How wars could be prevented: Friends' contribution to policy change

Presented by

Dr Scilla Elworthy

Saturday 24th March 2001

Dr. Scilla Elworthy is director of the Oxford Research Group (ORG) and trained a s a social scientist. She was previously consultant on womens' issues to UNESCO, research director of the Minority Rights group in France and author of studies on the role of women in international relations. Her PhD was on the subject of British nuclear-weapons policy. In 2001 she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for the third time. ORG is particularly successful in encouraging dialogue between decision makers.

The Preparing for Peace Project

In 2000, Westmorland General Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain, began a PEACE initiative, called Preparing for Peace, to explore these questions with international experts and witnesses. This is one of the papers.

The themes were:

Can we demonstrate that war is obsolete?
Is war successful in achieving its objectives?
Can war be controlled or contained?
What are the costs of war?
What are the causes of war?
Can the world move forward to another way?

How wars could be prevented: Friends' contribution to policy

Dr Scilla Elworthy

Thank you for inviting me. It is an honour to have the task of making a bridge between Joseph Rotblat and speakers like Hugh Beach who are to address your four questions:

1. Is war successful in achieving its objects?

2. Can war be controlled & explained?

3. What are the costs of war?

4. How can the world move forward to another way?

I agree with you that these are among the most vital questions of the millennium. Before I go into the heart of what I have to say, I have a few observations on these questions:

I. The costs and effects of war

Last century, most conflicts were between nations. This century, most are likely to be within nations: in 1999 there were 27 major armed conflicts in 26 locations throughout the world, all but two of which were internal. Of 39 'hotspots' currently identified by the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response [1], at the most 5 are in any way between countries. Nevertheless, in terms of response, we are stuck in a mindset geared to the old century:

Most resources are allocated towards traditional conflict between states.

Most interventions by the international community concentrate on the perpetrators of violence.

Most interventions are late.

---

[1] FEWER forum on early warning and early response, www.fewer.org, tel: +44 20 7247 7022

A. Most interventions are late

Let me deal with this last one first. There are now plenty of reliable indicators which can alert us to conflict brewing: denial of rights – to vote, speak language, practice religion - theft or diversion of resources, occupation of territory, oppression/ brutalisation of a minority, arms build-up, break-down of the rule of law, militias out of control, increasing power of warlords, terror attacks, etc. In other words "we can see horror on the horizon". Nevertheless we have a traditional tendency to wait a long while before we intervene, for various reasons with which everyone is familiar: disagreement in the Security Council, lack of strategic interests, reluctance to risk soldiers' lives. However when eventually we do intervene, as in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Haiti, the Gulf, Cambodia, El Salvador, late intervention ends up costing between *twice and ten times* what early intervention would have cost.[2]

We are talking here about military intervention, which brings me to the second point:

B. Most intervention concentrates on those who have interests in violence, rather than on those who have interests in peace

The Oxford Research Group is currently researching 50 accounts of effective interventions in conflict, interventions using other tools than force. These successful interventions concentrated on supporting those who ***opposed*** violence, in various ways. Let me give two examples, both from 1992: [3]

In Mozambique, the Community of St Egidio – an Italian catholic NGO – brokered talks between Frelimo and Renamo, which succeeded where previously military methods had failed.

In Uttar Pradesh in India you'll remember that Hindus tore apart the Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya. A wave of rioting spread across the country leaving 3,000 dead; Lucknow, capital of Uttar Pradesh, braced itself for violence. In Lucknow is the City Montessori School, the world's largest school with 23,000 students, instruction is based on Gandhi's teachings. They set up meetings with religious leaders and students took to the streets with jeeps and loudspeakers proclaiming 'the name of God is both Hindu and Muslim'. Lucknow escaped the violence which engulfed the entire surrounding area.

