

On War and Peace

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Although many books have been written on the subject of war, most of them deal with the history of war or the art of war, and not on the necessity of war. Also, much has been written on the subject of peace, but the viewpoint presented is usually that, between the options of war and peace, peace is not only the preferred state, but is desired to the total and permanent exclusion of war. This article presents the point of view that war and peace are both essential in and to human existence.

Motives for War

The reasons for war are many, and I shall group them into three major categories: (1) Human nature; (2) Population moderation; and (3) Promoting the health of the biosphere and saving the human race from extinction. This article will present points in support of the thesis that war is as essential as peace to humanity and the rest of the biosphere.

Human Nature

With the “knowledge of good and evil,” mankind is truly set apart from the other species inhabiting the planet. The concept of evil does not apply to other animals. Their motives and activities are simple, often instinctive, and they relate to basic biological or sociobiological needs such as the need for food, water, shelter, sex, companionship, living space and long-term survival. Their motivations are not complex, and their diversions are simple. The motivations for their behavior are not characterized by greed, envy, avarice, cruelty, hatred or a host of other human emotions that have little to do with basic survival (food, shelter, freedom, and a good living environment). With human intellect, emotions, and drives, the diversity and complexity of behavior compounds tremendously. An infinite variety of plots, intrigue, activities, environments and complex social structures evolves. The games that people play are much more sophisticated than those of the rest of the animal kingdom. And that brings us to the most challenging and significant game of all – war.

What is war? In simple terms, war is organized killing – a game between “sovereign” groups in which the stakes, for many of the participants, are life, maiming and death, or at least freedom and slavery (loss of sovereignty or property). It is called a “game” because it has objectives and rules, or at least procedures. It is the most significant game because the stakes involve the most highly valued aspects of human physical existence – life, health, freedom, and quality of life.

Why do human beings wage war? Wars have been waged as long as human beings have been around, beginning as clashes or feuds between neighboring families or tribes, and evolving to large-scale conflicts between large nations and civilizations. Human motivation and behavior are complex, and the reasons for war are correspondingly

many. The objectives of war are the achievement of social, political, economic and religious goals. Following is a list of some of the major motivations for war.

Conquest. One group may wage war on another to steal its land, or possessions, or its people (for use as slaves or breeding stock). These objectives are easy to understand. They are motivated by greed, or the desire for a better quality of life (e.g., better land), or a simple desire to remain free (kill or be killed, defense of one's family and home). Liddell-Hart (Strategy) observed that the primary purpose of war is to secure a better peace – i.e., to improve the quality of life for the survivors after the war is over.

In addition to these economic and political objectives, wars of conquest may be waged simply to satisfy “blood lust” – for the thrill of battle. Read Barbara Ehrenreich's book, Blood Rites, to understand the importance of this motivation. The thrill of war is similar to the thrill of winning a physical game, such as a rugby game, just incredibly more intense. Many men relate strongly to this motivation. For some, it is as simple as the thrill of killing another human being in mortal combat, or of claiming the spoils of war (looting, rape). Others crave the thrill of leading other men into battle. Recall the conversation between Generals Omar Bradley and George S. Patton in the film, Patton, in which Bradley says to Patton, “George, there is a tremendous difference between you and me. I fight because it is my duty and I am trained to do it. You fight because you love it!” Many men love to fight. Talk to a veteran about his war experience. For many men, their participation in war was the most significant event of their lives. And the profundity of the experience is in direct proportion to its level of risk, uncertainty, violence and brutality – even if no material reward was promised or obtained.

Alexander the Great did not have to conquer the world. He simply wanted to, as a personal goal. The same may be said of many other great conquerors, such as Caesar, Attila, Genghis Khan, or Tamerlane (Timur Lenk, Tamburlaine) or Napoleon. Sun Tzu and Thucydides observed that war is a naturally recurring state of human society – a conscious act, not an aberration.

