

Peace through Dialogue: A Time to Talk Thoughts on a Culture of Peace

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To commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI), I would like to set down some thoughts on the prospects for intercultural dialogue and peace as we enter the third millennium.

The last years of the twentieth century have proven to be a period of dramatic change and transformation. At the start of this period, it seemed that the end of the Cold War heralded far brighter prospects for humanity's future. Those hopes were soon dashed, however, as the world was wracked by a series of regional and internal conflicts. It was almost as if a Pandora's box had been pried open, unleashing the demonic forces of war and violence that now plague the world.

It is estimated that in the ten years following the end of the Cold War in 1989, more than fifty states underwent the wrenching drama of violent conflict, division or independence. These wars claimed some four million lives.

The dread reality of contemporary conflicts is that it is not unusual for ninety percent of the victims to be unarmed civilians; a horrific number of these are children. Survivors are often forced into a precarious existence as refugees or internally displaced persons. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that some twenty-three million people worldwide are in need of international protection and assistance. [\[1\]](#)

As part of the global effort to transform the tragic legacy of the twentieth century, the United Nations has declared 2000 the International Year for the Culture of Peace, and has designated the first decade of the new century (2001-2010) the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World. [\[2\]](#) In this sense, we have a truly unique opportunity to muster the will of the international community and to initiate action that will transform the age-old "culture of war" into a new culture of peace.

In its annual report, *the State of the World's Children 2000*, [\[3\]](#) the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reaffirms the possibility of overcoming entrenched patterns of structural violence, poverty and discrimination within a single generation, and urges our commitment to realizing this.

We cannot afford to lose heart in the face of challenging realities or look on passively at problems which do not directly affect us. We must not overlook the ills of society, but instead look for ways to act, with a clear set of goals in sight.

At this moment in history, we should determine to eliminate all needless suffering from this planet that is our home. It is in our efforts to realize this goal that we will find the key to ensuring that the new century does not mimic the last, but becomes a genuine departure toward an era of peace and hope.

A commitment to peace

Humanity is charged with the task of not merely achieving a "passive peace"--the absence of war--but of transforming on a fundamental level those social structures that threaten human dignity. Only in this way can we realize the positive, active values of peace. Efforts to enhance international cooperation and the fabric of international law are, of course, necessary. Even more vital, however, are the creative efforts of individuals to develop a multilayered and richly patterned culture of peace, for it is on this foundation that a new global society can be built.

The members of the SGI worldwide are actively engaged in the work of fostering a culture of peace. For example, in 1999, the youth membership of SGI-USA launched a "Victory Over Violence" campaign to help young people uncover and counteract the root causes of violence in their lives. It encourages young people to respect their own lives, respect all life and inspire hope in others. [\[4\]](#) Similarly, SGI representatives participated in the NGO (nongovernmental organization) conferences held at The Hague in May and in Seoul in October, on both occasions organizing

symposiums to explore various aspects of the culture of peace. The SGI-affiliated Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC) held a series of conferences and consultations on this theme in the first part of 1999. [5] Linking all of these dialogues was the question of how the deeply ingrained and culturally reinforced psychology of confrontation and hatred can be transformed into an even more robust psychology of peaceful and harmonious coexistence.

The SGI has long supported UNHCR's efforts to protect and rebuild the lives of refugees and displaced persons. These are the people who have suffered not only the immediate scourge of war and destruction but have also been forced by violence and fear to flee their homes. Their long-term needs must be addressed.

The youth members of the Soka Gakkai in Japan have held twenty fund- and awareness-raising campaigns, starting with that organized for Vietnamese and West African refugees in 1973. Since 1980, we have dispatched fourteen observation and information-gathering missions in order to provide up-to-date information to donors and the general public on the living conditions of refugees and the status of relief efforts. In 1999, for example, SGI representatives observed and publicized refugee repatriation efforts in war-ravaged Kosovo, and camp conditions for refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. We intend to continue and expand such activities, which we are convinced are integral to the vital humanitarian and social mission of Buddhism.

When the SGI was founded, on January 26, 1975, on the island of Guam, representatives from 51 countries and territories were present. Since then, our grassroots activities for peace, education and culture, based on the humanistic outlook of Nichiren Buddhism, have expanded to 148 countries and territories. This is indeed a movement for peace that is of, by and for the people, and which seeks to transform human history--so filled with misery and suffering--into a new era of peace and hope.

Persons of Concern to UNHCR, January 1, 1999, by Category

REGION	REFUGEES	ASYLUM SEEKERS	RETURNEES	IDPs & OTHERS	TOTAL
Africa	3,270,860	63,350	1,296,770	1,653,970	6,284,950
Asia	4,744,730	27,610	317,180	2,385,220	7,474,740
Europe	2,667,830	576,970	285,500	2,682,320	6,212,620
Latin America/Caribbean	74,180	360	7,860	20,000	102,400
North America	659,800	645,600	----	----	1,305,400
Oceania	74,310	5,200	----	----	79,510
TOTAL	11,491,710	1,319,090	1,907,310	6,741,510	21,459,620

Refugees: International law defines a refugee as a person who is outside his or her country and cannot return because of a well-founded fear of persecution, or who has fled because of war or civil conflict.

Returnees: Refugees leave their homes under extreme duress, and most of them want to return as soon as circumstances permit. UNHCR helps them reintegrate and monitors their well-being for up to two years.

Asylum Seekers: This category refers to persons who have left their countries of origin and have applied for recognition as refugees in other countries.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Others of Concern: UNHCR extends protection or assistance to certain groups who were not included in the Office's original mandate, but whom the UN secretary-general or the General Assembly has requested UNHCR to assist.

Building a culture of peace

How, then, are we to go about the task of creating an enduring culture of peace? What is really meant by a culture of peace? Here I would like to discuss the differences between the culture of war and the culture of peace and attempt to chart a path from one to the other.

In the time-honored contrast between the sword and the pen, it is of course the latter that is associated with culture, and which typically evokes an image of peace. But is it really so simple? When we look at how specific cultural values have been diffused and how different cultures have encountered one another, it is clear that the process has not always been peaceful. As the British historian Arnold Toynbee described it, "the reception of a foreign culture is a painful as well as a hazardous undertaking ..." [6] As history demonstrates, such encounters are often laden with power struggles and unleash forces that give rise to violence and bloodshed as one culture attempts to subjugate the other. In a sense, the incessant strife that we see in the world around us is proof that humanity has yet to transcend destructive modes of intercultural encounter.

I will not attempt here to delve into the difficult question of whether such violence is inherent in the nature of culture, or is the result of deliberate distortion and manipulation. Let it suffice to say, however, that culture manifests two contrasting aspects. One resonates with the original sense of the word "culture" and involves the cultivation of the inner life of human beings and their spiritual elevation. The other is the aggressive, invasive imposition of one people's manners and mores on another, inscribing there a sense of resentment and sowing the seeds of future conflict. In this case, culture serves not the cause of peace, but the cause of war.

Cultural imperialism

One of the classic examples of this invasive, aggressive aspect is the cultural imperialism that was intertwined with European colonial policy in the modern era, embellishing it and supplying its justifications. The term "cultural imperialism" emerged during the 1960s against the backdrop of the global process of decolonization and through the sub- and counter-culture movements in the West which questioned the legitimacy of received traditions and values. But the reality and experience the term describes date back to the earliest days of European exploration and expansion and are coextensive with the five-hundred-year history of modern colonialism. In essence, it is an ideology that justifies the subjugation and exploitation of other peoples by unilaterally defining them and their cultures as primitive or barbaric.

This is an example of the violent potential of culture in both intent and application. Here culture functioned as the forerunner and as the ideational basis for the war and violence of colonial domination; it served to cover and conceal simpler and more raw forms of collective egotism. Now, at a time when almost all colonies have won independence, it may seem that this veil has been stripped away, and culture is no longer being put to such political uses. The ruptures and struggles that continue to affect every region, however, suggest that this is by no means the case.