There are astonishing stories of heroism not only in preventing bloodshed, but in building understanding which lasts. What these different initiatives are doing seems straightforward, for example:

---

[2] see Brown, Michael. E, Rosecrance Richard N. (eds.), '*The Costs of Conflict. Prevention and Cure in the Global Arena'* (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict), New York 1999, p. 225, for a summary of the Effectiveness of Conflict Prevention Efforts with the Total Costs of Intervention.
[3] *War Prevention Works: 50 stories of people preventing war*, edited by Dylan Mathews for the Oxford Research Group, forthcoming May 2001

stakeholder dialogue in the case of the Wajir initiative in northern Kenya,

mediation, as in the case of the Hungarian Minority in Roumania,

post-conflict peace building in Osijek in Croatia –

but it requires a blend of 'thinking out of the box', determination, and courage.

In terms of resources it costs nothing, relative to armed intervention. Which brings me to my third point:

C. Most resources are still allocated towards traditional conflict between states.

NATO member countries spend $430,000,000,000 on defence, which is 215,000 times the budget of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) – the main regional inter-government organisation devoted to conflict resolution.

Britain was still spending (before the last bombing) £55m per annum to 'contain' Saddam Hussein, more than 20 times our contribution to OSCE.[4]

And yet the Kosovo Verification Mission, although undermanned, was generally agreed to be effective in stopping violence when it was pulled out in March 1999 for NATO to begin bombing.

Governments are still subsidising arms exports. A US State Department paper says 'in some countries it is easier and cheaper to buy an AK 47 than to attend a movie or provide a decent meal'[5] - rather disingenuous given that the US is by far the largest arms exporter in the world.

Governments have some catching up to do, especially in the way resources are allocated, so that we do not keep trying to apply 20th century tools to the realities of the 21st century. Some governments are moving in the right direction. The British Government recently allocated £110 million for conflict resolution, on condition it was spent co-operatively between the Department for International Development, the Ministry of Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

---

[4]. See 'Dealing with bullies without using bombs', Schumacher lecture by Dr. Scilla Elworthy, October 30th 1999.

[5] 'Cook calls for creation of arms surrender fund', Financial Times 14.2.01.

In some cases, where the situation has already deteriorated, a 'hardware' approach may be necessary. In most other cases, it appears that a 'software' approach may do the job, more effectively and at infinitely less cost. Whereas 10 years ago little was known about the effectiveness of small-scale non-violent intervention pre-, during and post-conflict, there are now 51 institutes in UK alone researching the subject, from Sandhurst through to independent NGOs. In 1990 there were only a handful of analyses of conflict interventions; a decade later there is an extensive published body of knowledge. In addition to inter-governmental agencies working to prevent and mitigate conflict, there are now more than 180 NGOs competent in the field. Their evaluation of theory and practice are producing effective tools and techniques for conflict transformation. These include:

Early warning; protection of human rights; promotion of democracy; support to indigenous dispute resolution; stakeholder dialogue; election monitoring; community mediation; bridge-building; confidence-building and security measures; civilian peace monitoring; violence containment; military and economic technical assistance; arms embargoes; economic sanctions; peace-keeping; reconciliation measures; restorative justice and humanitarian diplomacy.

There is much that is not yet known, but a steep learning curve is taking place in terms of what can be done, how much it costs, and what constitutes best practice. These tools could now be made available far more widely, to communities across the globe struggling to create sustainable peace in areas of conflict. These tools need to be more readily available than weapons.

II. Decision-making on nuclear weapons

Every decision made by a particular country to pursue a nuclear weapons program was made in secret; that goes for the United States, Russia, France, Britain, China as well as India, Pakistan and Israel. The only country which had the capacity for nuclear weapons but decided against developing them was Sweden, and that was as a result of a public debate where women took a prominent part.

Our research in Oxford over the past eighteen years [6] has shown that decisions on nuclear weapons are shaped by six groups of people:

- scientists who design warheads and develop new technologies,
- intelligence analysts who produce assessments on which decisions are based,

---

[6] see Elworthy, Scilla, 'In the Dark. Parliament, The Public & Nato's New Nuclear Weapons' (Oxford Research Group), Oxford 1989; McLean, Scilla, 'Who Decides? Accountability and Nuclear Weapons Decision-Making in Britain (Oxford Research Group), Oxford; Miall, Hugh, Greene, Owen, Hamwee John and others, 'Do It Yourself, Minister. Implementing a non-nuclear defence policy in a nuclear world (Oxford Research Group) Oxford 1987.

