governments for their own use; commerce in weapons between nations was considered highly unethical. The manufacture and sale of weapons now represents a significant segment of the U.S. economy, and the economic repercussions of a serious cutback in military production could be severe, at least temporarily. The continuing military buildup has a momentum all its own. Part of that momentum is the psychological inertia of conventional ways of thinking about international conflict.

In the United States, the immediate point of conflict appears to center around the fear of communism and involves not just the NATO countries versus the Warsaw Pact countries; the rest of the world is part of the conflict as well. And the fear is not only that territory may be taken by force but also that noncapitalist ideas may gain hold in other parts of the world. (The wisest response to that threat would seem to be to make sure that the free enterprise system works so well for everybody that alternative systems have no appeal. Unfortunately, when we are fearful we do not always take the wisest course.)

There is an implicit assumption in most discussions of peace that the Soviet Union is the "enemy" of permanent concern. But North-South tensions are likely to long outlast that particular temporary conflict. The rich capitalist countries require ever-increasing consumption for the well-being of their economies, yet the planet would be hard-pressed to accommodate all five or six billion people in mass-consumption societies. On the other hand, it is hard to imagine a state of peace on the planet when the vast majority of people remain in a condition of relative privation while the minority strives to increase consumption to maintain flourishing economies. This issue of the relationship between the consuming minority in the rich nations and the far-poorer vast majority of the Earth's population is likely to remain long after the Soviet Union and the United States have learned to coexist.

These connections among the various pieces of the world's complex macroproblem become fairly obvious when we turn our attention to them. But we often overlook how completely our predicament is a direct consequence of a way of thinking that emerged in Western Europe only a few centuries ago. To quote Roger Walsh:

> Moreover, for the first time in millions of years of human evolution, all the major threats to our survival are human-caused. Problems such as nuclear weapons, pollution, and ecological imbalance stem directly from our own behavior and can therefore

> be traced to psychological origins. This means that the current threats to human survival and well-being are *actually symptoms*, symptoms of our individual and shared mind-set.[1]

The problems, in other words, are not only connected, but have a common source in the underlying Western perspectives and tacit assumptions that have shaped not only science and technology, but practically all aspects of modern society.

An analogy will help make the point. It is well known that many illnesses are related to an underlying condition of stress, which has among its effects the impairment of the body's immune system. When these diseases (such as peptic ulcers, allergies, and cardiovascular disease) are considered as isolated problems, the attempts to heal often fail—or result in another symptom popping up somewhere else. The reason is that the underlying cause has not been dealt with. It might seem that dealing with the whole collection of possible illnesses and their underlying cause all at once would necessarily be far more complex than approaching one of them alone. But this is not so. Changing the attitudinal approach to life and eliminating stress is in principle quite simple. (It may *appear* hard because of the psychological resistance to deep inner change.) Treating the whole-system problem of stress is more successful than direct attacks on the separate medical problems.

The analogy suggests that the nuclear weapons threat, global environmental problems, world poverty and hunger, and an assortment of other modern dilemmas relate to an underlying mind-set in such a way that none of them are solvable without a change in that mind-set. Yet with that change and the associated whole-system change they all become solvable.

The analogy fits in one more way as well. Just as the executive with heart trouble may be more accepting of a diagnosis that leads to bypass surgery than of one that requires a change in his or her fundamental attitudes, so many people today will seek for a resolution of the peace issue *almost anywhere* except in a fundamental change of mind.

But is whole-system change a plausible scenario? There are two points to be made. First, there is precedent: Whole-system change has happened before in history. Second, forces that might bring this change about are increasingly in evidence.

Within the context of Western civilization alone there have been at least two whole-system changes: the end of the Greco-Roman world and the transition from the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance and Reformation periods, into the modern age. It might seem rash indeed to predict a similarly profound revolutionary transfiguration of society. Yet a substantial and growing number of writers and thinkers do predict

it, and there are some signs that make such a scenario not so unreasonable an expectation. Having lived over forty years with nuclear weapons, we are increasingly aware of the awfulness of our situation. Slowly but surely people are building up opposition to continuing the same perilous trends.