Last year, I initiated a dialogue on José Martí, the great nineteenth-century essayist, poet and leader of the struggle for Cuban independence, with Cintio Vitier, president of the Center for José Martí Studies in Havana. [7] These discussions brought back to me the degree to which the strong distrust toward the United States that Martí noted more than one hundred years ago remains a firm presence in the minds of the Cuban people today. Nor, I believe, can we dismiss these fears as unjustified.

The Palestinian-born cultural critic Edward Said writes in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, regarded by many as a key work of postcolonial analysis: "[T]he meaning of the imperial past is not totally contained within it, but has entered the reality of hundreds of millions of people, where its existence as shared memory and as a highly conflictual texture of culture, ideology and policy still exercises tremendous force." [8]

As we follow Said's carefully developed and copiously illustrated argument, we discover the depth to which the ideology of cultural imperialism had taken root in the hearts and minds of "decent men and women"--the educated classes of the imperial powers. At the core of Said's argument is his analysis of such literary works as Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* and Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. At the same time, he looks at the underlying attitudes of those intellectual lights--among them de Tocqueville, J. S. Mill, Hegel and Marx--who shaped modern thought and left their imprint on the intellectual life of modernizing Japan, itself a later colonizer which wreaked great suffering on the peoples of Asia. He reveals how these great thinkers, consciously and unconsciously, and with an astonishing freedom from any sense of culpability, supported the goals of cultural imperialism. For example, the French philosopher Ernest Renan (1823-1892) could on the one hand write a work such as the *Life of Jesus* and at the same time be a proponent of racial theories rivaling those of the Nazis.

As one final example of these attitudes, I would like to quote a statement by Albert Schweitzer, famous for the hospital he operated in equatorial Africa for many decades. "The negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority. We must, therefore, so arrange the circumstances of daily life that my natural authority can find expression. With regard to the negroes, then, I have coined the formula: 'I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother.' " [9]

It is hardly surprising that Schweitzer's reputation declined rapidly with the rise of independence movements among peoples subjugated by colonialism. And the fact that these words were written with apparent goodwill toward their referents only intensifies our sense of revulsion at the elitist, discriminatory sensibility they reveal.

Cultural relativism

Cultural relativism is an important intellectual legacy of the latter half of the twentieth century. It grew from the pioneering work of cultural anthropologists who sought to balance and redress the arrogant imperialist assumptions that had insinuated themselves into the Western cultural outlook. It is based on the view that specific practices must be understood and appreciated within the context of a culture as a whole; it denies attempts to judge one culture by the values of another or to rank them according to some hierarchical scheme.

There is much to respect in the earnest endeavor to relativize one's own culture and to accord value to traditions that had been looked down upon as savage or primitive. These efforts have done much to ameliorate the noxious effects of cultural imperialism.

I question, however, whether this understanding is adequate as a response to the challenges of globalization--the economic and technological unification of the world. In other words, I fear that an attitude of merely passive recognition or grudging acceptance of other cultures cannot deal with the destructive aspects of culture, which perpetuate a logic of exclusion and confrontation. Unless transformed, these aspects can render culture, in Said's words, "a battleground on which causes expose themselves to the light of day and contend with one another ..." rather than "a placid realm of Apollonian gentility." [\[10\]](#)

In my discussions with Johan Galtung, the pioneer of peace studies, he described the fragility of this kind of cultural relativism as its "tendency to take the form of passive tolerance instead of active attempts to learn from other cultures." [\[11\]](#)

Disputes concerning the universality of human rights between Western countries (in particular, the United States) and countries of the developing world have as their background the attempt to relativize the political culture of the West, from which the modern human rights tradition grew. Attempts on the part of Western countries to criticize the political systems and practices of developing countries are invariably met with countercharges of interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state. Equally typical is the rebuttal that the West's attempts to assert the universality of human rights, while ignoring differences in political culture, the history of colonial domination and the resulting disparities in economic development, are at best hypocritical and at worst a continuation into the present of the arrogance of the "Great Powers."

Any attempt to unravel differences and confrontations as complex as these must be grounded in something far more solid than passive acceptance or tolerance. Such attitudes cannot possibly provide the basis for a culture of peace or a new global civilization that will enrich the lives of people far into the third millennium.

Peace cannot be a mere stillness, a quiet interlude between wars. It must be a vital and energetic arena of life-activity, won through our own volitional, proactive efforts. Peace must be a living drama--in Spinoza's words, "a virtue that springs from force of character." [\[12\]](#)

Passive cultural relativism does not offer a viable alternative to the high-handedness of cultural imperialism. One necessary aspect of a culture of peace is that it must provide a basis on which a plurality of cultural traditions can creatively interact, learning and appropriating from each other toward the dream of a genuinely inclusive global civilization. Without this kind of overarching goal, we run the risk of being inadequately equipped to meet the challenges of globalization or, worse, of lapsing into a cynical paralysis.

From cultural internationalism to cultural interpopulism

In this connection, I would like to examine the rich possibilities found in the tradition of "cultural internationalism" and to attempt to broaden and deepen this concept.

Akira Iriye, professor of American history at Harvard University, has written of the cultural internationalism that emerged in the latter years of the nineteenth century. This movement viewed culture as a vehicle for building cooperative relations across national boundaries and defusing the underlying confrontations that were propelling the world toward a suicidal arms race. Starting with efforts such as those to promote the exchange of information among scientists and medical practitioners, and to standardize systems of measurement, its proponents sought to lay the foundations of peace through educational and cultural exchanges. These networks of exchange were able to survive through two global conflicts and were in fact foundational in the postwar efforts that took form in the UNESCO Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, two key documents that express the common aspirations and conscience of humankind. [\[13\]](#)

In recent years, this same thread has been taken up by the global activities of NGOs and what is known as global civil society. I believe that these activities are the first signs of an emerging trend toward what might be termed cultural interpopulism, a movement for cultural interaction in which ordinary citizens are the protagonists. I am convinced that this approach will play a key role in the work of building a new culture of peace.

Ryosuke Ohashi, professor of philosophy at the Kyoto Institute of Technology, has pointed out that in intellectual circles in Europe the term international has in recent years been largely supplanted by the concept of the intercultural. Ohashi describes our contemporary world as the intersection of "the vertical axes of a multiplicity of local cultures and the horizontal axes of technology that seeks universality and standardization." [14] There is a growing, if unspoken, agreement that the realities of such a world can be better grasped by focusing on the deeper issues of cultural identity rather than the more superficial layers of political definitions and concerns.

Indeed, if we are overly entangled in the national dimension, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that national identities are often quite deliberate constructs created for political ends. The greatest danger, of course, lies in falling into the trap of reifying these constructs, that is, viewing them as unchanging entities or essences, with an absolute ontological standing.

At the same time, we must recognize that the frameworks of the state--the national level--are not, in the near term at least, likely to disappear and that states will continue to retain an at least functional necessity. However, we must also confront the reality that there is a deepening crisis of identity that afflicts people everywhere and is driven by what Toynbee termed the "deeper, slower movements of history" [15] which are not amenable to remedy through purely political means. It is on this profound level that a paradigm shift toward an intercultural perspective is called for.

Global civil society has a key role to play in this. In the arenas where cultural internationalism thrived, it was still to a large extent governments and national elites that took the initiative. The main actors of cultural interpopulism, by contrast, are the many civil society organizations, the NGOs and international NGOs (INGOs), which are propelled by a powerful spirit of volunteerism among the people themselves. Here we see not the carefully constructed facade of governments and states, but the richly diverse faces of humanity. I believe that there is great potential for this kind of cultural interpopulism to interact with and support forward-looking political initiatives, based on a sense of appreciation and recognition of the respective roles and strengths of each. This is one of the avenues we should be exploring; it can equip us to respond to the complex demands of our diverse and rapidly evolving multicultural world.

The power of character

We must never lose sight of the fact that, however much communication technology may advance, people still count. It is the individual--it is the character of each individual--that is decisive as the creator and protagonist of culture.

Thus, whether the kinds of popular movements we see today can be successful in generating a culture of peace hinges on several factors. We must first succeed in transcending the excessive attachment to difference that is deeply rooted in the psychology of individuals; and we must conduct dialogue on the basis of our common humanity. I believe that only by confronting this intensely difficult challenge can we transform ourselves and our societies.