- military strategists,
- defence contractors who offer new technologies to the military,
- civil servants who draft policy and sign the cheques,
- foreign office officials.

These are the key long-term people behind the scenes who keep the policy 'on course' as politicians come and go. Most of these individuals work in insulated environments within which the rightness of what they are doing is not usually questioned.

This would be an endless lecture if I were to describe in detail how decision-making works in all the countries concerned, so I will discuss one major current issue, that of National Missile Defence.

US decision-making on National Missile Defence

As everyone now knows NMD is the shorthand for the so called shield which Washington wants to construct. It is an issue which affects Britain because of the US need to develop new radar facilities at Fylingdales and use the ground relay station at Menwith Hill in North Yorkshire to complete the early warning and missile tracking systems that would be part of NMD.

There are many actors, organisations and events that have shaped the development of the NMD debate within the USA. The key actors involved are the Republican Party and Congress, the Pentagon, the State Department, the Intelligence community and the Office of the President.[7]

Powerful Congressional pressure for deployment began in 1994 when the Republicans took control of both Houses of Congress on a platform called "Contract with America" that called, amongst other things, for an effective national missile defence system. The financial authority and legislative strength of Congress led to a significant increase in money allocated to NMD and a succession of bills to make NMD deployment a legal requirement, the Missile Defence Act of 1999 finally being signed by President Clinton in July 1999.

Although Congress as a whole has been instrumental in furthering the NMD cause, it seems that the Republican Party and its ideology is the real force behind it. Indeed, deployment is regarded by the Republican right as a matter of principle, regardless of technical difficulties or international repercussions, as President Bush's election platform stated:

[7] See Fig 1 diagram (below) 'Influences on US NMD decision-making'

"The new Republican president will deploy a national missile defence for reasons of national security; but he will also do so because there is a moral imperative involved".

Nonetheless, domestic pressure from the Republican right would probably not have had a concrete outcome without the external impulses generated by the growth of the black market in longer-range ballistic missiles. The export and development of missile technology by countries such as North Korea, China, Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Libya has provided a politically compelling case for missile defence. Two external events were particularly important in this regard: first, the launch of several Chinese intermediate-range ballistic missiles over the Taiwan Straits, during the run-up to the 1996 Taiwan election. Secondly, the testing of intermediate-range missiles in 1998 by North Korea over Japan, with the debris landing in the Pacific Ocean not far from Alaska. These two events strengthened the conviction of the need for defence against the so-called 'rogue states'. Though China may not be officially classed as a 'rogue state', many commentators believe that China is the real focus for NMD.

The second key player is the Pentagon. Pro-NMD factors that are pushing the debate within the Pentagon (such as the Ballistic Missile Defence Organisation –, civilian Pentagon hawks, and the aspects of the military that stand to gain) are supplemented by the interests of the arms-industry which is certainly *shaping*, if not *pushing*, the issue due to the $60 billion contracts involved in developing the NMD architecture. The influence of this Military Industrial Complex will undoubtedly increase under the Bush administration due to the strong links between the two. On the other hand the uniformed military & the Joint Chiefs of Staff would prefer funding for more conventional equipment such as tanks, planes and ships. However, Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld is a well known NMD advocate and appears untroubled by the concerns raised by other countries, stating that:

"once the Russians understand that the United States is serious about this and intends to deploy...they (Russia) will find a way...to accept that reality".

As the third key player the Intelligence Community, centred around the CIA, has produced National Intelligence Estimates concerning the ballistic missile threat to the USA at the request of Congress every year since 1995. This has played an important role in *shaping* the debate, though not necessarily *pushing* it.

The State Department is the one key player that has to deal with foreign influences criticizing the deployment of NMD. This is related first to the renegotiation of the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM) from 1972 with Russia. This treaty precisely forbids the deployment of national missile defences in order to preserve strategic stability between the USA and Russia. Secondly the State Department is trying to minimise and respond to any negative reaction to NMD deployment from China, Russia and the NATO allies. How much influence the State Department will have over the shape of a future national missile system remains to be seen.

