

A PATH TO PEACE

Joseph J. Fahey

Peace Studies – an academic field that is just over fifty years old – is providing some useful insights into how to resolve conflicts between nations without resort to war. Peace scholars tell us that peace has in fact been the dominant human experience and that war -- rather than the rule -- is an aberration in human affairs. Nor is war very old. War becomes possible with the advent of territoriality (agriculture) about 10,000 years ago and begins to develop with the rise of cities about 5,000 years ago.

Peace research tells us that peace between states is possible under six conditions. The first three of these conditions are informal or citizen-based initiatives: (1) athletic competition, (2) intellectual discourse, and (3) artistic celebrations. The next three are formal or government-based actions: (4) trade agreements, (5) diplomatic recognition, and (6) international alliances.

Hence, if a nation wishes to have peaceful relations with another nation, it will encourage the exchange of athletes, artists, and scholars, while pursuing trade, diplomacy, and international law as guarantors of peace. Consequently when conflicts between states arise, there are many cultural, economic, diplomatic, and legal alternatives to war as a method of dispute resolution. Communication is the first stage of peace.

Conversely, if a nation seeks war with another nation it will prevent athletes, intellectuals, and artists from visiting the targeted nation. Then it will break trade agreements, remove its diplomats, and withdraw from international treaties. War can easily develop since there are no peaceful constraints to hold it back. Refusal to communicate is the first stage of war.

These six conditions for peace have been found in ancient, classical, medieval, and contemporary relations between states. Although these conditions vary according to time and culture, peace between states cannot exist without most of them being in place.

Perhaps there is no better illustration of this path to peace than the European Union (EU). War has dominated European history for several millennia. Wars were fought between the Celts and the Romans, between Catholics and Protestants, and between the numerous nation states that emerged in the 16th century. The Latin maxim “Si vis pacem para bellum” (“If you wish peace, prepare for war”) led many a nation down the path to war, not peace. Knights, fortresses, and continuous bloodshed were used to make “peace” but greater wars always resulted.

The bloodshed and slaughter in Europe came to a head in the Great War of the 20th century (1914-1945). Nine million people were killed in the first phase of this war (1914-1918) and fifty million people were killed in the second phase (1939-1945). Countless millions starved and millions of children grew up without parents.

Finally, the Europeans had enough. Winston Churchill's proposal for a "United States of Europe" in 1946 was initially greeted with derision but soon the idea gained acceptance and took hold. Immanuel Kant's vision in *Perpetual Peace* (1795) of an international "federation of free states" became the philosophical foundation for today's European Union (EU). The EU was formally inaugurated in 1993 as an economic and political union following a "yes" vote by the citizens of all participating states.

Today there are 27 member states that include former Fascist and Communist states that fought hot and cold wars until as recently as 1989. Today armies of workers, tourists, and sports fans travel freely within these states. Today Germany battles England and France battles Italy on the athletic fields of Europe. Small nations such as Ireland and Luxembourg thrive as never before. A common currency, the Euro, has replaced the nationalist currencies of old. Also, it is highly likely that despite England's "Brexit" vote it will be forced to return to the EU to survive economically.

While it is difficult to predict the future, it seems virtually impossible that Europe will repeat the wars of the 20th century in the 21st century. The next century and those beyond can do what all the wars have failed to accomplish: bring a true, just, and perpetual peace to Europe.

There are, of course, some "caveats" in this model of peace. Questions like fair wages and collective bargaining for workers, fair prices for consumers, and the protection of the environment are real and must be continually regulated through international law. But the benefits of this model are also real: all profit when nations play together, think together, sing together, work together, share together, and live under a common rule of law together.

Can the six conditions for peace and the European Union serve as models for global peace? Can we one day establish a *Global Union* that will abolish war and secure human rights for all? Of course we can. This is no pipedream. Peace has existed for thousands of years and we are only now beginning to learn the power of nonviolence as a solution to war. Our best days lie ahead. There is hope.

Joseph J. Fahey is a retired Professor of Religious Studies and former Director of the BA in Peace Studies and the BA in Labor Studies at Manhattan College. He is the author of *War and the Christian Conscience: Where Do You Stand?* (Orbis Books)
E-mail: josephjfahey@gmail.com