Maintenance of Political Power or Status. If the leader of a group or nation is threatened by another group or nation, it is easy to understand why he will wage war, with the support of his people. But it may be that he can enhance his chances of retaining or enhancing his political power by waging war, even if there is no significant threat from the opponent. A war may provide his people with a significant occupation. He may be better at waging war than managing peace, so that his position is stronger in wartime than in peacetime.

The Need to Create. Man has an innate need to create, to build, to do meaningful work. This is a strong drive, and one of the defining characteristics of the species. No matter what has been built before, the current generation of mankind sees a better way, or its own way, of doing things. In a physical world, however, it is not possible to leave every created thing intact for all time. In order to build new things (buildings, cities, nations, civilizations or religions – or people), the old must be destroyed, to make room for the new (either physically or conceptually). All things in this physical universe pass through birth, growth, realization of purpose, dying and death. As long as the human species survives, its artifacts – no matter how precious to their creators – will eventually be destroyed, to make room for the creations of its later generations. What the human species builds in time of peace must be destroyed in a time of war, and what is destroyed must be rebuilt in a new manifestation.

Religion. The role of religion in war varies. In many cases, it is simply a way of distinguishing the combatants. The real reason for the war may be political (increase in power) or economic (conquest of lands or other spoils of war). It is easier for a leader to motivate his citizens to kill those of another nation if the other nation is of a different religion (or race or language or political structure).

Once war begins, each side prays to its own version of God for victory. If God cares about us, it is hard to imagine that He wants the other side to win the war. If He wants us to win, it follows that He wants the other side to lose. Although religion may not have been a significant factor in causing the war, it becomes a rationale for killing the enemy, and a great motivator or morale booster for the people.

Religion may in fact be a major reason for war. Some religious leaders (e.g., Moses, Joshua, Mohammed) were inspired by God to wage war on infidels. In the quest for the "Promised Land," the Jews were instructed by God to wipe out tribe after tribe of the Land's then-current occupants. Mohammed and his successors conquered the world from India to the Atlantic in the name of Allah. In conquering the New World, the leaders of France and Spain believed that it was their moral and religious duty to convert the heathen savages of North and South America to Christianity, or kill them. (See Arnold Toynbee's An Historian's Approach to Religion, or A Study of History, for more discussion on religion and war. Barbara Ehrenreich also discusses the close relationship of religion and war in Blood Rites.)

Population Moderation

Overpopulation is a major cause of war. All species, including human beings, breed prolifically. It is axiomatic that species breed to the limits imposed by their environments. An ecological equilibrium, or "balance of nature" evolves and remains stable over a long period of time. In times past, human beings relied on infanticide and war as principal means of reducing or moderating human numbers, when the carrying capacity of the land was reached. These were the same processes used by other animal species in response to overcrowding.

With the advent of Christianity as a major religion on the planet, the use of infanticide as a means of population control declined, and war remained the major policy tool used to address overpopulation. There are two aspects of the relationship of overpopulation to war. First is the response of a group that is being "squeezed" by the increase in population of another group (e.g., the American natives by European settlers). Second is the response of a government to the increase in the size of its own population. Although it is said that "a prince without population is without power," nations throughout history have responded to their own overpopulation (inability of the land to feed the citizens) by launching war (e.g., the Greek wars of 750 – 550 B.C.). The response to overpopulation involved both the national leadership and the family. In the recent history of Western Europe, it was common practice for each family to send its second and later sons to join the military – only the first son would inherit the land, in order to avoid fractionalizing the family's landholdings. When population exceeded the capacity of the land to support it, the national leadership proceeded to launch war on its neighbors. Wars continued for years, and thousands and thousands died. The leaders of the combatant countries mutually recognized the value of war in moderating population – it was not a "fight to the death," and neither government was in jeopardy. Sun Tzu

observed that it was not in the interest of a state to become involved in a protracted war, but he was speaking of a war that significantly drained national resources, not a long-term war that helped to moderate population size.

