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Culture of Peace

Joseph de Rivera

A culture of peace is usually contrasted with the culture of war that pervades so much of modern society. However, there are three different referents for the term. It may be used to refer to: The cultures of peoples who do not engage in warfare murder, rape, and other forms of physical violence, or to the ideal of a global culture of peace that can replace the current system of domination with a culture of cooperation for sustainable development, or to the culture of peace that actually exists within current societies, a culture encouraging people to transform those aspects that reflect a culture of war. Each of these referents is discussed below.

Extant Cultures of Peace

There is clear evidence for the existence of peoples and tribal systems that do refuse to engage in warfare. The people in these societies also do not, or very rarely, engage in murder, rape, or physical assault (Fry, 2007) Information about over 20 of these peoples may be found at Peacefulpeoples.org. These societies are remarkably diverse: Some consist of relatively small groups, others number over a hundred thousand; some (such as the Amish communities) exist within a larger society, others are on island groups or in relatively isolated areas; some are egalitarian, others hierarchical; some avoid conflict, others resolve conflicts with symbolic contests. What they share is an abhorrence of violence and strong norms against violent behavior. Further, the study of those societies with less violence suggests that they are characterized by the fact that they value children and raise them in caring ways. Of course, it may be argued that these

peaceful societies can only exist because they are protected by their relative isolation or the ability to move away from violent neighbors. However, their very existence demonstrates that humans are not necessarily violent. Although conflict is usually disliked, and life in these cultures might seem boring to those raised in societies that value competitive excitement, it is clear that it is quite possible for humans to create peaceful cultures and enjoy living in them.

The Ideal of a Global Culture of Peace

Given the existence of peaceful cultures but the fact of global warfare, we may imagine the ideal of a peaceful world culture. The idea of articulating the difference between a current culture of war and a possible culture of peace and using education to create the latter was first advanced by Felipe MacGregor. This idea, combined with the Seville Statement that humans were not inherently violent, led to a UNESCO proposal to create a culture of peace that contrasted with the current culture of war (See <http://www.culture-of-peace.info/history.html>). A culture of peace was defined as involving values, attitudes and behaviors that rejected violence, endeavored to prevent conflicts by addressing root causes, and aimed at solving problems through dialogue and negotiation. The UNESCO group argued that such a culture should be based on a foundation that could be contrasted with a culture of war. It seems clear that a war culture is based on education that supports violence, and uses male dominance hierarchies that encourage intolerance for outgroups and operate in secrecy, denying human rights and creating insecurity in order to exploit resources. Therefore, the UNESCO group argued a culture of peace should be based on:

1. Education for nonviolence
2. Gender equality
3. Tolerance among peoples
4. Democratic participation
5. Open communication
6. Human rights
7. International peace and security
8. Sustainable development (directed towards the reduction of poverty and income inequality)

Noting that each of these bases was reflected in major contemporary social movements (for democracy, human rights, gender equality, a sustainable environment, etc) and that the concept of a culture of peace provided a framework for unifying these goals, the UNESCO secretary general, Fredrico Mayor, supported the concept and the initiation of a number of important initiatives towards build a culture of peace. These included reconciliation efforts in El Salvador and Mozambique, and war prevention in Burundi (See UNESCO, 1995). In 1999 the idea of building a culture of peace was introduced to the UN General Assembly. Although many nations responded favorably, the major powers objected to the suggestions that the international system constituted a culture of war. They saw their military dominance as providing the security needed to maintain peace and insisted on the removal of all references to a culture of war, thus weakening the internal consistency of the concept and a thrust towards creating a new culture. However, they could not object to a resolution to build a culture of peace, and a resolution for a program of action to build a culture based on the eight bases passed the

General Assembly (United Nations (1999). A personal pledge to work towards the bases (manifesto 2000) was distributed by the UNESCO network and has been signed by over 75 million people. In spite of this ideological success, powerful nations refused to economically support measures that would have worked towards the building of a culture of peace. Although UNESCO maintains an active website (www3.unesco.org/iycp), and the UN has been involved in related programs (such as the establishment of the millennium goals), and is obligated to issue a report that evaluates progress towards a culture of peace, the concept is not guiding current UN initiatives.

