

THE AMERICAN CONSCIENCE FROM PRAGUE TO HIROSHIMA: PEACE PSYCHOLOGY TOWARD A NUCLEAR-FREE WORLD WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT

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Abstract

The 9/11 and the subsequent Afghanistan and Iraq Wars failed to meet the ardent but sincerest expectations of all the people in the world who longed for the world peace. The 20th century was characterized by the most tragic inhumanity of the never-ending wars: the two world wars and the subsequent Cold War: wars in Korea, Vietnam, central America and elsewhere. It was as if the two superpowers had displaced their conflicts to avoid a nuclear war erasing the human race. The height of the Cold War during the 1980s also brought about the nuclear disarmament movement by people across the globe while one of the two superpowers, an “evil empire” (Reagan,1983), was falling as best symbolized by the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989. During the disappearing of the “enemy” and the building of world peace in the early 21st century, the author argues, the only superpower has come to a standstill in leading the way to defeat the “new enemy” or win the world peace, not due to the lack of its military might, but because of its reckoning filtered through the Cold War, an old mindset proved wrong: “[M]oral leadership is more powerful than any weapon,” according to President Obama’s Prague speech, the Noble Peace Prize recipient in 2009. This research presents such variables as nationalism, nuclear politics, powerlessness and conscience. The author points to America’s declaration in Hiroshima of “no first-use of a nuclear bomb” as the way to world peace in the 21st century.

Keywords : Nuclear free world, peace psychology

**Nuclear disarmament, politics and conscience, no first use
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War for Peace?**

There is no such thing as war for peace except doublespeak (cf. Orwell, 1992; Herman & Chomsky, 1988). As best symbolized by the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars following the 9/11 attacks, the only superpower of the United States after the 20 century, the Post Cold War Superpower, seems to have been drawn into the quicksand of not only the longest and most expensive wars but also wars beyond Afghanistan and Iraq: Syria, Libya, Yemen, Iran and more.

While, it appears, most Americans do not want to assess if they won or are winning those subsequent wars after the 9/11 or whether or not they should strengthen the American military might much more and continue the wars for the world peace, the international community started viewing the U.S. itself as the threat to world peace.

According to a global survey conducted by the Worldwide Independent Network (WIN) and Gallup (2013), 24% of the 66,000 respondents across 65 countries viewed the USA as the greatest threat to world peace. The study found the sentiment was also strong to the following countries, but lagged considerably: Pakistan with 8%, China with 6%, North Korea with 5%, Afghanistan with 5%, Iran with 5%, Israel with 5% and Iraq with 4%. Among the American respondents in the same survey, Iran was viewed as the greatest threat to world peace at 20%. Afghanistan came in at second with 14%. 13% of the Americans viewed North Korea for the third nation as the most dangerous, but as many as 13% of the American respondents themselves viewed their own country as the greatest threat to world peace, as dangerous as North Korea(!)

This animosity perception toward the USA hardly changed last 10 plus years even during the Obama presidency. The threat from the US was rated most strongly among the respondents in The Middle East and North American countries affected by American military intervention, but others in Latin American countries such as Peru, Brazil and Argentina also viewed the US as the most dangerous country as well as our NATO partners (e.g., Greece and Turkey) and next-door American-allied nations (i.e., Mexico and Canada).

It is fair and safe to say that the first decade of the 21st century failed to meet their ardent but sincerest expectations of all the people in the world who longed for the world peace. For the 20th century was characterized by the most tragic inhumanity of the never-ending wars: the two world wars and the subsequent Cold War: wars in Korea, Vietnam, central America and

elsewhere. It was as if the two superpowers had displaced their conflicts to avoid a nuclear war erasing the human race.

Following the disappearing of the “evil empire” referred to the former superpower Soviet Union by the American President Reagan (1983), the only superpower US began the “new wars for peace” in response to the 9/11 attacks: The “Operation Enduring Freedom” took place to Afghanistan in 2001 and the subsequent 2003 “shock and Awe” bombing was inflicted on Baghdad. The wars meant “to deliver ‘incomprehensible levels of destruction’ and, in the process, shatter a society’s will to resist us, according to Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, who described the concept in a 1996 Defense Department publication” (Koehler 2015).