War is not, of course, the only phenomenon that moderates human population size. Bad weather may lead to famines, and climate change may lead to permanent changes in human population levels. Disease has sometimes played a significant role in moderating population, as in the case of the Black Death (bubonic plague) in medieval Europe and perhaps HIV/AIDS in Africa and Asia today. The principal topic of this article, however, is war, not overpopulation, and so the discussion is concerned mainly with the role of overpopulation as a cause of war, rather than with the influence of war on overpopulation. Most nations today are not terribly concerned with overpopulation, and would not consider going to war as a means of population control. They will still go to war in response to population pressure from another group (i.e., as a result of overpopulation), but not as a proactive population-control measure.

Modern times have severely restricted the use of infanticide and war as population-control measures, with the result that populations have exploded. The most egregious example is Africa (where I have worked for a number of years). Prior to a few hundred years ago, infanticide and war (and selling of slaves) were used to keep the population in balance with the rest of the environment. If population increases or environmental changes occurred so that the land could no longer support the population (by farming or hunting and gathering), a tribe or part of it simply moved on to other land. If there were already people there, war ensued, the losing tribe was exterminated, and the land continued to support the human population.

With the advent of the industrial age, disaster ensued. Disease control measures lowered the death rate, and the imposition of colonial rule prevented local tribes from moving around and waging war to keep population in line with carrying capacity. Christianity and changing Western morals, laws, and economics imposed restrictions on infanticide and slaving. The population began to grow rapidly. For most of the twentieth century, the population growth rate was an astronomical three percent per annum, with the population doubling about every two decades.

The impact on the environment was devastating. The beginning of the end was quite apparent by the middle of the twentieth century, when women gathering firewood could no longer obtain sufficient firewood from deadfall, and started to use live trees for fuel. Although colonial rule ended shortly after mid-century, the new nations of Africa never returned to their former means of population control. As the population grew without bound, the point was quickly reached at which the land could no longer support the people. As a result of massive overcrowding and gross intermingling, disease – notably HIV/AIDS – became rampant.

The population of Africa is perhaps one hundred times what can be supported by traditional means (traditional farming, cattle-raising, hunting and gathering). (It is one thousand times that required for a healthy balance of nature and meaningful human existence.) In the absence of war, the population has exploded and disease has become rampant (the HIV rate is over 30 percent in many African countries). Poverty, virtually unknown a millennium ago, is now a horrible prison for hundreds of millions of people on the continent.

The social costs of global industrialization on Africa have been catastrophic. In earlier times, Africa was characterized by strong tribal social structures. Men had a significant role to play in family and society. Their role was to protect the tribe and the family from wild animals and to wage war. Their actions kept the human population in line with the ability of the land to support it. With gross overpopulation, most African men have no means of providing an acceptable level of living for their families. They have been emasculated by global industrialization.

International organizations and agencies (United Nations, World Bank, International Monetary Fund) claim that Africa's problems are the result of African cultural shortcomings, such as corruption (the chief/leader controls everything, lack of democracy, transparency, etc.) and regional wars. This is completely false. They say this because it is good for global business to have hundreds of millions of African consumers, no matter how desperately poor they may be, and no matter that their society has been destroyed and will continue to be destroyed as long as globalization continues. It was African culture, including war as the lynchpin, that kept Africans free and healthy for millions of years. War kept Africa healthy. Peace has destroyed it. Bad planetary government (democracy, anarchy) has destroyed it. What Africa needs is more war, not less of it. What Africa needs is able and responsible planetary government, not government by the masses or anarchy. When the population of Africa drops by a factor of one hundred or one thousand, when mass crowding is gone, when gross intermingling of peoples ceases, when global industrialization ends and good planetary governance is established, then Africa's health – and happiness – will return.

Lest there be any misunderstanding, I am using Africa simply as an example. What is happening in Africa is happening worldwide, just at a different rate. The world is being choked to death by global industrialization and peace – and government that is not suited to responsible planetary management.

Preserving the Health of the Biosphere, and Saving the Human Race from Extinction

As noted in previous articles, the current global peace has been more destructive to the planet's biosphere and the quality of human life than war ever has. Peace is rapidly destroying the biosphere that evolved over the last 65 million years, and is placing the continued existence of the human species in peril. The biosphere is not designed for, and cannot accommodate, large-scale industrialization. Extreme overcrowding and global commingling of people is not conducive to good health of the human species. Global industrialization has resulted in direst poverty and deprivation for billions of human beings.