Looking back, we see that the twentieth century was an era in which different ideologies, competing views of justice, vied violently for ascendancy. In particular, we have seen ideologies that were fixated on external differences and distinctions--such as race, class, nationality, custom or cultural practice. These ideologies have claimed that such factors are the key determinants of human happiness and that the obliteration of differences is the most certain path to eliminating the evils and resolving the contradictions of society. The history of the twentieth century is written in the blood of the victims of these deluded ideas.

In June 1945, immediately after the defeat of Nazi Germany by the Allies, C. G. Jung addressed these words to "those parts of the body of the German people which have remained sound."

Where sin is great, grace doth "much more abound." Such a deep experience brings about inner transformation, and this is infinitely more important than political and social reforms which are all of no value in the hands of people who are not at one with themselves. This is a truth which we are for ever forgetting ...
[16]

At the time Jung's comment attracted little attention. From the perspective of the present, however, it is impossible to suppress astonishment at the historical depth and precision with which this man of wisdom dissected the pathology of our age.

Jung's dismissal of political or social reforms as having "no value" may seem somewhat extreme. We have only to remember, however, the nightmarish misery wrought by those in power who undertook political and social "reforms" without any sense of their own need to reform themselves or of the humanity of their victims. Stalin comes to mind. In contrast, in cases where there are prominent individuals who have successfully confronted themselves--for example, Zhou Enlai in the Chinese context or José Martí in Cuba--even the horror of the bloodshed and violence of revolution may be somewhat mitigated and the process of social reform win support from the citizens over the long term.

The positive aspects of the Chinese Revolution, for example, can nearly all be traced to the extraordinary qualities of Zhou Enlai. Likewise, through my discussions with Cintio Vitier mentioned earlier, I have gained a renewed appreciation for the role which José Martí's legacy has played as the spiritual source and font of the Cuban Revolution.

When we look back over the twentieth century, it is easy to focus exclusively on the negative heritage of that age. But some great achievements toward overcoming social ills must also be acknowledged. One that particularly stands out is the civil rights movement in the United States, which brought about dramatic reforms including the historic Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the bold experiment of affirmative action that followed.

To be maximally effective, legal and structural reforms must be supported by a corresponding revolution in consciousness--the development of the kind of universal humanity that transcends differences from within. It is only when a renewed awareness of our common humanity takes root in individuals throughout society that the dream of genuine equality will be realized. There must, in other words, be a creative synergy between internal--spiritual, introspective--reforms within individuals, and external--legal and institutional--reforms in society. I believe that this is one of the lessons that can be drawn from this dramatic era of change and the sometimes frustrating lack of progress that has followed.

There is perhaps no better illustration of the phrase "universal humanity" than the example of Martin Luther King, Jr. This finds expression in his words spoken one year before the adoption of the civil rights legislation. "I have a dream my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by content of their character." [\[17\]](#)

These stirring words express a profound faith in the power of character. In this sense, they resonate with the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, who asserted that one is not noble through one's birth, but through one's actions and deeds. José Martí, during the struggle for the independence of his homeland Cuba, declared his true homeland to be all of humanity. [\[18\]](#) He also asserted that there can be no hatred between races because "there are no races"--that is, race is an artificially constructed concept. [\[19\]](#)

In the end, laws and institutions are created by human beings; it is humans who implement and operate them. If we neglect the work of deepening and developing the inner character of individual human beings, even the finest system cannot be expected to function.

I firmly believe that the key to resolving all forms of conflict among ethnic groups lies in discovering and revealing the kind of universal humanity that was so powerfully embodied in M. L. King, Jr.--America's conscience--and José Martí--Cuba's conscience. Any attempt to resolve these issues without treading this challenging path will, I am afraid, be no more than a postponement of the problem.

The inner conquest of difference

When I had the opportunity to speak at Harvard University in 1993, I referred to a story about Shakyamuni Buddha in which he is described as saying that he perceived an invisible arrow piercing people's hearts. In my talk I interpreted this as the "arrow" of excessive attachment to difference and asserted that overcoming this kind of attachment is crucial to the creation of peace. As I spoke, I had in mind the special difficulties of resolving interethnic and communal strife, and was gratified by the positive reaction that this aspect of my presentation elicited.

To return to Jung, as he wrote in *The Undiscovered Self*, "If a world-wide consciousness could arise that all division and all antagonism are due to the splitting of opposites in the psyche, then one would really know where to attack." [\[20\]](#) Jung is stressing the fact that we must not be focused solely on that which is external to ourselves. We must resist the temptation to assign good exclusively to one side, and evil to the other. In fact, we need to reexamine the very meaning of good and evil.

The external manifestations of good and evil are relative and transmutable. They only appear absolute and immutable when the human heart is in thrall to the spell of language and abstract concepts. To the extent that we can free ourselves from this spell, we can begin to see that good contains within it evil, and evil contains within it good. Because of this, even that which is perceived as evil can be transformed into good through our reaction and response.

We can even come to understand the confrontation of good and evil as elements of the semantic network of the human heart which, mediated through language and symbols, embraces the entire cosmos. From this perspective, even division and confrontation can be appreciated as ultimately indicative of our connectedness to each other and to the universe.

We must not allow ourselves to fall captive to perceived differences. We must be the masters of language and ensure that it always serves the interests of humanity. If we force ourselves to review the nightmares of this century--the purges, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing--we will find that all of them have sprung from an environment in which language is manipulated to focus people's minds solely on their differences. By convincing people that these differences are absolute and immutable, the humanity of others is obscured and violence against them legitimized.

In this connection, I would like to quote the words of Chingiz Aitmatov, the gifted author from Kyrgyzstan. In the preface to the dialogue we published together, he expressed a truly profound insight into the nature of language, the relation between people and their words.

There are no "homeless" words. Humans are the homes of words, their sovereign masters. Even when people turn to God with the secret desire of hearing God's voice, it is themselves that they hear in their own words. Words live within us. They leave and return to us. They serve us devotedly from the moment we are born until we die. Words carry the burden of the world of soul and of the vastness of the cosmos. [\[21\]](#)

I can keenly appreciate what motivated Aitmatov to examine the function of language with such depth and poignancy. He lived most of his life under the Soviet regime, in an era when humans were never the sovereign masters of words. For people of his generation, words and disembodied concepts were the "sovereign masters" and humans were forced--from birth to death--to serve them devotedly.

The work of questioning this inversion was not limited to literary figures, but was the pressing concern of any sensitive and aware person who lived through that time.

Needless to say, communism was a system entranced by and obsessed with the concept of a "classless society," one which sought to overcome difference and distinctions through purely external, "objective" means. The destructive enchantment of language, its domination of human realities, distorts the processes of the inner life, and causes people to relegate inner-driven transformation to a secondary importance. In this way, it makes people vulnerable to appeals to the efficacy of external force--the use of violence.

Aitmatov survived a profound and bitter experience of the kind of ideologically dominated linguistic culture that accepts or even encourages violence. It is for this reason, I believe, that he has been drawn to the Buddhist approach, which rejects violence in all its forms and is unwavering in its commitment to dialogue and the prioritization of human realities.

A world in constant flux

From the Buddhist perspective, the true aspect of life is found in its incessant flux, the way that experiences are generated by the interaction between inner tendencies and external circumstances. In other words, what we experience as good and evil are not fixed, but depend on our attitude and response. Good and evil are not unchanging entities. To give a simple example, anger can function for good when it is directed at those things which threaten human dignity; in contrast, anger under the sway of self-serving egotism functions as evil. Thus, anger, which is typically thought of as an evil, is, in its essence, neutral.

Writing in thirteenth-century Japan, Nichiren, the Buddhist thinker whose teachings inspire the activities of the SGI, described this as follows: "To turn from evil is good; to turn from good is evil. Good and evil are not found outside our own hearts and minds. The intrinsic neutrality of life is found in its detachment from good and from evil. Our lives are only to be found in these three properties--good (*zen*), evil (*aku*), and the underlying neutrality (*muki*) with respect to good and evil. No reality is to be found other than in our hearts." [\[22\]](#)

This perspective, which focuses on the relativity of good and evil, can help free us from our enthrallment to the conceptualization of good and evil as fixed, external entities, and the corresponding tendency to label others as evil.