Despite the longest and most expensive wars for the only superpower, the US, its allies of “coalition of willingness,” and their enemies, a nuclear bomb has not been used for peace (or for another war toward the end of the world!) yet by any side or any group, the foe or the friend.

It has been reported that the American obsession of the enemy image had been manufactured and conveniently employed during the Cold War in particular (see the entire volume of “The Image of The Enemy” in *Journal of Social Issues*, 45 edited by Holt & Silverstein, 1989). During the disappearance of the “enemy” and the building of world peace following the fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, then newly elected American President George W. Bush pointed out the three “axis of evil,” Iran, Iraq and North Korea, as the America’s new “enemies” in his State of Union Address in February 2002. He claimed that:

“...[North Korea] a regime arming with missiles and weapons of mass destruction, while starving its citizens... [Iran] aggressively pursues these weapons and exports terror, while an unelected few repress the Iranian people's hope for freedom... [Iraq] continues to flaunt its hostility toward America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax and nerve gas and nuclear weapons for over a decade...”

In order to prevent a Iraq’s nuclear attack on the US land and/or the lands of its allied-nations, the American “pre-emptive war” to Iraq began as if it had been the “war for peace.” Its consequence did bring about not only more casualties and harm (than even those from the 9/11) and extend more wars and chaos to other countries, which must have proved and confirmed that there is no such thing as war for peace (except doublespeak). And, it is not sure that the Cold War is over, observing “endless war is alive and ... bleeding”(Koehler, 2015) in the early 21st century of the post Cold War world in which the sole superpower seems to still pursue peace by means of its world-strongest military power: in other words, war for peace, its reckoning from the Cold War mentality.

From the study of the American nuclear disarmament movement during the height of the Cold War in the late 20 century, this paper attempts to shed light on politics and conscience toward world peace, one of the challenges in the 21st century.

Nuclear Disarmament and Peace Movement in the Cold War

The conflict between the two superpowers reached its peak in the 1980s following a series of events: President Reagan's proposal of the deployment of nuclear missiles to Europe (November, 1981); his speech of the Soviet Union as an "evil empire"(March 1983); the downing of KAL 007 by the Soviet (September, 1983); the ABC television network's showing the terrifying *The Day After* movie (November, 1983); and the other conflict provoking. They also brought about the nuclear disarmament movement by people across the globe, as best symbolized by the 1982 one million anti-nuclear march in Central Park, New York. Such world-wide citizens' concerns with the nuclear threats moved not only their political leaders but also scientific, academic communities toward world peace(e.g., White, 1986):

"Psychologists also began to devote serious attention to attitudes toward nuclear war, to the factors that shape these attitudes, and to the factors that lead people to become active in working toward nuclear disarmament. This new focus has been motivated by two forces in particular: the unbridled escalation of the arms race and growing concern of the American people for the mass destruction capacity associated with this escalation. Responding to this growing awareness of the nuclear threats, the New York City chapter of Psychologists for Social Responsibility held its first conference on the topic in February of 1983. Several of us from the social psychology program at SUNY[State University of New York]/Stony Brook attended the conference with the goal of linking up with other psychologists concerned with the prevention of nuclear war. At the conference, we discovered that several research projects on the subject of nuclear war were already underway. However, most of this research focused on attitudinal responses toward the threat of nuclear war (e.g., nuclear denial and despair). Although this attitudinal research is critical, we felt it was limited in that it did not focus on strengthen the disarmament movement and could not, therefore, help to prevent the very threat that was creating the denial and despair in the first place. Our role was clear: we would design a study to tap the psychological barriers to nuclear disarmament political action. If we could determine the psychological factors influencing level of participation in the disarmament movement, anti-nuclear activists and educators would be in a better position to politicize more people around the issue and, subsequently, to build a stronger

disarmament movement...”(Flamenbaum, Hunter, Yatani & Silverstein, 1985).

Several research had found the following variables as significant correlates with attitudes toward nuclear disarmament: nationalism and anti-Sovietism (Larsen, 1982), attitudes toward nuclear freeze (Fiske, Pratto & Pavelchak, 1983), moral responsibility and political efficacy(Tyler & McGraw, 1983), among others. Meanwhile, a national opinion survey conducted by CBS news and *The New York Times*) reported that 63% of the respondents agreed to “the question of a nuclear freeze is too complicated for the public to decide” (participating in the disarmament actions (Public Opinion Quarterly, 1982). Except the 1982 largest anti-nuclear movement, actually the disarmament movement remained small despite Americans’ high anti-nuclear attitudes.