Neither extreme war nor extreme peace can continue for very long. War and peace constitute a duality in which both conditions are essential for the good health and long-term survival of the human species. No species can continue to breed without some sort of process of population moderation taking place, and no species can remain in good health without some sort of natural selection. War is essential for both of these processes. They both contribute to the health of mankind. All animals fight for space, sustenance, and sex. This is not only natural, but essential for health and survival of the species. (Of course, no species – or nation or civilization -- survives forever – we are speaking here in relative terms.)

As Liddell-Hart noted, the purpose of war is to secure a better peace. It is also the purpose of peace to prepare for war. As Machiavelli (The Prince) observed, war is the single important concern of a good leader. No society will – or can – continue for very long without war. War is needed not only to moderate the population, but to temper it, to provide it with discipline, and keep it strong. A society's military is a reflection of its civilian population. If either deteriorates in quality, the society will soon cease to exist.

It is instructive to quote further from Machiavelli on the importance of war to a leader: “A prince, therefore, must have no other object or thought, nor acquire skill in anything, except war, its organization, and its discipline. The art of war is all that is expected of a ruler....The first way to lose your state is to neglect the art of war; the first way to win a state is to be skilled in the art of war.” (Niccolò Machiavelli, The Prince, translated by George Bull, Penguin Books, 1961) On the relationship between war and politics, Machiavelli writes, “(1) Military power is the foundation of civil society; (2) A well-ordered military establishment is an essential unifying element in civil society; (3) A policy of military aggrandizement contributes to the stability and longevity of civil society; (4) The military art and the political art possess a common style; (5) A military establishment tends to reflect the qualities of the civil society of which it is a part.” (Niccolò Machiavelli, The Art of War, revised edition of the Ellis Farnsworth translation, by Neal Wood, Da Capo Press, 1965, 2001).

Sun Tzu (The Art of War) wrote that no nation has ever benefited from a protracted war. To the extent that the war becomes a heavy and chronic burden, this is true. War by its nature is, compared to peace, violent and convulsive. To be successful, it requires a maximal, focused concentration of force. This cannot be accomplished in a protracted war. A blitzkrieg works; a First or Second World War works; a Thirty Years' War or Vietnam or “War on Terrorism” does not.

Unlike war, for peace to be beneficial, it must be longer term. The accomplishment of great things – music, art, architecture, science, engineering – often takes time and resources that are not available during war.

Most nations have Departments or Ministries of War (or “Defense”) – because war matters. It is the only essential function of a state. They do not, however, have Ministries or Departments of Peace. Peace matters too, but in most cases it is not carefully managed, and certainly not optimized (directed toward a specific long-term objective). No nation (or other secular organization) on Earth at the present time has a long-term plan for planetary management. Most nations do not even have a long-term plan for themselves (perhaps they know that the “long term” for nations is not really very long at all!). Peace is to a large extent a period of unplanned recreation (and “re-creation”). To a degree, that is fine – it contributes to the arts and sciences and philosophy and religion. But to waste the precious interlude of peace on hedonistic pleasure and move mindlessly to the next war is a waste. The purpose of war is to prepare for a better peace, not a wasted peace. Wars will always occur, to destroy the physical structures and populations that man previously created. What is important is that man take advantage of peace interludes to advance mentally and spiritually. Mankind has certainly advanced intellectually in the present peace – there has been an explosion of knowledge in this era – but he has not advanced much mentally and spiritually. Perhaps that will happen after the next great war.

