

## THE SOLUTION

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When Noam Chomsky spoke at the Anderson Center a few years ago, he began his talk by stating that the two biggest threats we face are nuclear and environmental. He finished with the optimistic remark that both were within our capacity to eliminate. He cited past successful social movements as examples, but I maintain that now it will take more than just public demand to eliminate these two. These threats and others like them are global in extent and social movements alone will go nowhere if there is no structure to implement them. Here is a short list of some other global threats, not in any particular order of urgency or magnitude:

- Unsustainable population growth – In 1800, less than 1 billion people lived on this planet. Today, there are more than 6.6 billion, and by 2050, that will grow to 9.7 billion. Many solutions have been offered, none of them palatable or “practical.”
- Poverty – Half of the world’s population lives on less than \$2 per day. According to UNICEF, 26,500-30,000 children die each day due to poverty. This is in spite of the fact that many humanitarian organizations and some first world countries are addressing this need.
- Economic injustice - More than 80 percent of the world’s population lives in countries where income differentials are widening. There is no question that the richer are getting richer, the poorer are getting poorer, and those in the middle are either stagnating or falling into poverty.
- Shortage of water - Some 1.1 billion people in developing countries have inadequate access to water, and 2.6 billion lack basic sanitation. Access to piped water into the household averages about 85% for the wealthiest 20% of the population, compared with 25% for the poorest 20%. What is potable is steadily becoming more polluted or wasted. It has been said that water will someday replace oil as the world’s most critical resource.
- Disease - Worldwide, 2.2 million children die each year because they are not immunized. 15 million children orphaned due to HIV/AIDS (similar to the total children population in Germany or United Kingdom)
- War and the sovereignty of nations – War has long been acknowledged as the scourge of civilization. The sovereignty of nations is now frequently violated. It has almost become an accepted practice for one nation to cross the border of another, have ships violate claimed territorial waters, or fly planes into someone else’s airspace.

Yes, there is no shortage of problems, but where are the solutions? Often we hear that something ought to be done about this or that. Even some concrete suggestions are made, but the big question always remains, who will do it? There is a song sung frequently in churches, usually when the sermon is about peace. It starts and ends with, “Let there be

peace on earth and let it begin with me.” This may be “feel good” stuff but hardly realistic, as the decisions which created the problems listed above were made by very few people in power, some of whom may have occupied the pews and sang the song but none of whom paid any attention to its words. Or, if they did, they found one excuse or another to ignore them.

The truth is that we live in a world which is divided by nations, each acting in what it considers to be its own best interest. When those interests are at another nation’s expense, morality is not a factor, since governments always claim their primary duty is to their constituents. (It seems not to matter that those who benefit are usually the privileged minority, not the general population.) So, what we have is world anarchy; where the strong dominate the weak, where there is no order or justice, and the international laws that do exist are unenforceable.

Look at any of the world’s problems and then ask yourself this question, “Who will administer the solutions even if they can be found.” There is only one reasonable answer – an international organization in which all nations are represented and to whom all nations have surrendered some degree of sovereignty. Obviously, this body must be democratic to be respected and strong enough to carry out its decisions. It must also have a court to decide when international laws have been broken; one which is accessible to even the weakest of nations. This organization does exist, albeit that it is currently undemocratic, ineffective, and corrupt. It is of course the much maligned United Nations. Some may argue that the UN’s reputation is so sullied that it would be better to start over from scratch. I am not prepared to debate this point, but it does seem to me that it is easier to repair what already exists than to discard it entirely.

The end of WWII was an historic time for America. It had just fought and won a war on the opposite side of its two bordering oceans. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which triggered its entry into the war, its homeland never came under attack. The US emerged from the war as the world’s greatest military and economic power. Additionally, it had developed and used the atomic bomb; a weapon so terrifying it caused the immediate surrender of its remaining enemy. Indeed, some felt at the time that this new weapon made future wars obsolete. The US remained the bomb’s sole possessor for four years until the Soviet Union tested its own. Perhaps having that monopoly and being otherwise so militarily invulnerable led the United States to support the establishment of the United Nations. It knew it was so strong that it could do so without fear of coming under its jurisdiction. For further insurance, it insisted that the five victorious nations of WWII each be given a permanent seat with veto power in the Security Council. Had this provision not been included, it is doubtful the United Nations would ever have come into being. The UN was structured so that the power to implement any resolutions passed by the inclusive General Assembly rested with an exclusive 15-member Security Council. In fact, on numerous occasions over the years, resolutions passed overwhelming in the GA, often

with only 2-3 dissenting votes, died there because of the opposition of one of the vetoing nations (most often in recent years, the US.) Thus, the UN was fatally flawed as a democratic organization from the start. As time passed, it grew weaker and weaker, since it was viewed as nothing more than an arm of American foreign policy. Today, when the UN is needed perhaps more than ever, the US continues to weaken it by using and promoting the expansion of NATO as an alternative. NATO was created during the Cold War to counter the Soviet bloc. When the Cold War ended, so should have NATO, but the US saw in it a useful tool which it could use whenever the UN did not support US interests.