The Stony Brook peace research group including the author conducted the survey study in the spring of 1984, as mentioned above, to find out (1) “intervening variables”(i.e., the psychological barriers) between strong concerns with the nuclear threat and weak anti-nuclear activities and (2) to strengthen citizens’ nuclear disarmament movement. The brief description of the study is as followed (see Flamenbaum et al., 1984 for more details):

Subjects: 374 college students, 214 females and 149 males, from three universities, a small, rural Catholic university, an inner-city large state university and a suburban large state university

Procedure: A 55-item questionnaire was constructed and filled out by each respondent. The questionnaire was designed to measure socio-demographic variables, attitudes toward disarmament, disarmament behaviors, and the four hypothesized mediators (intervening variables, in other words) of anti-nuclear sentiment and behavior: anti-Sovietism, feelings of powerlessness, knowledge about the arms race and nationalism. Three items were designed to tap disarmament attitudes, anti-Sovietism, feelings of powerlessness and nationalism. Knowledge about the arms race was assessed by a scale composed of 10 questions about nuclear weapons and their origins. Disarmament behaviors were assessed by a scale of 8 types of disarmament activities: signed petition, attended demonstration, wrote a letter to congressperson, wore a disarmament button, contributed money to a disarmament organization participating and the like.

Results

Although 78% of the respondents supported anuclear freeze and 65% supported nuclear disarmament, relatively few of them had engaged in political actions toward these ends.

More than half (54%) of the respondents had not participated in any disarmament activities; less than a quarter(21%) of them in one activity; 11% in two; 6% in three: and, 8% in more than three. Given the skewedness of the responses on the behavior scale, a statistical procedure that treated the behavior as a continuous variables was not justified. Therefore, the sample was divided into two groups based on the responses on the behavior scale: those who engaged themselves in no disarmament activities and those who were engaged in one or more of the listed activities.

The relationship between responses on the behavior scale and all other scales(treated simultaneously as continuous variables) was analyzed by means of discriminant analyses, so-called factor analysis, that would yield factors that differentiate or discriminate two groups. The three scales were found to own a discriminatory power to distinct between two groups, the one group of those respondents engaging themselves in non-nuclear activity and the other group engaging themselves in at least one or more nuclear disarmament activities: pro-disarmament attitudes, powerlessness and nationalism (see **Table 1**). It can be concluded that those who did not engaged themselves in any activity for nuclear disarmament had no or weak attitudes toward

Table 1. None vs. Some Pro-Disarmament Activities by All Respondents (N=364)	
Wilks Lambda (Predictor scales that Discriminate between groups)	
Attitudes toward disarmament	(p< .0001)
Powerlessness	(p< .0000)
Nationalism	(p< .0000)
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Percentage of cases correctly classified	63%
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Percentage of total variance explained by predictor scales	12%

nuclear disarmament, feelings of powerlessness and/or strong nationalistic sentiments. Those respondents with some disarmament activities can be said to have maintained strong anti-nuclear attitudes, strong self-efficacy (i.e., feelings of “less” powerlessness) and/or were less nationalistic.

Another analysis was made in order to see the factors that distinct between Low Activity Group, the group of one or two disarmament activities, and High Activity Group, the other one with three or more disarmament activities. The result presented three scales, pro-disarmament attitudes, nationalism and knowledge (see **Table 2**).

Table 2. Low vs. High Pro-Disarmament Activities by All Respondents (N=163)

Wilks Lambda (Predictor scales that Discriminate between groups)	
Attitudes toward disarmament	(p< .0570)
Nationalism	(p< .0004)
Knowledge	(p< .0007)
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Percentage of cases correctly classified	62%
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Percentage of total variance explained by predictor scales	10%

The analysis showed that it was the respondents' level of knowledge concerning the nuclear race and weapons that determined whether they would be engaged in low disarmament activity (one or two activities) or high disarmament activity (three or more actions).