The facts of those trends are familiar but still staggering. The total number of nuclear weapons in the world is around 50,000, with a total explosive power about two million times that of the Hiroshima bomb and a total tonnage 7,000 times that of all the bombs dropped during World War II. The explosion of even one of these weapons would be likely to release radioactive fallout that would dwarf the impact of Chernobyl to insignificance. Global nuclear war would result in devastation and suffering on a scale totally unknown in human history. The biological consequences, immediate and long-range, have been estimated and would be severe.

Even if nuclear weapons were never again to be exploded, the radioactive waste already generated by their manufacture remains as an unsolved problem. Thousands of tons of radioactive waste products contain substances that are likely to remain toxic for centuries; no way is known to render the waste harmless, and no leak-proof storage has been devised.

Economically, the arms race is a drain on all nations, most especially on the two superpowers and many of the Third World countries. Global military expenditures currently run around a trillion dollars a year, which is nearly three billion dollars a day. A small fraction of this expenditure could provide the whole world with adequate nutrition and sanitary water supply, public health measures to reduce disease, and housing and education.

Worldwide, military expenditures account for around 6 percent of the gross economic product. For the United States the figure is about 7 percent, for the Soviet Union around 14 percent, and for some of the Third World countries it is well above 20 percent. In some Third World countries more is being spent on armaments than on health care, education, and welfare all together. In addition to the tragic waste of resources and human effort, uncountable human deaths are resulting from malnutrition and disease, partly from the lack of preventive measures. Untold human misery in poverty-stricken countries directly results from the diversion of attention to arms.

Faced with such evidence of the effects of military buildup, people are beginning to see the need for change. Chapter 5 discusses further reasons why it may not be implausible to suppose that another fundamental change is now in the offing.

As awareness of the frightening dimensions of the nuclear dilemma has grown, people have banded together in a variety of peace organizations—and hoped that their efforts toward a nuclear freeze, or a peace academy, or a test ban treaty, might be successful. In recent years leaders in these peace-related movements have found common cause with leaders of other groups—ecological and environmental movements, "Green politics," women's movements, human rights organizations, and so on. And all of them have become more sophisticated in their understanding of how deep are the roots of the problems they are attempting to ameliorate.

At the same time a new vision has been forming: a vision of a world with nuclear disarmament and global security, appreciation of the diversity of Earth's many cultures, wholesome relationships between humans and the planet, elimination of subtle and not-so-subtle oppression of minorities and women, fundamental rights that are guaranteed by universal agreement—a vision of a world at peace. If the forces with this vision continue to grow, they could bring about the sort of whole-system change spoken of earlier. This possibility is not without hazards. People can be very fearful of change, and their reactionary responses can also bring on social disruption and human misery.

Thus there are two compelling reasons for thinking about peace in a lucid and fundamental way: (1) to be more effective in working toward peace; (2) to better understand the kind of societal trauma that we may experience during the transition period that probably lies ahead. This short book aspires to be of assistance in that task of learning to think about peace rationally, penetratingly, but still with passion.

In past conflicts we have been able to convince ourselves that if we could once vanquish the German "Huns"—or the Axis Powers, or "Red China," or the Soviets—then peace would be assured. But this logic is not as satisfying now as it was in our more naive years. We suspect that the solution to the problem is more complex than subduing some particular "enemy." The solution also involves more than choosing the right arms control policies or the right alternative security strategies or than adopting the latest conflict resolution techniques.

Yet peace and common security, for all the world and for generations to come, is a conceivable goal—and therefore an achievable goal. To achieve it we will need a lot of clear thinking about the problem; we hope this book will contribute to that. And as the book points out, the first step in achieving this goal, as with any other goal, is to *believe it can be done.*

Acknowledgments

The basic concept for a book of this kind came from the Institute of Noetic Sciences, which supported its writing with a grant to Peace and Common Security (PACS), an institute for research and education headquartered in San Francisco. Richard Smoke was executive director of PACS during the initial writing period; much of the planning and conceptualization of the book, and the bulk of the writing, were his. Midway through the project he accepted the position of research director of the Center for Foreign Policy Development at Brown University, and the work was completed there. Willis Harman, as president of the Institute of Noetic Sciences, collaborated in the conceptualization and contributed minor portions of the writing. We acknowledge with thanks the secretarial and other support of all three organizations.