So, the UN, with all its fine intentions to rein in aggressor nations and resolve conflict non-violently, never could fulfill those objectives, nor can it now. But, if it were to democratize its structure and increase its enforcement ability by mandating that a percentage of each member-nation's militia be placed under its central command, I believe it could accomplish its original mission. The restructuring would require each country to surrender some of its sovereignty, but would that not be in their own self-interest? Is not a world free of war and injustice a better world for all? The poorer nations would cease to be exploited by the rich and powerful ones, as they would now have a place to go to air their grievances and have injustices corrected. The rich and powerful nations, by subjecting themselves to international law, would no longer be the target of terrorists seeking revenge, using tactics against them which their huge conventional forces and nuclear weapons can not obstruct. All nations would benefit from having a larger share of their budgets devoted to social needs instead of wasteful armaments that require endless upgrading.

As much as all these positive benefits might provide the incentive for restructuring, the biggest incentive lies in trying to answer the negative question, "If no such organization exists, allowing world anarchy to persist, how will all the major problems listed at the beginning of this document be resolved?" They can't be! There simply is no other way (at least none I can think of!) Is there? So, why don't we just stop spinning our rhetorical wheels about solutions that are impossible to implement and start addressing the one that is essential, the one without which none of the others can succeed?

I could end this paper here and I would have enjoyed writing it, but nothing would have been accomplished, as I have offered no plan for moving forward. A long time ago, when I first joined The Freeze movement, it maintained an international office at the UN with Cora Weiss as its leading spokesperson. (I just sent her an e-mail. She is still alive and politically active. She flattered me with a lengthy response.) Since then, The Freeze and the successor organizations of SANE/Freeze and Peace Action have never given the UN the priority I feel it deserves. However, now, if you agree with my assertions, we can work together to make reforming the UN an imperative. The question is where to start? I think it is right here in our chapter. If you, the Board, can not be convinced that

restructuring the UN into an international organization capable of ending world anarchy is the only way to implement solutions to the many problems the world faces, then I will pursue the matter no further. But, if you do agree, the next step would be to take the issue to PANY, and from there on to National.

Even if you, the Board, disagree with my postulation, maybe a discussion of it will stimulate some better suggestions as to how world anarchy can be ended. I am certainly willing to listen! But, at this point, it seems to me that if no attempt is made to develop some mechanism to correct the world's multitude of problems, we are just "blowing in the wind." To prove my point, I will give you two concrete examples. Take the issue of nuclear abolition. As you all know, I provided the initiative and leadership last year for having Matt Ryan join with other mayors throughout the world in signing their statement on nuclear abolition. He did so at the Hiroshima Day Breakfast, but what did that accomplish? It was "feel good" but no number of mayors, or even countries, demanding the elimination of all nuclear weapons and control of all fissionable material will go anywhere without a strong, well-respected, well-funded international organization to oversee the disarmament process and serve as a future watchdog. A similar case in point is the current situation with the UN and Iran over its uranium enrichment program. At US insistence, the Security Council has politically perverted the provision in the Non-proliferation Treaty which allows for the peaceful development of nuclear energy, while totally ignoring the provision that nuclear states make a serious effort to rid themselves of nuclear weapons. It allowed the United States and the Soviet Union to enter into a nuclear arms race that made a mockery of the NPT; it accepted the addition of Israel, India, and Pakistan into the nuclear club; and it is now remaining mute while the US develops new weapons that are "more usable." Iran may or may not have the acquisition of nuclear weapons as its clandestine goal, but who could blame it if it did? There are surely many countries who would like a few nukes to deter America's continuous bullying and aggressions? These issues are but two examples of how the United States has corrupted a weak, undemocratic UN to do its bidding.

A reformed United Nations may indeed be our last and only hope for a livable world. *People who try to resolve the world's problems without including the essential ingredient of implementation remind me of the joke about the man who knowingly looked for his lost keys on the wrong corner because the light was better over there.*

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