One of the initiators of the UN program has suggested that it is impossible to build a culture of peace that is based on the current nation state system. On the basis of his reading of history, Adams argues that since nation states, and the whole system of nations reflected in the UN, are grounded in the current culture of war (and rely on war to suppress internal dissent) they ultimately resist the measures needed to build a culture of peace. From this perspective, the UN needs to be based on local governance rather than nation-states Hence, Adams (2009) advocates building a global network of local authorities who are committed to nourishing a culture of peace via peace commissions. These commissions are partnerships between civil society and local systems of governance and may nourish cultures of peace by enlisting people in the assessment of the local culture and working to further each of the bases for a culture of peace .For example, democratic participation may be enhanced by using participatory budgeting.

The Empirical Approach to Nourishing Cultures of Peace

Boulding (2000) defines a peace culture as one where patterns of beliefs, values and behaviors, together with accompanying institutional arrangements, promote mutual caring and sustained wellbeing in the midst of diversity. Emphasizing peace as a process that eliminates the need for violence she examines the extent to which a culture of peace has existed throughout human history and may best be nourished in our current situation. Rather, than focusing on the extent to which we are living in a culture of war, she notes that the cultures of most nations contain many hidden peaceful elements so that most peoples have mixes of peaceful and warlike cultures. Less despairing of the system of nation states, her work notes the many peaceful aspects that exist, points out positive current initiatives, and suggests many things that could be done to strengthen the culture of peace in individual societies and the global system. She emphasizes the need to build partnerships between men and women, children and adults, communities and educational institutions. Although completely compatible with the UN initiative, her work is more synthetic than analytic, a sort of yin complement to a yang systems analysis.

Accepting the idea that cultures of peace exist to varying degrees in current societies, de Rivera (2004) attempted to measure culture of peace on a national basis. He noted that social scientists have not yet devised measures for peaceful norms, but have created objective measures that may be used to measure each of the eight proposed bases. Collecting these measures from a sample of 74 nations he correlated the measures and searched for an underlying culture of peace factor. Rather than finding a unitary factor, an analysis revealed four factors. Accordingly, de Rivera argued that there were four dimensions to a culture of peace: Liberal Development was reflected in the relationship

among measures for press freedom, democracy, human rights, gender equality, per capita GDP, adult literacy, and life expectancy (but not sustainability). Nonviolent Equality was reflected in the relationship between homicide rate and economic inequality. State Violence involved the number of international military threats and the amount of military expenditures, and was related to the percentage of a nation's citizens in prison. Nurturance was reflected in aiding rather than creating refugees, greater expenditures for education and, to some extent, the percentage of women in parliament. Arguing that it was useful to compare nations and that this would enable nations to address weaknesses, de Rivera suggested that nations with above average scores on all four dimensions (such as Norway and New Zealand) had more of a culture of peace than nations with below average scores. Some nations (such as the U.S) have above average scores on liberal development but are far below average on state violence; others nations are below average on several of the factors.

Although the contrast with a culture of war is useful in delineating the nature of a culture of peace, the latter may not simply be the opposite of the former and may require a consideration of other bases. Thus, the empirical examination of existent cultures of peace and a consideration of the cultures of peace that are an aspect of contemporary societies suggests the importance of considering how children are nurtured and how power is managed. Our cultures are entwined in a global economy in which the interests of the elites in different nations are often more closely linked with one another than with the interests of the majority within their own nation. If promoters of a culture of peace argue that the ideals of equality and sustainability are best attained in a non-state system of local non-hierarchical governance, they must address how local power struggles can be

settled, and how conflicts among local governing agencies can be mediated by a web of global communication. If promoters accept the need for states and hierarchies of status and power, they must address how to structure societies so that positions of power and status in hierarchies are based on caring for others rather than domination. Considerable evidence suggests that people seem predisposed to in-group favoritism and prejudice that make it difficult to achieve solidarity, and that nonviolence may be a norm in conflicts between individuals, but not between government and people, haves and have-nots, or between societies. Ought we to work for multicultural communities or to separate ethnic and state identities so that conflicts can be isolated and contained by a superordinate state identity? Those seriously interested in developing culture of peace must carefully consider the emotional climate of societies, the role of ethnicities, civil society and states, the possible utility of departments of peace and the control of corporations.

The beginnings of this consideration may be found in a *Handbook on Building Cultures of Peace* (de Rivera, 2009). The first section of this book discusses culture of peace from anthropological, economic, psychological, and sociological perspectives. In the second section, specialists examine each of the eight bases for a culture of peace. The third section addresses issues in advancing personal, family, community and societal peace, and methods for nonviolent action, negotiation, restorative justice, prison reform, and police oversight. In squarely facing the challenges posed by each aspect of the whole, and proposing practical solutions, the Handbook suggests that attaining a culture of peace is a challenging but viable goal.

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Key Words

Culture, Ideals, Measurement, Nonviolence