Neutral, however, does not mean void or empty. Far from being vacant or void, our lives are manifestations of the cosmic life itself, eternal and filled to overbrimming with the energy of creation.

Nichiren says of the true aspect of life that it "cannot be burned by the fires at the end of a kalpa, nor swept away by floods, nor cut by swords or pierced by arrows. It can fit into a mustard seed, and although the mustard seed does not expand, there is no need for life to shrink. It can fill the entire universe. The cosmos is neither too vast nor life too small to fill it." [23]

What is described here is a perfectly clear, pellucid state of life, indestructible and adamantine.

The Buddhist understanding of life can help us translate the ideal of an inner transcendence of difference into the actualities of daily life. In other words, we can achieve a state in which we are no longer caught up in or constrained by our awareness of difference.

In this connection, I am moved to refer to the words of my mentor, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, spoken in the period immediately following the end of World War II. Here he described the process by which it is possible for an individual to transform even the most deeply rooted tendencies, or karma. According to Buddhism, every aspect of who we are--nationality, skin color, family background, personality, gender--is the present result of causes we ourselves made in the past. The law of cause and effect that governs the generation of these differences and distinctions operates consistently over the three realms of past, present and future.

Practicing Nichiren's Buddhism, Toda said, "is the means by which we can transform our karma. When we do this, all intermediary causes and effects disappear, and we can reveal the aspect of the common mortal enlightened since time without beginning." [24]

What Toda refers to as "intermediary" are causes which we have enacted and which generate distinctions on the phenomenal plane--differences of capacity, physical, mental and spiritual differences and the resulting differences in circumstances such as education and occupation. These are, together, the distinctions that make each of us the unique being we are.

When Toda spoke of these intermediary causes and effects "disappearing," he did not mean that the distinctions between people would somehow be obliterated and we would all lapse into sameness or uniformity. This could, of course, never happen. Just as no two people will ever have exactly the same face, differences are an integral, natural and necessary aspect of human society.

For Toda what "disappeared" was our attachment to differences, our negative, limiting reactions to differences. This is an example of how a practice of faith can enable the inner transcendence of difference.

An unadorned, primordial state of life

The goal of embracing Buddhism is to experience within our lives the state that Toda described as "the common mortal enlightened since time without beginning" (*kuon no bompū*). In his own writings, Nichiren elucidated the concept of *kuon*--time without beginning--as meaning to be unadorned, in one's primordial, original state. [25] Thus, when we relinquish all artifice, and unleash the natural splendor that is inherent in our being, we are able to rise above our differences and see them in perspective, freeing ourselves from excessive attachment to them.

Metaphorically, intermediary causes and effects can be thought of as the stars and moon that grace the night sky, and the common mortal enlightened since time without beginning as the sun. When the dawning sun rises in the east, those celestial bodies which had been such a vivid presence through the night immediately fade into seeming nonexistence. They don't, of course, cease to exist, but are simply overwhelmed by the light of the sun, which represents our innate vitality and wisdom. This, I believe, is the function of religious faith and practice. When I wrote earlier of a "pellucid state of life, indestructible and adamantine" and described our lives as "manifestations of the cosmic life itself, eternal and filled to overflowing with the energy of creation," I had in mind these treasured words of my mentor, Josei Toda.

The Buddhist law of causality--that every aspect of who we are is the result of causes we ourselves have made--and the emphasis on an inner transcendence of difference in no way mean that we should passively accept discriminatory practices. The Buddhist idea of inner causation and responsibility should never be allowed to degenerate into the kind of fatalism that causes people to turn a blind eye to real social ills. It is our natural duty to challenge such practices and prejudices and the social structures that give rise to them. Any time religion renders people passive and powerless, it deserves the dishonorable title of "opiate."

On the most basic human level, even if the ideal of a society completely free of all discrimination were to be realized, human differences would persist. The Buddhist terms for the world which we inhabit are all words for difference, distinction and distance, reflecting an understanding that these are the elements that comprise experiential reality.

Dialogue and human diversity

Overcoming negative forms of attachment to difference--discrimination--and bringing about a true flowering of human diversity is the key to generating a lasting culture of peace. And dialogue is the means. The Buddhist approach outlined here can, I believe, loosen the shackles of abstract concepts and language that can be so destructive. Thus freed, we can use language to the greatest effect, and can engage in the kind of dialogue that creates the greatest and most lasting value. Dialogue must be pivotal in our endeavors, reaching out to all people everywhere as we seek to forge a new global civilization.

As Nichiren wrote, "Encountering various conditions of good and evil, our minds generate different *dharma*s"--in this case, language--"of good and evil." [26] This indicates a philosophical stance that is active and engaged, whose praxis is the kind of dialogue through which even negative, destructive circumstances or conditions can be transformed into positive, creative realities and experiences.

To put this into actual practice, I have sought to promote dialogue among civilizations, meeting with individuals from every continent on Earth. I have held discussions with intellectual leaders coming from various religious backgrounds--Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, etc.--and these conversations have often been published. Based on years of such experience, I am keenly aware of the possibilities of open dialogue and the importance of its implications in society.

SGI organizations around the world are carrying out activities to create a peaceful society in their respective areas in accordance with one of the principles of the SGI Charter: "The SGI shall, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religions, engage in dialogue and work together with them towards the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity." [27] The SGI has also promoted interfaith dialogue by sponsoring symposiums and other forums with institutions such as the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and other bodies.

Last year, our representatives attended the Parliament of the World's Religions (PWR) in Cape Town, South Africa, and they are scheduled to participate in the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders to be held in August.

The Boston Research Center for the 21st Century has published *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Nonviolence in Religious Traditions*, a collection of essays by scholars representing various religions that discusses the philosophies of nonviolence found in eight of the world's religious traditions, and ways to overcome conflict.

In addition, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy has been making multidimensional efforts toward dialogue among religions. The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research is planning to hold an international conference on the theme "Dialogue of Civilizations: A New Peace Agenda for a New Millennium" in February 2000 in Okinawa, gathering together experts to discuss major civilizations and their underlying religious dimensions.

SGI Affiliates

Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC)--The Boston Research Center (founded in 1993) serves as a conference center, publisher and forum for dialogue on topics such as nonviolence, human rights, economic justice and environmental ethics.

Institute of Oriental Philosophy (IOP)--Established in 1962, the Institute of Oriental Philosophy aims to find, in the philosophical heritage of the Asian tradition, a rich reservoir of wisdom for the entire world.

Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research--The Toda Institute, based in Tokyo and Honolulu, was founded in 1996. It brings together peace-researchers, policy-makers, media and community leaders focused on peace, disarmament and nonviolent conflict resolution; sustainable development, employment and the environment; and human rights, the United Nations and global governance.

In 2001, designated as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and also the International Year of Mobilization against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, a UN-sponsored world conference (the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance) is to be held in July in South Africa.

I feel compelled to urge that humankind seriously tackle, based on the bitter lessons of the twentieth century, the challenge of how to build a society of peace and coexistence. Building on our tradition of awareness-raising activities around the world, including the "Toward the Century of Humanity: Human Rights in Today's World" exhibition and "The Courage to Remember: Anne Frank and the Holocaust" exhibition in support of the UN Decade of Education in Human Rights (1995-2004), the SGI is committed to actively working for the success of this conference.

UNESCO, which is responsible for coordinating the activities of the International Year for the Culture of Peace, is currently taking the initiative in a worldwide awareness-raising movement called Manifesto 2000, aimed at submitting to the UN Millennium Assembly one hundred million signatures to a pledge to put into practice the values, attitudes and forms of behavior which inspire the culture of peace.

The SGI supports the ideals of Manifesto 2000, and will back up the movement in various areas, including public information. To date, the SGI has supported the International Literacy Year (1990) in consonance with the goals of UNESCO, and "The World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition" has been shown in numerous countries as part of our efforts to develop an awareness of the culture of peace.