The crucial factor in shaping the future of NMD will be the Office of the President. While former President Clinton postponed any deployment decision on first September 2000, President Bush, Vice-President Cheney and the National Security Advisor Condoleeza Rice have all pledged their commitment to deployment of a national missile defence system.

It is not yet clear what the Bush criteria for the actual deployment will be, but it is likely that ABM treaty compliance will be omitted. A more detailed picture is expected to emerge following important defence reviews due to be completed towards the end of 2001.

However, a more immediate decision faces the new administration. If Bush wishes to deploy a ground-based NMD system as soon as possible, he will have to authorise the construction of a new early warning radar on Shemya Island off Alaska. Building can only take place on this remote island during two months of the year during the summer due to harsh weather conditions, therefore Bush will have to make a decision in spring/summer 2001 as to whether construction should begin, thus breaking the ABM treaty or face delaying deployment by another year.

In summary the real force behind Congressional pressure for NMD is the right wing of the Republican Party and its accompanying ideology. This has been supplemented by pro-NMD factors within the Pentagon and the military-industrial complex that wield significant influence on the shape and direction of the debate. This combination is crucial, since history has shown that once big military programmes have Congress and contractors on board, they are rarely cancelled.

Thus it appears that an initiative which could destroy the entire carefully woven fabric of international arms control is being driven by several thousand extremists within Congress, the Pentagon and contractors. Nonetheless, the initiative is opposed by many within the military, the State Department and the National Security Council, as well as the rest of the world.[8]

III. Friends' contribution to policy change

Now let us examine ways in which Friends could help to influence such a decision-making process. Quaker groups, by virtue of their firm but non-confrontational approach, have constituted an important part of the Oxford Research Group dialogue process. In the 1980s we pioneered a dialogue project in the UK which linked over 60 citizen groups each with a nuclear weapons decision-maker in the UK and one in China. The groups attempted to establish a correspondence with their decision-makers, and in some cases were able to meet them. In 1985 we established a parallel project in the United States which linked concerned citizen groups with thirty American decision-

[8]. Nick Ritchie, The NMD Debate: Movers and Shakers, published by the Oxford Research Group, April 2001, see also p. 6a.

makers, and in 1990 supported a similar project in Sweden, this time with professional groups of medical practitioners writing to French and British nuclear weapon decision-makers. During this period and since, in our work organizing residential consultations with nuclear weapons decision-makers at Charney Manor, we have developed a step-by-step approach for successful dialogue with decision-makers. These are outlined in a booklet [9], so you do not need to take notes. Briefly, let me walk you through the ten steps.

Step 1: Take on board three principles:

A. Change happens at the level of the individual: this is to address your own doubts about whether the small contribution you can make is worth the effort. The effects of the pure stating of another opinion, of the presenting of an alternative of thinking cannot be underestimated. Whether consciously or unconsciously it will have an effect on the person you address, even though that might not be visible at first. Decision-makers themselves have confirmed how rare and valuable it is for them to get into contact with an opinion from a different horizon.

B. The difference between dialogue and lobbying: whereas the traditional lobbyist works *at* the decision-maker to get him or her to do something which will be to the *lobbyist's* advantage, in a dialogue you try to work *with* the decision-maker, engaging him or her to join in a course of action which will be to everyone's advantage. Dialogue is a non-confrontational communication, where *both* partners are willing to learn from the other and therefore leads much farther into finding new grounds together

C. Getting beyond the way of thinking which caused the problem in the first place: Real change comes when people are enabled to use their thinking and their energy in a new way, using a different system of thought, different language, and having fresh visions of the future.

Step 2: The basic research to find your decision-maker

One advantage of this personal approach is that you can concentrate on that person's area of influence instead of becoming an expert on the whole subject. But for that you need to identify the people who *do* have influence on the subject you care about.

