ENDING WAR

A Recipe

by Robert Hinde

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‘We, the peoples of the United Nations, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind … and for these ends to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security … have resolved to combine our efforts to accomplish these aims.’

(Extracts from the Preamble to the United Nations Charter)

‘War must cease to be an admissible human institution.’

Prof. Sir Joseph Rotblat FRS, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, (1908-2005)
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**Introduction**

Not this year, not in my lifetime, perhaps in yours, and with a strong probability in my grandchildren’s lifetimes, war will be seen as an unacceptable way of settling disputes between states. The aim of this book is to hasten the day. It will not come quickly or without a great deal of effort, because much must and will change first. The hegemony of the United States will be challenged as newly industrialised states jostle for position centre-stage. Climate change and demands for a more even distribution of the world’s goods will cause major disruptions to the political system. The integrity of nation states will become less important, and the richer nations will learn that wealth must be shared.

There are those who say that war will always be with us. They will be proved wrong. The world is changing: there is a growing realisation that violence fails to produce lasting settlements. Already war has become virtually unthinkable within Western Europe, within North America and within most of Australasia. Although threats and counter-threats are still exchanged amongst both major and minor powers, there is great reluctance to go to war because it is clear that wars are less winnable and, in every war, both sides suffer. Wars on the scale of World War Two have become improbable because both sides would certainly be losers. Many of the wars since then have involved guerrillas or terrorists: the superior force has been defeated by an elusive enemy. The US/UK could defeat Saddam Hussein’s forces, but found guerrilla tactics in the cities another matter. The use of excessive force against combatants hidden amongst civilians is counterproductive and merely increases resistance. Industrialised states will be less willing to try to impose their will by force. Disputes there will be, but increasingly they will be solved by dialogue round the conference table.

A day will come when markets open to trade, and minds open to ideas, will be the sole battlefields.

*President Gorbachev, quoting Victor Hugo, Soviet News, 12 July 1989*

Of course, that does not mean there is nothing to worry about. States accumulate weapons under the illusion that this increases their security, when in reality the presence of the means for violence makes violent acts more likely. In every industrial nation, the military-
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industrial-scientific complex, discussed in chapter 6, facilitates conflicts all over the world. Even now, wars are being fought in many parts of the world. As I write, desire for revenge and national status has led to a bloody war in Georgia, and a newspaper recently (Jan 23 2008) reported that, as a consequence of the persisting state of war, 45,000 people a month were dying in the Congo. Nor must it be assumed that armed forces have become totally unnecessary: that would be the view of a starry-eyed idealist. From time to time the oppressed will need support. Peace must be promoted and maintained between factions in dispute. Sadly, there is always likely to be a broad spectrum of views as to when intervention is appropriate.

It seems clear that the UN Security Council is not the appropriate forum for such decisions so long as a few nations have the power of veto. In any case, in the end, every dispute must be settled by negotiation leading to a solution that both sides see as acceptable. Even then, leaders' views may not be acceptable to all their followers, and it may be necessary to maintain peace by a show of neutral force.

This book is concerned with what we must do to accelerate progress towards a world without war. In doing so, I hope it will show that the goal is a realistic one. If the world is to be changed, it will be necessary to work both with the grassroots of public opinion and with the politicians and leaders who seem to control our fate. It will require new world-views, but they will be world-views that many of us already hanker for. I hope that the chapters that follow will show that we are not doomed by our very nature, for those who maintain that view have a false view of humanity. And I hope it will show that we are not powerless against the false goals and ambition of some of those who seem to be in control. Of course what I write is coloured by my own experience: I grew up around the time of World War Two. As we shall see, the nature of war has changed since then. Indeed all wars are different and those who have experienced war in Vietnam, Mozambique, Iraq or Afghanistan would have a different slant on the nature of war. But many of the fundamentals are the same: in war, people kill and are killed.