Women lead the way to a culture of peace

I would especially like to stress the role that women can play in creating a culture of peace. Throughout the long history of humanity, women have suffered the most whenever society has been wracked by war, violence, oppression, abuse of human rights, disease and famine.

It has been women, in spite of this, who have persevered in turning society in the direction of good, in the direction of hope and in the direction of peace. Women hold the key to opening a future filled with hope, as Mahatma Gandhi emphasized: "If by strength is meant brute strength then, indeed, is woman less brute than man. If by strength is meant moral power then woman is immeasurably man's superior ... If non-violence is the law of our being, the future is with women." [\[28\]](#)

Manifesto 2000--Peace is in Our Hands

Because the year 2000 must be a new beginning, an opportunity to transform--all together--the culture of war and violence into a culture of peace and nonviolence.

Because this transformation demands the participation of each and every one of us, and must offer young people and future generations the values that can inspire them to shape a world based on justice, solidarity, liberty, dignity, harmony and prosperity for all.

Because the culture of peace can underpin sustainable development, environmental protection and the well-being of each person.

Because I am aware of my share of responsibility for the future of humanity, in particular to the children of today and tomorrow. I pledge, in my daily life, in my family, my work, my community, my country and my region, to:

- Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice;
- Practice active nonviolence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economical and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents;
- Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression;
- Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others;
- Promote consumer behavior that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet;
- Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

The SGI has a number of women-focused projects such as a series of publications recording women's experiences of war, exhibitions for awareness raising and various lecture series. An SGI-sponsored symposium entitled "Women Leading the Way to a Culture of Peace" was held at the 1999 Seoul International Conference of NGOs last October.

Reviewing various problems confronting humankind from women's perspectives, the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, the publisher of *Women's Views on the Earth Charter*, plans this year to hold a two-part event, "Creating Connections: Peace with Self, Sister and Society," to examine women's role in creating peace.

A special session of the UN General Assembly, "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century," will be held in June, in which the SGI is scheduled to participate. I have great hopes that this gathering will stimulate intensive discussions on this theme.

Peace in daily life

In addition to these efforts, it is equally essential to work to create in concrete, tangible ways a culture of peace in daily life.

Elise Boulding, a renowned peace studies scholar, stresses that cultures of peace are to be found in each individual's process of tenaciously continuing peace-oriented behavior. She attaches particular importance to women's role in this aspect.

Peace is not something to be left to others in distant places. It is something we create day to day in our efforts to cultivate care and consideration for others, forging bonds of friendship and trust in our respective communities through our own actions and example.

As we enhance our respect for the sanctity of life and human dignity through our daily behavior and steady efforts toward dialogue, the foundations for a culture of peace will deepen and strengthen, allowing a new global civilization

to blossom. With women leading the way, when each and every person is aware and committed, we will be able to prevent society from relapsing into the culture of war, and foster and nurture energy toward the creation of a century of peace.

The SGI has always been committed to empowerment--of the people, by the people and for the people--a process we describe as human revolution. The essence of empowerment is to fully unleash the boundless potential inherent in every human being based on the Buddhist understanding that our own happiness is inextricably linked to the happiness of others.

It is our belief that through active engagement with others and the process of mutual support and encouragement, individual peace and happiness will be realized, and the foundations for world peace will be further solidified.

It is my great joy and pride that SGI members, committed to the inconspicuous but steady practice of empowerment by encouraging friends who are suffering and bringing out their courage to live and to hope, have built a people's solidarity through their movement of peace, culture and education as good citizens of their respective countries and communities.

I would like to affirm once again that it is the forging of personal relationships based on trust and respect that is exactly the culture of peace put into practice. I am convinced that a culture of peace can truly be realized on a global scale and become permanent when peace takes root in the mind of every single person.

Global public goods

Next I would like to examine specific steps toward building a new century of peace and creative coexistence.

Humanity needs to leave behind the era of war and division. Looking far into the future, we must embark on the challenge of removing the causes of war. We must abolish the institution of war itself and make the twenty-first century the start of an era where war is renounced throughout the world.

Globalization has brought to the surface problems that easily cross state borders, such as environmental destruction, poverty, and a distressing increase in the numbers of refugees and displaced persons. Likewise, with greater travel, infectious diseases are spreading in new and disturbing patterns. We urgently need to come up with measures to deal with these issues. Within the framework of the sovereign state system, crises have long been defined as territorial issues, and many states therefore have concentrated their efforts on military buildup. But the global issues now confronting us cannot be addressed using conventional approaches. In fact, it is these problems that, when left to fester, are causing internal conflicts and wars in many regions.

Former Israeli premier and key player in the Middle East peace process Shimon Peres described the present era as a transition from a world full of enemies to a world full of threats. Drawing on the example of Europe, he stated that as we pursue economic development based on interdependence, balance-of-power politics and the struggle for hegemony become irrelevant. [29] Faced as we are today with an escalation of global crises, what we need is an outlook that is focused not on the supremacy of national interest and security, but on the interests of all humanity, and encourages us to face our common problems.

In 1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), famous for its advocacy of the concept of human security as an alternative to state-centered security, issued a report entitled "Global Public Goods: International Cooperation in the 21st Century." The term "global public goods" is the application to the global level of the standard economic term "public goods," which refers to goods that benefit all, such as a legal framework, justice system, healthy environment or education. Global public goods have benefits that are shared across nations, generations and population groups. In other words, they indicate the direction of a completely new international community that will not exclude any state, social stratum or individual, or harm future generations. [30]

The UNDP report points out three problems to be resolved in realizing global public goods: a jurisdictional gap, a participation gap and an incentive gap.

The jurisdictional gap refers to the gap between the global boundaries of today's major policy concerns and the national boundaries within which policy-makers operate. The participation gap points to the fact that international cooperation is still primarily limited to an intergovernmental process even though there are numerous nongovernmental actors in the world. The incentive gap means that moral justifications alone are insufficient to persuade concerned states to change their policies and build cooperative relationships.

New roles for the UN

I believe that the United Nations is the only body capable of bridging these three gaps and laying the foundations for a framework of concerted action based upon the interests of humankind. As we stand at the threshold of a new millennium, we must draw up a grand design worthy of the advent of a global era, and begin to take action toward realizing it. The most crucial challenge is therefore to strengthen the UN, so it may serve as the rallying point of humankind's joint struggle.

This year will be a great opportunity to focus public attention on this matter. The UN has designated its 55th General Assembly, scheduled to open in September 2000, the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations, and aims to "articulate and affirm an animating vision for the UN in the new era" and "provide an opportunity to strengthen the role of the UN in meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century." [\[31\]](#)

A Millennium Summit of the United Nations, attended by world leaders, is also scheduled to be held as an integral part of this. The overall theme of the summit will be "the United Nations in the twenty-first century," with the subtopics of (1) peace and security, including disarmament; (2) development, including poverty eradication; (3) human rights; and (4) strengthening the United Nations.

I would like to offer some concrete proposals in line with these four subtopics here.

Peace and security

It is my belief that peace and security must be considered, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged in his annual report last year, from a standpoint of the transition from a "culture of reaction" to a "culture of prevention." A culture of prevention is an approach that accords utmost importance to preventing problems before they happen and thereby minimizing consequent damage, rather than reacting to them after they have taken place. [\[32\]](#)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is engaged in advocating, coordinating and promoting humanitarian assistance in crises and emergencies such as famine caused or complicated by internal war or international conflict, as well as natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods. OCHA is acting in close cooperation with other international agencies and NGOs in numerous countries and regions including, so far, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, the site of intense conflict, and disaster-stricken Bangladesh and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. [\[33\]](#)

Nevertheless, the reaction to an already present and severe emergency is inevitably limited in terms of the area that can be covered and the range of available measures. Such interventions must be highly focused and are extremely expensive in terms of time and effort. The UN has played a primary role in coordinating humanitarian assistance, but it must become more involved in preventing conditions that lead to emergencies.

It is therefore essential to reexamine the role that the UN can and should play in the prevention of conflict.

The settlement of disputes is one of the UN's central functions as specifically provided for in the Charter, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to respond to the growing number of internal conflicts in the post-Cold War era.