So you need first an idea of where decisions originate – by obtaining or creating some sort of organisation chart – and secondly you have to find out who does what. Internal

[9] *Everyone's Guide to Achieving Change: A Step-by-Step Approach to Dialogue with Decision-Makers*, available from the Oxford Research Group, 51 Plantation Road, Oxford OX2 6JE, price: £3.00 + £1.50 p&p.

organisational charts can often be found on the websites of institutions or corporations or in annual reports.[10]

Step 3: Be aware of assumptions

The views of decision-makers, as of us all, are based on deep-rooted assumptions about the world and even about human nature. These assumptions are rarely revealed in official publications, but without knowing what they are, it is impossible to test the validity of decision-makers' arguments, nor to know what kind of debate with them is likely to be fruitful or effective. An example is the assumption that different ideologies are the source of conflict and threat between nations. Assumptions may also be hidden in the use of images, analogies and metaphors, for example, by justifying the possession of nuclear weapons as an 'insurance policy'. The analogy assumes that the possession of nuclear weapons creates no risk for the possessor, just as the payment of an insurance premium creates no risk for the policy holder. Most hidden of all are assumptions arising from the very structure of the decision-maker's arguments and beliefs: the relations he or she conceives between threat and deterrence, between defence and international relations, and between the existence of conflicts and ways of resolving them. To understand the assumptions your decision-maker may make you should read any texts he or she has written.

Step 4: The first contact with your decision-maker

The overall aim of your work is to build a dialogue with your decision-maker, and the most effective way of doing this is obviously meeting face-to-face. A letter will nearly always be the best way of making the initial contact, a letter in which you show you are knowledgeable, serious, but not aggressive and that manages to establish a longer-lasting contact with the decision-maker by gaining his or her interest and requiring a non-standard answer.

Step 5: Take care of your own anger

It is also worth being aware of the anger many of us feel about the state of the world. At times anger can have a salutary effect upon those at whom it is directed, but it can also be counterproductive through producing fear and resentment. Perhaps it is sufficient to say that if your interest is in engaging the person in a dialogue, anger should be expressed sparingly and accompanied by other things that might offset the defensiveness it is likely to engender.

Another danger is to get wound up in a spiral of things that *have* to be done. There are never enough competent people to help, never enough time, and not much real satisfaction. Little time for joy, no time to breathe and certainly no time to reflect to get a bit of distance and perspective. As Thomas Merton says:

---

[10] see Fig 2 (below) Diagram MOD organisation chart

"…the frenzy of the activist neutralizes his work for peace. It destroys his own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of his own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful".

So do allow yourself nourishment and space in your work.

It is also important that the means used in this work should be the same as the ends - of the same character and quality. For example, if what you are seeking is a world without weapons of mass destruction, it is no good going into a discussion armed to the teeth and using facts like ammunition. The more the methods are true of the goal, the faster and more effectively the goal will be reached.

Step 6: What to do if…

These are some detailed suggestions for ideas how to proceed after your first letter or contact, too specific for our purpose today, but outlined in the booklet I mentioned.

Step 7: Non-Confrontational Communication

If a meeting with the decision-maker is on the cards, you need to be well aware of how much can go wrong, or right, in the actual quality of communication taking place between you and your decision-maker. We offer some hints about communication that can make the difference between dialogue and monologue including real listening, agreeing, disagreeing, language, implicit assumptions and shaping the conversation.

Step 8: Preparing to meet with a decision-maker

It is important to work out a strategy for the meeting in advance, and to make sure that you are well prepared. There are some questions that can help you with this like: What do you hope to achieve in the first meeting? Where will you hold it? How many of you should attend? What should you say first? etc. It is very helpful to actually jot down the answers – referring back to them after the meeting can help make improvements for any future contact.

Step 9: Following up the meeting and evaluation

You will need to think about how to deal with any potential media coverage for any dialogue you may undertake. A local newspaper, radio or TV station may hear about your activities and want to report them, and it is well to be prepared for this. Will publicity help or hinder what you want to achieve? Are any members unhappy about being publicly known to be working on the project? Do you think the publicity would hinder other groups doing the same work?