Americans' Dissonance Over Nuclear Disarmament during the Cold War: Strong Anti-Nuclear Attitudes but Weak Anti-Nuclear Behavior

From the Japanese experiences of their attack on Pearl Harbor, the Pacific War, the subsequent America's atomic bombing on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the World War II, it was my strong intriguing to see Americans' strong anti-nuclear sentiments but their weak anti-nuclear actions. Trained as a psychologist in three American universities, I was convinced that the Americans' dissonance over nuclear disarmament was unhealthy psychologically and politically as well. Discrepancy or inconsistency between attitudes and behavior is uncomfortable and this discomfort motivates people to do what they can in order to reduce the discomfort, or dissonance (Festinger, 1957). And, psychologically speaking, the feelings of uncomfortableness or discomfort is emotional expressions of guilt, shame (cf. Erickson, 1963) or compunction of conscience, otherwise. According to the theory does the attitudes usually change to be congruent with the behavior rather than the other way around (Festinger, 1963).

My strong intriguing was more or less resolved with the finding of the four factors through our research by the Stony Brook peace research group: pro-disarmament attitudes, powerlessness, nationalism and knowledge about nuclear arms race and weapons, among others:

"...These results have related theoretical and practical implications for the study of nuclear disarmament activities. Theoretically, the differences reported here between anti-nuclear activists and non-activists points out the complexity of the relation between political attitudes and behaviors. Pro-disarmament attitudes do not lead simply and directly to disarmament

actions. Rather, the effects of these attitudes on anti-nuclear behaviors are partially mediated through level of powerlessness, nationalism and knowledge. ...Practically, these results imply that if they wish to be maximally effective, disarmament activists and educators must devote attention to the role played by feelings of political powerlessness, nationalism and knowledge in predicting disarmament activism. Political powerlessness, nationalism and knowledge play a significant role in predicting disarmament actions even after the predictive power of pro-disarmament attitudes has been taken into account. The meditating role played by these three factors particularly important in light of the discrepancy between disarmament attitudes and actions---existing both nationally and in this study. In the study reported here, over 78% of the respondents supported a bilateral freeze, yet fewer than 46% engaged in even one disarmament action. Clear analyses of the social and political origins of excessive powerlessness, nationalism and knowledge are essential if this gap is to be narrowed”(Flamenbaum, Hunter, Yatani & Silverstein, 1985).

The last 20 years, since the 1985 study, were when I tried “to narrow the gap,” in the context of the “Challenges in the XXI Century” as this conference’s logogram, PIC 2015 in Argentina.

Along with the Arendt’s work (1966), the subject of powerlessness was studied as one of the origins of totalitarianism (Yatani, 1986) and pointed out as one of the psychological consequences derived from American individualism as the ideology (Yatani, 1992). The topic of nationalism was further examined as the confounding variable of anti-Sovietism through reviewing Americans’ attitude toward the Soviet Union from 1954 to 1988 (Yatani & Bramel, 1989). After the fall of Berlin Wall when the “enemy” (i.e., Evil Empire) disappeared, in other words, the notion was convinced to be true that the enemy is manufactured (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Yatani, 2013, 2012b, 2009, 2008, 2003). While teaching psychology, sociology and Japanese at a New York state college for over 20 years, America witnessed the declining of education as once called as “nation at risk” in 1983 and another discrepancy: children’s school performance decreased while their grades went up (Yatani, 1994). It has been quite paradoxical but challenging when a Japanese from the vanquished country in the WWI is a teacher and American children are his students in terms of “dissonance and behavioral changes” (Yatani, 2003, 2004, 2009c). Teachers’ social responsibility was always inspired and challenged in accordance with “a university’s role as critic and conscience of society” (Jones, Galvin & Woodhouse, 2000).

When a country is at war, according to the Festinger’s theory (1957), the citizens of the country are likely to support it attitudinally and behaviorally: it is quite uncomfortable for them to be against it, particularly

