What you will read on this web site will be astounding and shocking. You will read that democracies do not make war on other democracies and rarely engage in lesser violence against each other. You also will read that the more a nation is democratically free, the less severe its foreign and internal political violence. Moreover, you will read that somewhere around 170,000,000 people have been murdered by their own governments, aside from war, and that the more democratic a nation the less it murders its own people. As if this were not enough, you will also read that democratic freedom promotes wealth and prosperity. Finally, you will read that our basic foreign policy should be to promote democratic freedom around the world. In short, you will read that were the world to become wholly democratic, then to the best of our knowledge war would be completely eliminated for the human species, lesser political violence, genocide, and mass murder would be minimized, famine eliminated, and poverty and inequality would be sharply reduced.

After reading all this, you may well conclude that I do not know what I am writing about or am some kind of nut. Had I seen this site myself thirty years ago, I would have thought it at best idealistic, but in any case too simplistic and misleading, even arrogant. I would not have believed anyone claiming that they have a solution to end war. And then for them to assert that this solution also will deal with other forms of political violence and reduce poverty. . . . Well, at the least I would have believed they did not live in the real world. I was sure then that war and other forms of human violence were complex social and political phenomena, requiring an understanding of diverse conditions and causes to forecast and resolve. Any one-factor explanation was simply absurd. Moreover, to claim as I will here that this one factor should be the paramount concern of American foreign policy was also, I would have thought then, to be really irresponsible about policies that, in a world of independent and powerful nations, can not only lead us astray, but also endanger our security as a nation and risk war.

To at least provide the reader with some assurance that I did not dream all this up, therefore, let me give some background on how I came to these conclusions. But first, so there is no misunderstanding, I should point out that these conclusions are not mine alone, but now the product of the research of many people, that has accumulated over two decades. Indeed, many of those doing this research on war approached it with the same kind of skepticism you may presently have, but became convinced by their own research results, as I became convinced by mine, that there was a fantastic truth here. Nor is the idea that democracy will promote peace new. It goes back several centuries, as my Power Kills shows. What is new is that the computer, statistical data collections, and developments in methods of research since the 1960s, have enabled us to scientifically test and validate this idea. I have been one researcher among many, therefore, who could have set up such a site, and my particular history in doing research on this may be shared by several colleagues.

During World War II I was a young boy highly influenced by anti-Japanese war propaganda. I saw the Japanese as buck toothed, monkey-like, inscrutable, cruel and devious, and without feeling or sentiment. It was a cultural shock, therefore, to see the Japanese people as they really are while I was stationed in Japan during the Korean War. I found that the Japanese were nothing like my war engendered stereotypes. They could laugh and cry and love flowers and animals. They could be loving and considerate. Moreover, this period was close enough to the Second World War for me to see still the effects on the people and cities of American bombing. This experience had a life-long effect, for it made me ask myself why, if we are really all the same as human beings, we make war on each other.

After the Korean War I started college with a major in physics and mathematics. But my true interest was in reading about social and political matters, particularly about East Asia. So I decided in 1956 as a sophomore at the University of Hawaii to change my major to political science, and then happily discovered
that in political science I could study war and peace within the subfield of international relations. From then on I focused my term papers, MA thesis, and Ph.D. dissertation on war and other forms of political violence. After getting my doctorate in 1963 and for the next thirteen years I received annual grants from the National Science Foundation and Advanced Research Projects Agency of the Department of Defense to conduct research on the empirical dimensions of nations and their behavior, which for me was an attempt to delineate the context and conditions of conflict and war between and within nations. This turned out to be one of the largest social science projects of this kind. Its results have been published in numerous books, the most important of which are described in the bibliography. The essential findings were published in 1981 and are what you will read here: to foster nonviolence, promote freedom.

This result was so radical and seemed too ideological (particularly during the Cold War), that I had to assure myself further that it was sound. As a matter of course, I had already screened all the related research in the literature and so I redid this a second time and also replicated with new data the empirical results. The freedom factor, which is what I will now call it, held up without exception. But my research had been limited to violent conflict, such as war, military action short of war, revolution, guerrilla warfare, rebellion, and the like. Because I did not appreciate its extent, I had ignored democide (genocide and mass murder). But after this research some work on democide led me to realize that possibly more people were killed through government genocide and mass murder than in war. So with grants from the United States Institute of Peace I spent quite a few years collecting data on democide and then subjected them to a variety of empirical analysis. The results of this were also the same. The more democratic freedom, the less democide.

This brings me up to about 1993. Now I was ready to pull all this research--really my life-time research career--together in one volume to be called Power Kills. In the process I again carried out a series of empirical replications and redid for the third time a systematic survey of the literature, with again the same results. The new findings reconfirmed what I will write here.

One final note. I have also personally done the research on the positive effects of freedom on wealth and prosperity, and the results are given in the to Appendix to my Saving Lives, Enriching Life. I also have followed research on this for three decades, since it shows a benefit of freedom that must be considered as important as eradicating violence.

This site is meant to communicate in nontechnical terms the new and revolutionary results from research on war, other forms of political violence, and economic progress. I hope that the reader will gain a new appreciation of the wondrous results of democratic freedom; and realize that this now gives us the power of knowledge. This is knowing what now can be done to rid humanity of the horrors of war, to almost eliminate other forms of political violence, including genocide and mass murder, and to sharply reduce world poverty.

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