Furthermore it is important to keep a record of what you set out to achieve and to constantly review with your group what you are doing. The Oxford Research Group

would appreciate feedback related to these procedures and would like to know of dialogues which you initiate.

Step 10: Remember that change is possible…

When faced with world problems – like hunger, overpopulation, nuclear weapons, the arms trade – you may be among those who are overwhelmed by a feeling of "Help! What on earth can I, just one person, do about this?" Take heart. That's a sane response. It's the basis for a whole new attitude to world problems, where change at the level of the individual is more and more recognised as essential to change in huge world systems. The Dalai Lama points this out when he says:

"Although attempting to bring about world peace through the internal transformation of individuals is difficult, it is the only way… Peace must first be developed within an individual. And I believe that love, compassion, and altruism are the fundamental basis for peace. Once these qualities are developed within an individual, he or she is then able to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony. This atmosphere can be expanded and extended from the individual to his family, from the family to the community and eventually to the whole world."

While there are plenty of books, newspaper articles and television programmes that question the big issues, they lack the force of direct personal contact and specific application to a decision-maker's work.

What the dialogue approach does is to link an interconnected web of concerned citizens person-to-person with those individuals in whose hands rest the decisions on our future. It offers the potential for change to take place not only at an individual level but on a vast scale, literally throughout the world.

Going back to your four questions with which we began, it is clear that more and more individuals worldwide are realizing that war does not solve conflict, nor resolve long-standing cycles of violence. As more of those who have this understanding communicate it to policy-makers and more particularly, start implementing it in their own lives and localities, change will start to happen.

We need to learn and to show others that there are tried and tested, powerful ways of containing and resolving conflict which do not require the use of force.

Scilla Ellsworth
Oxford Research Group
51 Plantation Road
Oxford OX2 6JE
Tel: 01865 242819
Fax: 01865 794652
e-mail: org@oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

Bibliography

Brown, Michael E., Rosecrance, Richard N. (eds.), The Costs of Conflict. Prevention and Cure in the Global Arena (Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict), Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham 1999.

Cleveland, Harlan, Henderson Hazel, Kaul, Inge (eds.), The United Nations: Policy and Financing Alternatives: Innovative Proposals by Visionary Leaders, The Global Commission to Fund the United Nations, Washington 1995.

De Bono, Edward, New Thinking for the New Millennium, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth 1999.

Everett, Melissa, Breaking Ranks: The riveting inside stories of ten men who left comfortable jobs in the military, the intelligence community or the defense industry to work, in their own ways, for peace, New Society, Philadelphia 1989.

Graham, Kennedy (ed.), The planetary interest: A new concept for the global age, UCL Press Limited, London 1999.