In fact, during the Kosovo crisis, the UN's inability to prevent the situation from worsening was followed by an aerial bombardment by NATO, waged in the name of humanitarian intervention and without the endorsement of a Security Council resolution.

After this, the principles to govern a cease-fire were discussed at the G8 Cologne Summit. The summit welcomed the deployment in Kosovo of international civil and security presences in accordance with the UN Security Council resolution of June 10, 1999. Although the Security Council's adoption of this resolution enabled the UN to coordinate the resolution of the conflict in its final stages, the issues surrounding military action undertaken without the sanction of the Security Council and the criteria for humanitarian intervention remain unresolved.

Against this backdrop, the Cologne Communiqué stressed the need to "recognize the important role the United Nations plays in crisis prevention and [to] seek to strengthen its capacity in this area." [\[34\]](#) We must remember the fact that under the Charter of the United Nations military action can only be used as a last resort, and this makes it all the more critical that the UN build a preventive system based on what is known as "soft power."

That leads me to join my voice in support of proposals to establish a conflict prevention committee as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly with a mandate to continuously monitor regions threatened with conflict or war, provide preventive recommendations and, further, to afford protection to noncombatants. [\[35\]](#)

To prevent a situation from worsening, the function of early warning is crucial, for it is impossible to take effective measures without a system capable of discerning potential triggers for conflict and indications of escalating confrontation. It will also be essential to create a system for sharing with the public the information and analysis accumulated through these ongoing monitoring activities. The sharing of information is a prerequisite for encouraging more states--including those that are not members of the Security Council--and NGOs to become concerned and participate in generating a solution, and to offer ideas for promoting peace.

Another role for such a conflict prevention committee to play would be to take exhaustive measures to protect noncombatants in order to minimize suffering.

Under the current framework of international law, human rights are secured by international human rights law in peacetime and by international humanitarian law in times of armed conflict, with both legal regimes mutually complementing each other.

But conflicts of recent years have been characterized by the targeting of civilians, as seen in genocide and "ethnic cleansing." Acts which violate humanitarian law have become the objective of war rather than the outcome.

During a period of protracted social disorder as is found with an internal conflict, it is difficult to accurately designate when a state of war has emerged. This tends to engender a vacuum in which both human rights law and humanitarian law are disregarded. As a result, many citizens fall victim to open violation of the human rights that should be protected at all times.

In order to stop conflict areas from being reduced to anarchy where basic human rights are violated with impunity, it is essential to maintain surveillance to ensure a prompt transition from protection by human rights law to protection by humanitarian law, and to call for steps to guard noncombatants against attack. To achieve this, a conflict prevention committee--as a neutral observer body--could be responsible for officially determining whether or not the area in question has entered a state of war triggering the application of humanitarian law, and thus seek to ensure that human rights are safeguarded at all times.

This committee should be mandated to dispatch fact-finding missions to determine the realities of a conflict, to receive and consider appeals from individuals affected by conflicts, and to hold public hearings to air the grievances of all parties.

I find public hearings to be particularly critical. Once an armed conflict has escalated, it is not easy for the parties concerned to sit down at the same table, even if areas for discussion still exist. It would be very meaningful for the UN to provide a forum for the mutual exchange of views before the situation deteriorates that far. If they have voiced their opinions and assertions to the international community in this way, the concerned parties' subsequent actions might be more restrained.

The Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research is considering holding an international conference, in cooperation with other NGOs, to discuss basic outlines of such systems as a conflict prevention committee. By holding such a conference in Africa or other parts of the world which have been plagued by conflict, the conference would be able to incorporate into its discussions the voices of people experiencing actual conflict, thus beginning to fulfill the function of public hearings as discussed above.

Development and human rights

Next I would like to examine ways of strengthening the UN's roles in the areas of development and human rights.

The eradication of poverty, one of the four specific subtopics of the Millennium Summit, is a humanitarian challenge of great urgency. One effect of globalization has been an ever-growing gap between rich and poor. While people in a few countries consume a disproportionately massive amount of resources and enjoy affluent lifestyles, fully one quarter of the world's population subsists in extreme poverty. For these people, human dignity is under constant assault. We must eliminate these obscene imbalances if we are to fulfill our responsibilities for the new millennium.

It is not impossible to achieve that goal. According to an estimate by UNDP, the costs of eradicating poverty would be about one percent of global income and no more than two to three percent of national income in all but the poorest countries. Cuts in military spending, with the savings channeled to poverty reduction and measures for human development, would realize a considerable alleviation of the problem. [\[36\]](#)

Poverty is one of the key causes of conflict, as it destabilizes societies. Poverty gives rise to conflict, which in turn further aggravates poverty. Choosing to sever this vicious circle would simultaneously lead to the eradication of one of the causes of war and resolve this global injustice. Removing the causes of war and poverty that menace human dignity will enhance enjoyment of human rights.

The 1999 Cologne Economic Summit adopted the Cologne Debt Initiative to speed up debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). The initiative seeks to ensure that resources made available by debt relief will be invested in poverty alleviation and social development in areas such as education, nutrition and sanitation and health care. [37]

I welcome this as one tangible step toward the eradication of poverty, and call for ever more bold thinking in this regard. We need a total commitment to enabling these societies to raise themselves out of poverty--a program to be implemented with determination and consistency, equivalent, perhaps, to a "Global Marshall Plan." The UN should be at the center of efforts to take the summit's agreements further--to a deeper level--toward a global community that protects and nurtures all members of the human family.

The World's Most Indebted Countries		(Numbers in US\$ millions as of 1998)	
Top 10 by total debt stock		Top 10 by % of GNP	
Country	Amount of debt	Country	Debt as % of GNP
01. Brazil	232,004	01. São Tomé & Príncipe	685%
02. Russia	183,601	02. Guinea Bissau	504%
03. Mexico	159,959	03. Republic of Congo	307%
04. China	154,559	04. Angola	297%
05. Indonesia	147,475	05. Mauritania	273%
06. Argentina	144,050	06. Guyana	249%
07. Korea	139,097	07. Mozambique	223%
08. Turkey	102,074	08. Zambia	217%
09. India	98,232	09. Dem. Republic of the Congo	208%
10. Thailand	86,172	10. Lao PDR	199%

Source: Global Development Finance 2000

Regarding the promotion of human development on a global level, I would also like to call for the extension of the functions of UN Houses, which are centers to coordinate various UN programs and agencies in each country. The original purpose of the UN Houses was to improve cooperation between UN agencies engaged in development and related projects. The plan sought to bring together the various bodies active in each country into a common building called a UN House, to encourage coordination of their activities under the banner of the UN.

It is my suggestion that the role of UN Houses be broadened one step further, that they function as a UN Embassy in each country and thus play a comprehensive role as a local center for the promotion of substantive programs as well as public information activities.

Efforts at poverty eradication and human development require in particular that plans be based on a thorough understanding of unique local circumstances. By bringing together and giving a permanent standing to the avenues of communication with governments, implementation of such plans would surely become more smooth.

Strengthening the United Nations

On the fourth subtopic, strengthening the UN, I would like to make a proposal from the perspective of democratization, that is, how to ensure that the views and concerns of ordinary citizens are heard at the UN.

I believe that the driving force for bridging the jurisdictional gap, the participation gap and the incentive gap--the three problems to be resolved in realizing global public goods mentioned above--consists of grassroots solidarity in support of the UN and broad and multidimensional NGO activities.

It has already been proven that NGOs' united efforts to broadly stir up public opinion can give rise to a force that can move the international community forward.

NGOs have taken up themes that are often neglected within the framework of a state-centered international system, and have been pioneers in addressing ways to solve such problems--their achievements are truly great. I see tremendous promise in the way NGOs can channel the people's power to overcome the gaps that states alone cannot bridge. NGOs have won greater prominence thanks to their role in a series of world conferences starting with the Earth Summit of 1992.

In September 1994, then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali noted that "Non-governmental organizations are now considered full participants in international life," and that "NGOs are an essential part of the legitimacy without which no international activity can be meaningful." [38]

Recently NGOs are frequently referred to as civil society organizations (CSOs). Instead of the conventional name, which focuses on what they are *not*, the new name emphasizes their active role as sustainers of the global community.