Religion places a very high importance on war. It is a matter of life and death and freedom, and it is of paramount importance to human existence. Polytheistic religions (e.g., of the Greeks, Romans, and (perhaps) Hindus) invariably have a god of war. The history of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) is a history of war. Just as much as peace, war is a primary instrument of God's handiwork. Moses and Mohammed were leaders in war – both wars of conquest (the conquest of the Promised Land) and wars of conversion (the wars of 622-732 A.D., in which Islam (under Mohammed, his close friends and immediate successors) conquered from the borders of India to the Atlantic Ocean). Jesus Christ is often referred to as the "Prince of Peace," but this refers to inner peace, not political peace. He never stated or implied that war is an evil, or even undesirable. Quite the contrary, he instructed to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and unto the Lord what is the Lord's."

The evidence is strong that placing too great an emphasis on either war or peace is suicidal. Everyone is familiar with Neville Chamberlain's infamous statement, "I have brought peace in our time," and can readily imagine that a pacifist nation without a patron will soon perish. What is not so evident is the fact that an overemphasis on militarism can also be fatal. Arnold Toynbee discusses this topic at length in A Study of History (vol. I-VI of D. C. Somervell's two-volume abridgement, Oxford University Press, 1957, 1985). "Militarism, as we shall see at a later point in this Study, has been by far the commonest cause of the breakdown of civilizations during the last four or five millennia which have witnessed the score or so of breakdowns that are on record up to the present date. Militarism breaks a civilization down by causing the local states into which the society is articulated to collide with one another in destructive fratricidal conflicts. In this suicidal process the entire social fabric becomes fuel to feed the devouring flame in the brazen bosom of Moloch. This single act of war makes progress at the expense of the divers arts of peace; and, before this deadly ritual has completed the destruction of all its votaries, they may have become so expert in the use of their implements of slaughter that, if they happen for a moment to pause from their orgy of mutual destruction and to turn their weapons for a season against the breasts of strangers, they are apt to carry all before them."

In the section, "The Suicidalness of Militarism," Toynbee describes several examples to support his assertion, including Assyria, Charlemagne, and Timur Lenk. The example of Assyria is particularly impressive. "The disaster in which the Assyrian military power met its end in 614-610 B.C. was one of the completest yet known to history. It involved not only the destruction of the Assyrian war-machine but also the extinction of the Assyrian state and the extermination of the Assyrian people. A community which had been in existence for over two thousand years and had been playing an ever more dominant part in South-Western Asia for a period of some two-and-a-half centuries, was blotted out almost completely. Two hundred and ten years later, when Cyrus the Younger's ten thousand Greek mercenaries were retreating up the Tigris Valley from the battlefield of Cunaxa to the Black Sea coast, they passed in succession the sites of Calah and Ninevah and were struck with astonishment, not so much at the massiveness of the fortifications and the extent of the area they embraced, as at the spectacle of such vast works of man lying uninhabited. The weirdness of these empty shells, which testified by their inanimate endurance to the vigour of a vanished life, is vividly conveyed by the literary art of a member of the Greek expeditionary force who has recounted its experiences. Yet what is still more astonishing to a modern reader of Xenophon's narrative – acquainted as he is with the fortunes of Assyria through the discoveries of modern archaeologists – is the fact that Xenophon was unable to learn even the most

elementary facts about the authentic history of these derelict fortress-cities. Although the whole of South-Western Asia, from Jerusalem to Ararat and from Elam to Lydia, had been dominated and terrorized by the masters of these cities little more than two centuries before Xenophon passed that way, the best account he is able to give of them has no relation to their real history, and the very name of Assyria is unknown to him.”

It is interesting to consider Toynbee’s comments in light of the size of the defense budgets of the nations of today’s world (and vice versa!).

The planet’s biosphere is being destroyed by large-scale industrialization. Much of human society lives in unimaginable misery, squalor, disease, and meaninglessness. Peace has continued for too long – it is a bad peace, that is destroying the planet. Through peace, however, mankind has achieved the means of bringing global industrialization to an end. As we enter the Age of Aquarius (age of thought, knowledge, wisdom) we enter a new age in which mankind can realize a higher level of development. It is through war that this will be achieved. At the present time, mankind as a whole has no sense of destiny or purpose. Modern civilization is destroying itself and the rest of the biosphere in a mindless, hedonistic orgy of global industrialization and overpopulation. This will end soon. A great war will lead to a great peace.