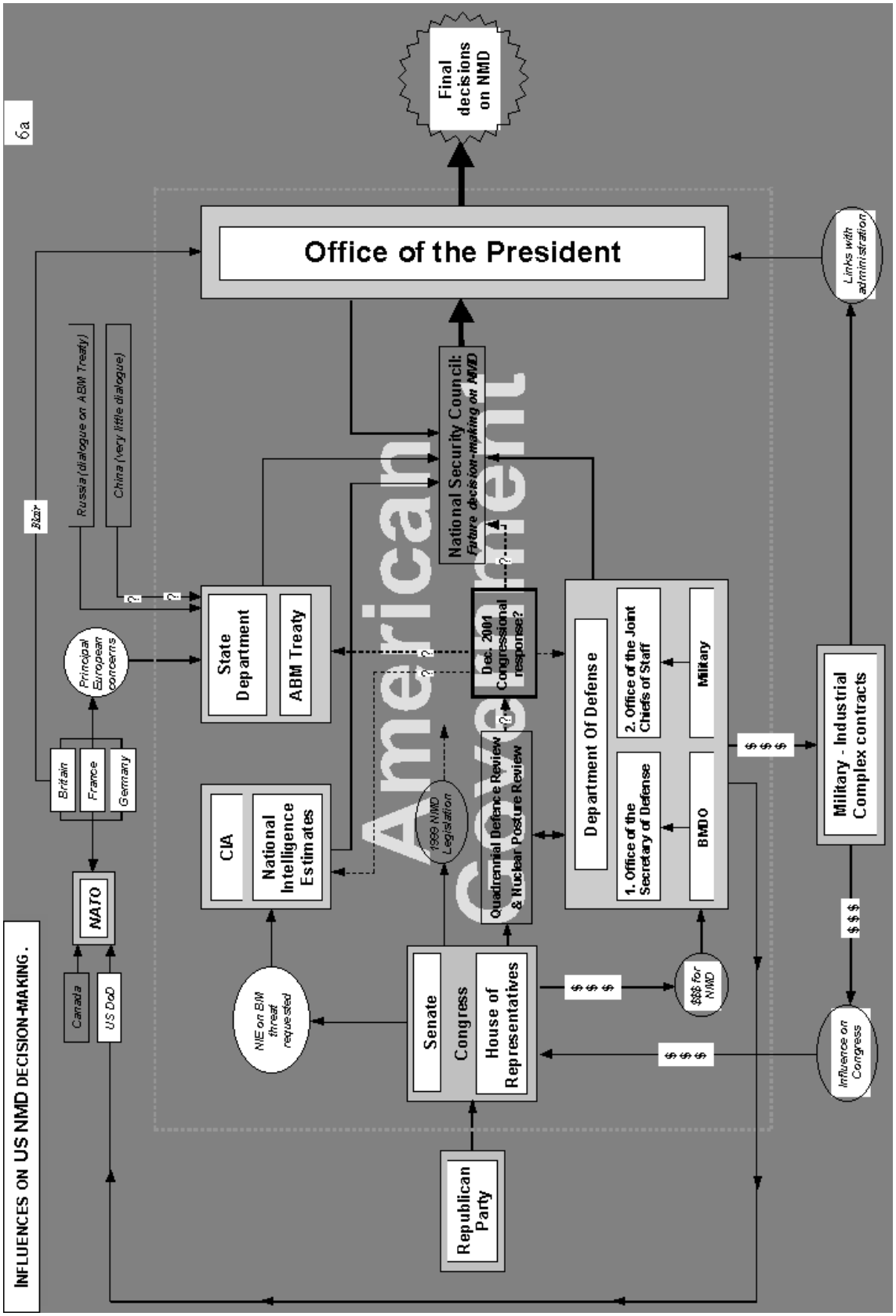
Hock, Dee, Birth of the Chaordic Age, Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco 1999.