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Willis Harman
Richard Smoke

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Introduction

This is a book on how to think about peace in a nuclear age. Peace now is not as precious as it has always been; it is *more* precious. The possible consequences of war have escalated to unthinkable dimensions. This small and fragile planet cannot afford a single global nuclear war. Hundreds of millions, possibly a billion or more, people would die in the first couple of hours. The whole species of humankind might be wiped out, along with many other species, in the environmental catastrophe, possibly including a "nuclear winter," that followed. The prevention of a global nuclear war is an absolute requirement if humanity is to have a future.

It is true that not every conflict could trigger a global nuclear war. But it is also true that no one is quite sure how to distinguish between those conflicts that might and those that won't. Some of the best-informed experts believe that the chance of war is significant. The requirement that there never be a global nuclear war, therefore, may not be easily achieved unless Albert Einstein's famous appeal for "new ways of thinking" is answered—by this generation and by generations to come.

Even though there have been many failures to maintain peace, the tone of this book is cautiously optimistic. It is important to know the limitations of old and new methods, but even more important to see the hope in the possibilities of their combination and in approaches not yet fully developed. The aim of the book is to help readers feel not only competent to hold opinions about what should be done but also motivated to make a contribution toward doing it.

What Is Peace?

The Romans had a saying, "If you desire peace, prepare for war." That maxim still guides the policies of the United States, the Soviet Union, and many other nations. In the nuclear age, we recommend that greater attention now be given to a different maxim, that of the

University for Peace, chartered by the United Nations and located in Costa Rica: "If you desire peace, educate for peace."

Peace, not just the avoidance of war, is important. It is both common sense and a profound psychological truth that people tend to create in reality the situations they imagine in their minds. If people focus on war, either looking forward to the victory or fearing the catastrophe, in subtle ways they may act to make war more probable. Even focusing on how to avoid a war may tend to postpone it rather than to transform the underlying conditions that give rise to it. Conversely, if people focus on peace, especially if they are realistic as well as imaginative in their thinking, they contribute toward peace. Thus thinking about peace is important, perhaps more so than is immediately apparent.

But thinking about peace is not as simple as it may seem. In the first place, the word itself is ambiguous. People who speak or write about peace often mean simply the absence of war. This "negative" definition conceives peace in terms of something else that is *not* happening, namely war. Less common but ultimately more satisfactory is a "positive" definition, one in terms of what *is* happening. This state of peace is one of harmony, mutual regard, and indeed active cooperation among the groups or nations involved—and ultimately the whole world.

Many who have intensively studied peace believe that a necessary accompaniment of this positive state is a sense of inner peace within at least many of the principal individuals leading these groups or nations. That state of inner serenity might be called "peace-*fullness*." Its absence is a subtle kind of psychological "emptiness" (which is really the beginning of feelings of insecurity).

Peace in the world is also a matter of degree. The fact that peace does not reign everywhere does not mean that it is not real in many places. Although some people are fighting with rifles as this book is being published, no one is fighting with nuclear missiles.

For our purposes in this book, it will be useful to define three peace goals, each representing a greater degree of peace. First, there is a long-term goal of what we will call *complete peace:* a sustainable state of nonviolence, and even low conflict, among peoples. Many assume that this is achievable only after nation-states have been replaced by some kind of world governance.

Second, there is a shorter-term goal that we will call *operational peace.* We will offer a more complete definition later, but for now we mean a reasonably universal conviction that war and weapons of mass destruction are no longer legitimate elements in international life and a reasonably consistent employment of peaceful means of conflict resolution among nations. This state is probably what most people