Although the significance of NGOs is growing in this way, their officially recognized interaction with the UN is limited to certain specified channels such as consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

I have previously suggested plans for the establishment of a UN people's assembly consisting of representatives of civil society. Reform of the UN requires that it listen to the voices of ordinary citizens and work with ordinary citizens. Although creating such a people's assembly will of course be difficult, I believe it is essential to establish some means whereby the people's voices reach the UN.

I would therefore like to propose on this occasion the creation of a global people's council that will function as a consultative body to the General Assembly. This council would be mandated to advise the General Assembly on themes for deliberation from the standpoint of realizing global public goods, and also call its attention to potential threats. Taking full advantage of NGOs' expertise in information gathering and firsthand experience in their fields of activity, such a council could contribute to the General Assembly's deliberations by promoting advance discussion of key issues.

With the completion of the cycle of UN-sponsored world conferences on critical global issues, the focus has now shifted to the follow-up of past conferences at five- or ten-year intervals. In light of this, I believe that it would be very significant for such a council to consistently monitor the implementation status of past agreements. Another important contribution could be to serve as the focus for networking among NGOs and member states and as a venue for sustained discussion toward enhancing global cooperation.

One of the subthemes for the NGO Millennium Forum scheduled to be held in May as a lead-up to the UN Millennium Assembly is "strengthening and democratizing the United Nations and other international organizations." [39] I sincerely hope that the Forum will deliberate meaningful plans for strengthening and reforming the UN from a people's perspective.

In this connection, the "New Diplomacy," collaborative efforts between civil society and governments committed to fundamental reform, has emerged as an important new force in the world. In a sense this corresponds to the creative synergy between inner, spiritual reform and external, institutional reform I referred to earlier. Its greatest success to date is the adoption of the Landmine Ban Treaty (Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction) in 1997.

NGOs--Upcoming UN Conferences & Events

- Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century--Vienna, Austria, April 10-17, 2000
- Millennium Forum--United Nations headquarters, May 22-26, 2000
- Beijing +5 Review: Special Session of the General Assembly to Review the Implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action--New York, June 5-9, 2000
- World Summit for Social Development and Beyond: Achieving Social Development for All in a Globalized World--Special Session of the General Assembly--Geneva, Switzerland, June 26-30, 2000
- Millennium Summit of Religious Leaders--New York, August 28-29, 2000
- World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance--South Africa, 2001

This was reaffirmed in one of the Ten Fundamental Principles which emerged from The Hague Appeal for Peace (HAP) Conference held in May 1999, which declares that "all states should integrate the New Diplomacy, which is the partnership of governments, international organizations and civil society." [40] The Conference initiated new campaigns including the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA) and the Global Ratification Campaign for the International Criminal Court, and called for an end to the use of child soldiers. I have discussed these issues in my past proposals, and the SGI will give active support and cooperation to these campaigns.

It is particularly critical to sever the intergenerational perpetuation of the culture of war by stopping the use of child soldiers. It is a welcome and great advance that a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts, which ensures that persons who have not attained the age of eighteen years are neither voluntarily nor compulsorily recruited into the armed forces, was finally adopted in

January 2000.

Campaign for the ratification and entry into force of the CTBT

In addition to these campaigns, I believe that one of the challenges to be addressed under the framework of the New Diplomacy is the promotion of nuclear disarmament. First I would like to propose a campaign to accelerate the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The CTBT was adopted by the UN General Assembly by an overwhelming majority in September 1996 as a complementary treaty to the Nuclear-Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). These two treaties have as their goals, respectively, the prevention of vertical proliferation (increase in the destructive capacity of nuclear weapons) and horizontal proliferation (increase in the number of nuclear weapon states). The CTBT has not, however, entered into force yet. That is because only twenty-six of the forty-four nuclear weapon states and nuclear weapon-capable states, whose ratification is required for the Treaty to enter into force, have ratified it. [\[41\]](#)

Out of the five permanent members of the Security Council--all nuclear weapon states--only the United Kingdom and France have ratified the Treaty. It has not been signed by India or Pakistan, which both conducted nuclear weapons tests in 1998, or the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a country whose nuclear weapon policies and program remain unclear. What greatly set back the prospect of the CTBT entering into force was the rejection of the ratification bill by the United States Senate in October 1999. The Treaty's prospects will be greatly jeopardized if the impact of this discourages other states that have yet to sign or ratify it.

During 1999, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution that urges the ratification of the Treaty. But a breakthrough will be almost impossible unless global public opinion in favor of ratification is aroused.

The SGI intends to promote an international network for the promotion of CTBT ratification, consistent with our long-held stance in support of nuclear disarmament. Such a network would generate momentum to press states that have not yet ratified the Treaty, using the New Diplomacy technique of working together with other NGOs and those governments that are committed to promoting ratification.

I believe that this campaign should not only encourage each state to ratify the CTBT, but also advocate two additional points in order to enhance the CTBT's effectiveness.

Status of the Forty-four States Whose Ratification is Required for the CTBT Treaty to Enter Into Force *

States yet to ratify

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Algeria | 2. Chile | 3. China |
| 4. Columbia | 5. Democratic People's Republic of Korea | 6. Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| 7. Egypt | 8. India | 9. Indonesia |
| 10. Iran [Islamic Republic of] | 11. Israel | 12. Pakistan |
| 13. Russian Federation | 14. Ukraine | 15. United States of America |
| 16. Viet Nam | | |

States which have already ratified

- | | | |
|--|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1. Argentina | 2. Australia | 3. Austria |
| 4. Bangladesh | 5. Belgium | 6. Brazil |
| 7. Bulgaria | 8. Canada | 9. Finland |
| 10. France | 11. Germany | 12. Hungary |
| 13. Italy | 14. Japan | 15. Mexico |
| 16. Netherlands | 17. Norway | 18. Peru |
| 19. Poland | 20. Republic of Korea | 21. Romania |
| 22. Slovakia | 23. South Africa | 24. Spain |
| 25. Sweden | 26. Switzerland | 27. Turkey |
| 28. United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland | | |

*Nuclear Weapon or Nuclear-Weapon-capable states

Source: CTBT PrepCom Open Web Site

The first of these two points is to seek the understanding and cooperation of all states toward obtaining the financing required to create the kind of verification regime stipulated in the CTBT. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

Organization is currently setting up a verification regime that includes facilities, scattered throughout the globe, for detecting nuclear tests. These efforts, which work to the common advantage of all signatory states, should be continued regardless of the status of progress toward ratification.

The second point is to build consensus for the establishment of a mechanism to determine if subcritical experiments, not explicitly prohibited by the CTBT, run counter to the Treaty's intent. (The CTBT's preamble clearly states that its intention is to take effective measures toward nuclear disarmament and against the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects.) With many nonnuclear weapon states frustrated with the carrying out of subcritical experiments, the establishment of such a mechanism would go a long way toward responding to these frustrations and enhancing the effectiveness of the CTBT.

One notable recent development has been the campaign for enactment of a treaty banning nuclear weapons advocated by the New Agenda Coalition (NAC), a group of states actively seeking nuclear disarmament, and the Middle Powers Initiative (MPI), a coalition of NGOs. Both groups were launched in 1998. The MPI was an outgrowth of the Abolition 2000 campaign, a global network of NGOs for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Since the NAC was formed with eight states, more and more countries have supported its goals, and it is now the core of a new movement for the promotion of nuclear disarmament. For example, sixty states sponsored the draft resolution calling for a new agenda toward a nuclear weapon-free world submitted to the UN General Assembly in December 1999. The NAC's immediate priority is to reinforce nuclear disarmament within the framework of the NPT. But if the NPT Review and Extension Conference, slated for April-May 2000, achieves no positive results, the NAC will shift its focus to the enactment of a treaty banning nuclear weapons.