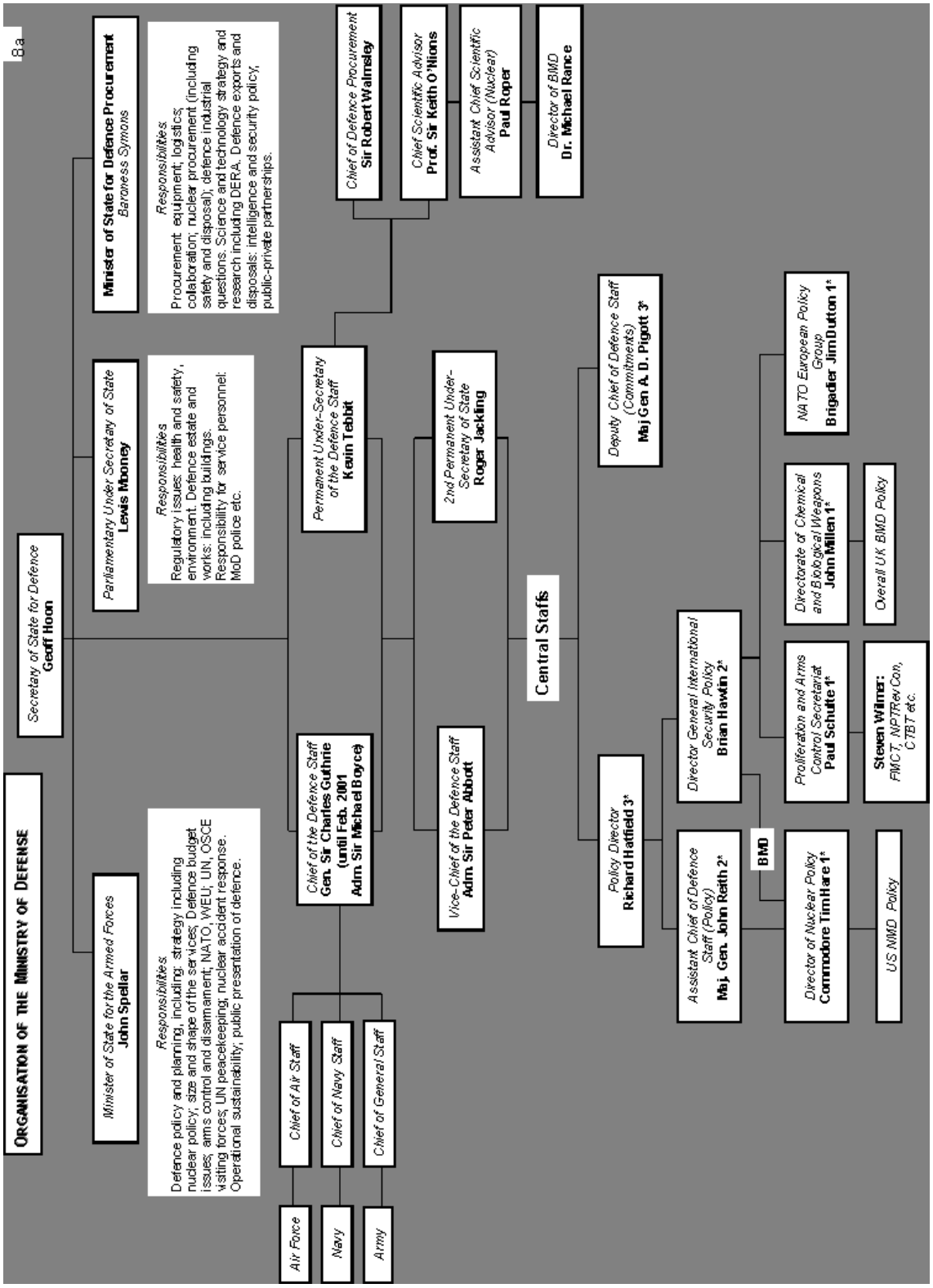
Ishtar, Zohl dé (ed.), Pacific Women Speak Out for Independence and Denuclearisation, Christchurch 1998.

Lampen, John (ed.), No Alternative? Nonviolent Responses to Repressive Regimes, William Sessions Ltd., York 2000.

Morrison, Philip,Tsipis, Kosta, Reason Enough to Hope. America and the World of the Twenty-first Century, The MIT Press, Cambridge-London 1998.

Schell, Jonathan, The Gift of Time: The Case for Abolishing Nuclear Weapons Now, Granta, London 1998.





Westmorland General Meeting

Westmorland General Meeting is a Meeting for Worship and Business of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), comprising Friends from the Swarthmoor, Kendal and Sedbergh, Lancaster and Preston areas in the north-west corner of England. George Fox, founder of the Society, made his first visit to these towns, villages and dales in 1652, and the region continues to be known among Friends as the birthplace of Quakerism.

Quakers seek "that of God" in everyone, worshipping together in silence without doctrine or creed. For three hundred and fifty years Friends' Peace Testimony has been at the centre of a corporate witness against war and violence, through conscientious objection, conflict resolution, service in the Friends' Ambulance Unit or alternative paths of conscience. In the 21st Century we face fundamental changes to the 'engines of war', and new social and international challenges in a changing world, yet the Peace Testimony of 17th Century Friends still bears powerful witness.

In 1660 Friends declared:

> **All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world.**

Today the Society's book of 'Advices and Queries' advises members:

> **We are called to live 'in the virtue of that life and power that takes away the occasion of wars'. Do you faithfully maintain our testimony that war and the preparation for war are inconsistent with the spirit of Christ? Search out whatever in your own way of life may contain the seeds of war. Stand firm in our testimony, even when others commit or prepare to commit acts of violence, yet always remember that they too are children of God.**