The argument is simple. Two things are essential for war – weapons and people willing to use them. Both weapons manufacture and the motivation to fight are supported by the institution of war. The institution of war is a human construction and can be disempowered. Wars are led by politicians and generals, but leaders become ineffective if enough people refuse to follow them. It is partly because
leaders are afraid of popular opposition that they try to keep their cards close to their chests, but non-governmental organisations can insist on governmental openness. If we could render the institution of war ineffective, even the most belligerent politicians would be powerless. With a sane outlook on the world, leaders will not go to war and people would not follow them if they did.

1 The nature of war

To some, war will seem like a remote curiosity, something that other people get involved in, a long way away. So in this chapter let us see what it can really mean to those involved. One way to do that would be to look at the figures. In World War Two there were several tens of millions of casualties. In Vietnam, three million is a rough estimate. Such figures are inevitably imprecise. While military casualties may be countable, civilian casualties are not. In the second Iraq war, the Americans apparently did not even try to count the number of civilians they killed when bombing supposed enemy strongholds. The above figure for Vietnam includes around 2 million civilian casualties. In the civil war in Rwanda it was primarily civilians who were killed: the distinction between civilian and combatant is not always easy to make.

But it is hard to attach meaning to such figures. Just as when we
read of the billions of pounds or dollars in the national budget, for most of us the numbers are beyond our imagination. And death is only one of the consequences of war. The number of wounded is likely to exceed by many times the number of deaths. And of those wounded, some will suffer for the rest of their lives. Many will have lost limbs, others will have lost sense of sight or hearing. Others will be incapacitated by poisonous substances to which they have been exposed, deliberately or adventitiously, as part of the machinery of war. Yet others will be traumatised by the dangers and experiences to which they have been exposed.

And death and wounds are only part of the story. Military training can lead to a change in personality: individuals in civvy street who abide by the law and try never to hurt anyone are transformed into members of a group whose membership entitles or requires them to kill. Many are further affected by the experience of combat and find it difficult to readjust to ordinary life.

War also induces starvation and disease. In the Introduction I mentioned the report of 45,000 war-related deaths each month in the Congo: apparently most of these were due to starvation or disease, or complications of pregnancy or the frailty of newborns, but in each case a consequence of war. We have all seen pictures of refugee camps, with figures for the number of refugees, so-called ‘displaced persons’, but it is not easy for most of us to imagine what it must be like to lose your home, your family, your livelihood, and most serious of all, every scrap of hope for your future. In the civil war in Rwanda the great majority of the refugees had lost family members, and nearly half had lost both parents. In every war, for each death there is at least one bereavement, usually several, perhaps widow, children and parents.

But this list of horrors may have lost you. We preserve ourselves by turning away, by feeling that this has nothing to do with us, it is remote, distant, in another world. It is the individual cases that are easiest to identify with. So here is a tiny incident, pretty insignificant in the total scheme of the conflict, from World War Two. It happens to concern my brother, a doctor and medical officer in a Field Ambulance of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Fairly recently qualified, he joined up soon after war was declared and was stationed in various places in Norfolk. Having volunteered for overseas service, he sailed from England on about July 20\textsuperscript{th} 1941. His wife and my parents were told that he was missing on September 8\textsuperscript{th}, but could get no further information about him from the War Office. After some
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weeks they heard through friends in Liverpool of a newspaper report about the survivors of a torpedoed ship which mentioned a doctor who had died in the lifeboat. Only on November 3rd was official notification of his death from wounds received. My father managed to obtain the names of the survivors, and this is a copy of part of the letter from one of them:

14-1-42

Dear Sir,

Thank you very much for your letter which kind of brought memories they will never die to me.

