

“Conquer” by Love rather than Force of Arms: America Needs to Replace the “Pentagon Approach” with the “Peace Approach”

By [Sherwood Ross](#)

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If the United States attempted to “conquer” by love rather than force of arms, it might be respected, not reviled, globally.

If the White House took an altruistic approach in foreign affairs—that is, if it rejected greed, exploitation, and war in favor of fair play, charity, and humanitarian assistance—it might enjoy such prosperity as exists beyond the dreams of its misguided rulers.

It is no naïve suggestion to urge the Congress to transpose the budgets and numbers of personnel of the Pentagon and the Peace Corps. Naïve is how one would define the Pentagon’s 10-year-long *failure* to conquer Afghanistan by force of arms. Naïve is how the Pentagon can claim the U.S. has improved Iraq when that country far is worse off today than when the Pentagon first bombarded it eight years ago.

The U.S. has invested 10 years and \$3 trillion in attempting to conquer Iraq and Afghanistan and what does it have to show for it, apart from the increased hatred of peoples throughout the Middle East? Congress has taken the Pentagon’s road and what’s been achieved apart from massive slaughter and despoliation of those nations and a bankrupt Treasury at home? For President Obama to prosecute these criminal wars, based on a tissue of lies, and to initiate new wars is naïve as well as criminal.

No, the goal of American foreign policy must be to *serve*, not to *rule*. There is strength and dignity in serving others—in building infrastructure, in opening schools and educating, in ministering to the afflicted. *That’s* the way to win friends and influence people.

What the military-industrial complex does not grasp is that time is running out for all of the creatures on this small blue planet. Global warming, significantly induced by the greenhouse emissions of the U.S. and other great consumer/polluter nations, is gathering momentum. Based on what we can already see happening elsewhere, as in Bangladesh, it appears that in the foreseeable future the streets of New York and Miami will be underwater and the nation’s electric power grids overtaxed beyond blackout. Trying to keep cool and find a drink of fresh water may yet be the greatest challenges of this century.

For a preview of the future read Don Belt’s excellent article in the May *National Geographic* titled “The Coming Storm” about the suffering (and, yes, resilience) of the 164 million people of Bangladesh.

“They’ve watched sea levels rise, salinity infect their coastal aquifers, river flooding become more destructive, and cyclones batter their coast with increasing intensity—all changes associated with disruptions in the global climate,” Belt writes.

“Thousands of people arrive in Dhaka (the capital) each day, fleeing river flooding in the north and cyclones in the south,” Belt continues. “Many of them end up living in the densely populated slum of Korail. And with hundreds of thousands of such migrants already, Dhaka is in no shape to take in new residents. It’s already struggling to provide the most basic services and infrastructure.” By 2050, the country’s population is predicted to reach 220 million “and a good chunk of its current landmass could be permanently underwater.”

“By 2050 millions of displaced people will overwhelm not just our limited land and resources but our government, our institutions, and our borders,” Major General Muniruzzaman of the Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies told Belt.

One farmer told Belt, “In previous times this land was juicy, all rice fields. But now the weather has changed—summer is longer and hotter than it used to be, and the rains aren’t coming when they should. The rivers are saltier than before, and any water we get from the ground is too salty to grow rice.”

Belt goes on to show the many ingenious ways Bangladesh’s people are adapting to global warming, from making transportable shanties to developing new salt-resistant strains of rice to building floating schools, hospitals and libraries. Belt quotes Mohammed Mabud, a professor of public health at Dhaka’s North South University as saying that investing in educating Bangladeshis would help them train professionals to work inside the country and also to immigrate abroad where they can work and earn.

This kind of challenge is just one of thousands of educational tasks around the world where America’s Peace Corps could be of service and make friends for this country. “During the global financial meltdown, trillions of dollars were mobilized to save the world’s banks,” Abu Mostafa Kamal Uddin, a former manager with the government’s Climate Change Cell, told Belt. “What’s wrong with helping the poor people of Bangladesh adapt to a situation we had nothing to do with creating?” Belt repeatedly makes the point the world has a lot to learn from the ways Bangladeshis are responding on their own. They might well have shown the Bush regime how to save New Orleans.

So here, my friends, is the better path for America in our time: to harness the same ingenuity that created for the world the electric light, the airplane, the telephone, and a thousand and one medical advances and to put it at the service of humanity. Sending masses of Peace Corps volunteers around the world to educate, (that’s just one example of one vital area), would be far better appreciated than our present investments in germ warfare, nuclear bombs, killer drone attack planes, “daisy cutters,” torture chamber prisons, and the like. It would not only defuse the raging hostility against this country that is reducing foreign purchases of our goods and triggering anti-American riots and violence, it would forge bonds of friendship as it calls forth our best efforts.

The Peace Corps has a budget of just \$400 million and 8,700 employees, while the U.S. military budget comes to about a trillion dollars annually, counting all the intelligence agencies, and employs more than three million employees. The U.S. spends more for war,

for example, than, roughly the next dozen countries combined and the Pentagon is eating up about 52 cents of every tax dollar. The budgets of the Pentagon and the Peace Corps need to be reversed, as well as their employee numbers.

We have a clear choice between continuing to fight on the Pentagon's endless battlefields of war or working in the vineyards of peace.

Sherwood Ross, who formerly reported for national magazines and wire services, now directs the Anti-War News Service. All donations cheerfully accepted. To comment or contribute reach him at sherwoodross10@gmail.com

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