Afterword

Much has been written and discussed of the establishment of the “Kingdom of God” or “Golden Age” on earth. And much of this is silly nonsense. The purpose of the physical universe is to enable the physical manifestation of spiritual desire – the means of playing games for real stakes. The Kingdom of God already exists, in both the spiritual and physical planes, as He wills it. Armageddon and the New Dawn will surely occur, and they will lead to a New World Order in a New Age or Golden Age, but that world will be just as physical as the present one. As evolution proceeds, however, mankind will surely advance mentally and spiritually, and in harmony with the rest of nature. And as long as man survives in this physical universe, so too will war and peace. But as man evolves, the nature of war and peace will surely evolve, too.

It was noted by Hobbes that “The sovereign’s job is to procure ‘the safety of the people,’ and by safety is meant, not a bare preservation of life, ‘but also all other Contentments of life, which every man by lawful industry, without danger, or hurt to the Commonwealth, shall acquire to himself.’” (Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, edited with an introduction by C. B. Macpherson, Penguin Books, 1651, 1968) The current planetary management (global industrialization) has failed miserably to deliver an environment where man can realize his full potential, or for most, even a meaningful existence. It has, to the contrary, transformed the planet into a living hell for most of humanity. The time to change this is long overdue. In this sense – the creation of an environment conducive to meaningful existence for mankind, living in harmony with the rest of nature – the establishment of a Golden Age is long overdue. But it will be manifest in the physical universe / planetary environment of which we are a part.

In his study of history, and more specifically of causes of the rises and falls of civilizations, Arnold Toynbee considers the hypothesis that religions are chrysalises of civilization. “A church would thus be part of the reproductive system of civilizations, serving as egg, grub, and chrysalis between butterfly and butterfly.” (A Study of History, vol. VII-X of D. C. Somervell’s two-volume abridgement, Oxford University Press, 1957,

1985) He rejects this hypothesis, citing that “A study of all available examples shows that *none* of the civilizations of the second generation – Hellenic, Syriac, Indic, &c. – was affiliated to its predecessor through the medium of a church; that *all* the known universal churches were developed within the disintegrating bodies social of civilizations of the second generation; that none of the civilizations of the third generation, though several of them are (and all of them may be) broken-down and disintegrating, shows any convincing evidence of producing a second crop of universal churches.” Given these observations, it seems unlikely, if the future resembles the past, that a New World Order will flow from an existing religion, or that the disintegrating global industrial empire will produce a new universal religion. In light of this observation, it is interesting to consider the role and significance of phenomena such as the synarchic movement of the New Age Movement, as we ponder the present condition and near-term future of the planet. (For more on synarchy (government by an elite of enlightened Initiates) and the legend of Agharta / Agartha, see The Mission of India in Europe by Marquis Joseph Alexandre Saint-Yves d’Alveydre, 1885; Beasts, Men and Gods by by Ferdinand Ossendowski, 1922; Altai-Himalaya, A Travel Diary (1929), The Heart of Asia (1930), Shambhala (1930) by Nicholas Roerich; “Politics in the Light of Initiatic Science,” in A New Dawn: Society and Politics in the Light of Initiatic Science, Parts 1 and 2, 2nd edition, Complete Works of Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, Volumes 25 and 26, Prosveta, 1990, 1999; and Agnes Lejbowicz, Omraam Mikhaël Aïvanhov, Master of the Great Universal White Brotherhood, Prosveta, 1982; and Plato’s The Republic translated with an introduction by Desmond Lee, Penguin Books, 1955, 2nd ed. 1974. See the Internet web sites http://www.rennes-discovery.com/Rennes_Alchemist/synarchy_by_milko_bogaard.htm (synarchy); http://www.newdawnmagazine.com/articles/mystery_of_shambhala_part_one.html (Agharta); and <http://www.videlinata.ch> , <http://www.prosveta.com> , or <http://www.revelation37.freereserve.co.uk/contents/aivanhov.htm> (Great Universal White Brotherhood).)