so when its government and national leaders encourage to defeat its/their enemy(e.g., nationalism reinforced by anti-Sovietism). During the Vietnam War, for example, many people who had anti-war attitudes obeyed the government, men to their draft orders, and became a part of the war. Another example of the 2003 Iraq War confirmed such behavioral changes of those who had opposed it before that “Operation Enduring Freedom” war began. Not merely the government but the mass media also marched with the military and reported the military might several thousand miles away from home to the living rooms at home: Thew new enemy was found or “manufactured” (cf. Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Remember that 87% of Americans between 18 and 24 did not find Iraq on a map, according to National Geographic survey just before the U.S. would go to war in 2002 (Kilian, 2002). Isn’t there any way in which attitudes and behavior would be consistent by changing the behavior instead of changing the attitude, contrary to the cognitive dissonance theory though? My thought or hypothesis must be or seems to be “wild” at least, but one concept, it seems, fits to this “audacity”: conscience. As best symbolized by the terms, “conscientious objector” or “conscientious objection,” he/she could maintain his/her anti-war attitudes and anti-war activities without feelings of uncomfortableness or discomfort when his/her country is at war while his/her conscience is universally shared with everyone else beyond national or cultural boundaries. Conscience could be play a powerful means for nuclear disarmament and bring a nuclear-free world” without firing a shot. With conscience, we can also reject the powerful doublespeak a “war for peace.”

The American Conscience from Prague to Hiroshima: Peace Psychology toward a Nuclear-Free World without Firing a Shot

After the WWII with over 60 million victims and two nuclear bombs (not one!) did the world put up the world peace and established the United Nations to solve international disputes or conflicts without military means. Hiroshima and Nagasaki pledged to “not repeat the error” on its cenotaph and Japan issued the “peace constitution” renouncing military solution of any dispute or conflict (e.g., its item 9) “given” the U.S. and its occupation allies. Germany created an exceptionally peace-oriented nation by its complete redemption of 6 million Jewish genocide.

During the Vietnam War, Martin Luther King Jr.(1967), after his “I have a dream speech,” made his anti-Vietnam War speech: “I come to this magnificent house of worship tonight because my ‘**conscience**’ (bold faced by author) leaves no other place. ...We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in

southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have seen repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been unable to seat them together in the same schools. ...I could not be silent in the face of such cruel manipulation of the people. ...This kind of positive revolution of value is our best defense against communism. War is not the answer. Communism will never be defeated by the use of atomic bomb or nuclear weapons. ...”

Here in Argentina in 1984, the writer and physicist Ernesto Sabota called **conscience** of Argentina presided over CONADEP (Comision Nacional sobre la Desaparicion de “Personas/ National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons” in English) that investigated the fate of those suffered forced disappearance during the so-called Dirty War under the military dictatorship in the 1970s. The result of the findings was published bearing the title Nunca Mas (“Never Again,” in English).

In the U.S. of the early 21st century was African-American Barack Hussein Obama elected as the first “black” American president in 2009. Less than six months of his presidency did he give an audacious presidential speech in Prague, the Czech Republic, bringing a “world without nuclear weapons” in the 21st century: “... It [the Velvet Revolution of the Czech Republic] showed us that peaceful protest could shake the foundations of an empire, and expose the emptiness of an ideology. It showed us that small countries can play a pivotal role in world events, and that young people can lead the way in overcoming old conflicts. And it proved that moral leadership is more powerful than any weapon. ...And as nuclear power—as a nuclear power, as the only power to have used a nuclear weapon, the United States has a moral responsibility to act. We cannot succeed in this endeavor alone, but we can lead it, we can start it. ...” (Obama, 2009).

“Yes, we can” to bring a world without nuclear weapons. The U.S. has been the sole superpower after another superpower collapsed 20 years ago. The “enemy” had gone unless new ones were “manufactured” since then. The U.S. is the world leader and must hold “moral leadership” (Obama, 2009) since it is that “only nuclear power to have used a nuclear weapon” (Obama, 2009) twice in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, not once. He and the world were impressed and inspired by the people of the Czech Republic who “helped bring down a nuclear-armed empire without firing a shot”(Obama, 2009) while they made the world “expose the emptiness of an ideology”(Obama, 2009). “Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something”(Obama, 2009).

The world is eager to see a world with no nuclear weapons (let alone no more nuclear politics over war for peace) while more than three quarters of Americans have been always pro-nuclear freeze with strong anti-nuclear

sentiments, according to many national opinion surveys (e.g., Yatani, 1986, Yatani & Bramel, 1989). It is proposed that, with the America's collective conscience, the sole superpower show its moral leadership and that it declare no first use of its nuclear bombs. It is also proposed that such a declaration be made in Hiroshima—namely the American conscience from Prague to Hiroshima. It should be expected that Americans as well as the world would see the America's image as the world leader to world peace not the greatest threat to world peace shown in the results in their early 21st century.

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