To move beyond this impasse, it is essential that nuclear weapon states and their allies fundamentally rethink their reliance on nuclear weapons. Ultimately, nuclear disarmament cannot be significantly advanced unless the deterrence mentality is overcome. In 1986, Mikhail Gorbachev, then Soviet general secretary, was already declaring that no country could find real security in military power, either for defense or for deterrence. It must be recognized that security based on deterrence is rooted in mutual distrust; it will always be accompanied by an arms race, making it inherently unstable and dangerous.

In fact, a majority of citizens support the abolition of nuclear weapons, even in nuclear weapon states like the United States and the United Kingdom, and their allies. This was discovered in opinion surveys conducted by NGOs using research agencies in countries participating in the Abolition 2000 campaign. [\[42\]](#) The nuclear weapon states cite their citizens' support as part of their justification for the possession of nuclear weapons, but the findings of this research disprove their assertions.

It has been pointed out that nuclear weapon states and states aspiring to join the nuclear weapons club seek in nuclear weapons a confirmation of their national prestige, in addition to national security. Therefore, a starting point for achieving change is to interrogate these perspectives and the power mentality from which this definition of prestige springs.

In that sense, the efforts of the NAC and the MPI, utilizing the strengths of soft power and seeking to fundamentally change people's attitudes, exactly meet the demands of our time. As such campaigns gain ever greater support from the people, a new superpower of trust and solidarity will be born, replacing nuclear-dependent superpowers driven by deterrence and threat.

This common goal--the enactment of a treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons--can only be achieved by strengthening the solidarity of citizens.

Toward a treaty for the prohibition of nuclear weapons

In *The Geography of Human Life*, published at the beginning of the twentieth century, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first president of the Soka Gakkai, described shifts in modes of national competition--from military, to political, to economic. Moving from the descriptive to the predictive, he set out a vision of what he termed "humanitarian competition," which represents a profound qualitative transformation of competition itself, toward a model that recognizes our interrelatedness and emphasizes the cooperative aspects of living. He envisaged a time in which people and countries would compete--in the original sense of the word of "striving together"--to make the greatest contribution to human happiness and well-being.

From this context, he stated that the ultimate goal of a state lies in the accomplishment of humanitarianism, and asserted that nations should always adhere to noncoercive, intangible (i.e., nonmilitary, noneconomic) means to strive to expand their sphere of influence. In this sense, Makiguchi could be said to have identified with foresight and wisdom what we now know as soft power, the ability to win naturally the hearts and minds of people.

As a Buddhist, I feel compelled to stress the deeper significance of nuclear weapons and the need for their elimination.

It is more than a matter of disarmament. It is a question of fundamentally overcoming the worst negative legacy of the twentieth century--distrust, hatred and the debasement of humanity--which was the final outcome of a barbaric, hegemonic struggle between nations. It requires that we face head-on the limitless capacity of the human heart to generate both good and evil, creation and destruction.

This year marks the birth centennial of my mentor, Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai. In his declaration against nuclear weapons in September 1957, he condemned nuclear weapons as an absolute evil that deprives humanity of its right to exist. From a profound understanding of the innermost processes of the human heart, he keenly discerned the true nature of nuclear weapons and declared his determination to transform the demonic aspects of humanity that gave birth to them.

As heir to Toda's vision, the SGI has constantly sought ways to spread this message throughout the world. Initiated in the middle of the Cold War, the SGI's touring exhibition "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" has been shown in twenty-five cities in sixteen countries around the world, including nuclear weapon states such as the United States, the former Soviet Union and China. SGI members have collected more than thirteen million signatures in support of Abolition 2000. These campaigns are entirely based on a conviction that there is no other way to achieve this daunting task--the abolition of nuclear weapons--than to build people's solidarity, transcending national and ethnic differences. They are also an expression of a resolute determination never to yield to the power of nuclear weapons, but rather to consistently challenge the gnawing sense of resignation and powerlessness they engender, which corrodes the human spirit.

Peace in Northeast Asia

Lastly, I would like to address the issue of peace in Northeast Asia, one of my long-cherished hopes. My concern stems from the belief that trends in Northeast Asia are not merely a local issue, but a matter of great gravity that will determine the future direction of the world in many ways.

Patrick M. Cronin, director of the Research and Studies Program at the United States Institute of Peace, made an intriguing point regarding this issue. Predicting that Northeast Asia will be a center of political, economic, technological, social and military activity in the twenty-first century, Cronin asserts that peace and security in Northeast Asia is the key to determining whether the international community can enter an age of harmony based on cooperation. [\[43\]](#)

Peace in Northeast Asia has been my sincere hope in light of the potentials the region possesses. I am also motivated by a profound regret for the great suffering Japan's war of aggression caused throughout the region. I have made a number of proposals for peace in the Korean Peninsula, in particular. These include: North-South summit talks (1985 proposal), a mutual non-aggression and non-belligerence treaty (1986), conversion of the demilitarized zone for peaceful and cultural purposes (1986), the establishment of a reunion center for divided families (1994), and building a relationship of mutual trust through projects such as railway and other transportation links (1995).

Relations between the two Koreas are improving after many twists and turns. Unfortunately, however, these countries still technically remain in a state of war today, confronting each other across the demilitarized zone since reaching an armistice in July 1953. I have consistently urged that this unnatural condition be resolved.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the outbreak of the Korean War, and I urge all sides to seize this opportunity to put an end to the state of cold war, and make the transition to genuine peace. To create such an environment, it is essential to initiate dialogue and foster trust throughout the region. From this standpoint, I called for the creation of a nuclear-free zone in Northeast Asia in my 1997 proposal, and for a Northeast Asia Peace Community involving the two Koreas and neighboring countries in my 1999 proposal.

The latter in particular is a vision for promoting dialogue in Northeast Asia, which at present lacks a regional cooperation organization. The SGI sponsored a symposium at the International Conference of NGOs in Seoul in October 1999, working toward the realization of such a community, and we plan to set up similar opportunities for discussion in the future.

As I mentioned earlier when considering conflict resolution, I believe it crucial to maintain a forum for discussion, instead of excluding parties, to keep tension from escalating into military conflict. At the Seoul Conference, the creation of links between Chinese, Korean and Japanese NGOs was discussed. It would be very meaningful to secure dialogue channels on a civil society and a government level.

I would like to propose that a Northeast Asia Peace University, an institution similar to the European Peace University, be established in cooperation with the UN University as part of such regional exchange--possibly in Mongolia. I

suggest Mongolia as a candidate for the following reasons: it is a peace-oriented country whose nuclear weapon-free status was recognized by the UN in 1998, and, like Russia and China, it is one of the countries in the region which maintains diplomatic relations with both Koreas.

Wherever it is established, a Northeast Asia Peace University could contribute to peace and stability in the region on a long-term basis if it provides a place for fostering capable individuals committed to grassroots exchange and peace-building. One can also envision something on the lines of the Socrates program, an educational exchange program promoted by the European Union, in Northeast Asia in the future. Soka University, which already has a tradition of actively promoting educational exchange in the region, would definitely contribute to any such educational and youth exchange programs.

One of the topics on the agenda of the G8 Okinawa Summit 2000 is peace in Asia. I hope that this opportunity for the topic to be discussed in depth from a broad perspective will be fully utilized so that the Northeast Asia region, the Korean Peninsula in particular, will be able to make a significant advance toward peace.

Unleashing the power of the human spirit

If we take to heart the lessons and warnings of the tragedy-filled twentieth century, we must make "action" and "solidarity" the keywords for the twenty-first.

The problems confronting humankind are daunting in their depth and complexity. While it may be hard to see where to begin--or how--we must never give in to cynicism or paralysis. We must each initiate action in the direction we believe to be right. We must refuse the temptation to passively accommodate ourselves to present realities but must embark upon the challenge of creating a new reality.

The human spirit is endowed with the ability to transform even the most difficult circumstances, creating value and ever richer meaning. When each person brings this limitless spiritual capacity to full flower, and when ordinary citizens unite in a commitment to positive change, a culture of peace--a century of life--will come into being.

People are the protagonists in this grand adventure. The SGI will continue to promote empowerment--of the people, by the people, for the people--with ever deepening commitment and energy. Through broad-based dialogue and collaboration, we are determined to open a path toward peace and hope in the new millennium.

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