

reviewed, starred, and—what else?—panned. And they have a cultural range that suggests the UN is stirring the pots. The exotic cuisines of choice for most Americans used to be Chinese and French, pizza and wurst being too domesticated to count. But variety is now here to stay, because so many new citizens from abroad have brought with them their recipes. We eat the native foods of countries we couldn't locate on a map, and of countries that exist on no map but whose disparate cuisines some antic chef has thought to fuse: Chinese-Slovakian, Belgian-Inuit. In our food pantheon of Hindu profusion, chefs are the major deities. We watch as they rise and fall, are worshiped and flambéed. Some withdraw in creative exhaustion, only to return reheated and do something previously unthinkable to a sea urchin.

What's the future of American foodolatry? To Americans 30 years hence, will we seem daft or relatively innocent—or perhaps just plain lucky to have had the luxury of indulgence? For, of course, the spell can be broken, but by a cure worse than the affliction: bad times that clear the palate and the mind by returning the nation from plenty to want.

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Is Peace Possible?

By STEPHEN M. YOUNGER

IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT WE WILL ESCAPE THE scourge of war within the next three decades, but as more and more countries acquire means of mass destruction, it is time to ask whether peace is even *possible*. Are we doomed by some biological or social imperative to continue the violence of our past, or is there hope that we might find a different path?

Even a tentative answer would have profound implications for how we craft international policy, but scholars seem polarized over the very origin of human violence. Some attribute it to a fundamental flaw in our nature, perhaps a holdover from our hunter past; others think that the problem lies in the social systems that govern group behavior. Research based on observations of diverse cultures is beginning to shed light on this critical issue.

Most societies are peaceful at least some of the time,

and a few seem to have found the secret of avoiding violence almost entirely. Societies on Pacific islands such as Pukapuka, Kapingamarangi, and Manihiki have survived for centuries with remarkably little violence. Murders are extraordinarily rare, and only the oldest oral traditions mention wars.

What do these peaceful societies have in common, and what lessons can we, in our complex world, learn from them? For one thing, all of them have populations of fewer than about a thousand people—the maximum-size group in which everyone can still know everyone else and have a direct say in how they live. Decisions are made by councils typically composed of male elders who are heads of families. Also, these societies are isolated enough from their neighbors that contact is at best infrequent. But regardless of size or isolation, peace isn't free. Group members must remain ever vigilant lest someone upset the social balance. Many small societies are ruthlessly intolerant of bad behavior, enforcing peace with ridicule and ostracism that sometimes continue for years after the transgression. In short, they work at maintaining the peace.

This is not to suggest that we all retreat to tropical islands. But the existence of these societies does demonstrate that human beings can live peacefully under the right conditions. Peace seems to hold when people have a say in how their group is governed and when every group member commits to following the rules and to sanctioning immediately those who do not. These are lessons that we can apply in the modern world.

As individuals, we tolerate bad behavior in others by maintaining that it is not our job to correct them. On a global scale, countries go to war and engage in genocide, and sometimes little is done to stop them. As difficult as it is to change our tendency not to act, the threats posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction make it urgently necessary that we do.

We are growing up as a global society, and it is time to accept our responsibilities as individuals and nations. If we are to reap the benefits of peace, we will need to invest time and energy to *make* it happen. The next 30 years may represent a watershed in human affairs, forcing us to come to terms with what we are, where we have come from, and, most important, where we want to go.

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