Yes Sir, I was in the same lifeboat with Capt. Hinde. I will now try and endeavour to give you some of the ordeals we had to encounter after the “Shareston” was hit. To begin with, we had retired to our hammocks for the night and at about 10-30pm the ship shuddered which threw us out of the hammock. After collecting ourselves together we went to the lifeboat allotted to our squad. Well then we clambered down the ladder into the boat, by now some of the boats had got away but ours unfortunately took in a few waves that made the boat half full of water. There was quite a number in at the time including some crew (lascars) but once again a huge wave pushed our little craft against the side of the now burning ship and the suddenness of the tip threw us out into the furious seas. I shall never forget the sensation of being under water for maybe seconds but it seemed like hours the want to breathe but couldn’t. My lifebelt brought me to the surface and I saw the lads clambering back into the now lifeboat practically full of water. Your son I must confess saved my life. I have always said that so I am not just writing for the bluff. Yes sir, I threw my arms out and caught the MO around the neck and he said ‘Don’t struggle you will be alright’. We swam to the lifeboat and he tugged me in. There was 16 of us in this boat and only 9 of us finished up. We saw terrific waves which swamped the boat and we sat in this water logged boat for four days. The fifth day brought us a much calmer day and we saw a raft. This raft floated towards us and soon we had it tied to our lifeboat where some of the lads got out and we took the job of bailing out. It took a while but we did it and now we could get to the biscuits the water and the condensed milk also the Horlicks tablets. This sounds a lot but believe me it isn’t when we had to last for 19½ days before being picked up. The MO worked the food out and we had a drop of water mixed with milk three times a day and a Horlicks tablet. Each day a man would die because of wounds and the hot sun during the day.

The thought of just lying and waiting to be picked up was mental agony.
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Miles and miles of water with us just a dot like a cork riding up and down the waves. Days passed, we grew weaker and myself had to bathe my eyes to open them each morning. The sun I suppose made my eyes mattery and you may guess what it was like to open them the next day. Sir, those were the longest days and nights I ever new. ‘Meals’ at sunrise, overhead and sunset so you can just imagine how boring it was with nothing to do but lie and wait. Your son, Sir, was very badly wounded for his body, legs and arms was in a mess and the exposure tended to aggravate them for we had little clothes on. He suffered with several others terrific pain I should say. We went thin and our faces was thick with beard. The Captain of the Ship, the Chief Engineer and Your Son I am sorry to say died near enough together … Well we chalked the days up as the days went past and on the 19th day a ship spotted us and altered course … I believe it was on the 15th day that your son released of agonising pain died. A watery grave maybe but his life was given for his country …’

This letter tells not of dramatic action but of long drawn out suffering followed by agonising death. Imagine the effect on his widow and on my parents. The suspense they suffered and the nature of my brother’s death made the loss many times worse.

My brother’s death also made them more sensitive to suspense when, about 18 months later, they received a letter of condolence from the landlady on whom I had been billeted in Oban. It was a case of mistaken identity: another pilot and crew had been killed at about the time that I flew to the Far East. The Air Ministry refused to release any information about me and, for a variety of reasons, it was several weeks before I could communicate with my family. Put this against the facts of my parents’ situation: my father was a busy doctor, near retirement, taking frequent night calls in the blackout. My mother was an Air Raid Warden, out whenever the air raid siren blew, and often at other times. One of my sisters, a newly qualified doctor, was doing the work of my father’s partner, who was in the army; my other sister was working on the decoding of German radio messages in Bletchley, and I, the youngest, was in the RAF. The family did not suffer to the extent that some families in battle-zones did, but the whole family was engulfed in the war.

After my brother’s death, I can honestly say that my parents were never truly happy again. Indeed the life of everyone in the country was changed by the war. It permeated every corner of the lives of every citizen – fear, rationing, blackout, the call-up touched everywhere. It was even worse, of course, for those living in the
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European countries where the land battles were fought. In this respect, for UK citizens' World War Two differed from more recent wars in which the forces of one country were fighting the forces of another in the territory of the latter. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, indescribably horrific though they have been for many, and totally disruptive as they have been for the citizens, barely touched the lives of most in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Of course, in time of war the public is shielded from many of its worst horrors. War is sanitised, especially the suffering of one's own countrymen. In World War One a trench was constructed in a London park to show the public what trench warfare was like. Of course it was clean and tidy: there was no mud, no rotting corpses, no rats feeding on them, no shell holes where the protective parapet had been blasted away. More recently, in the second Iraq war, reporters have been embedded in combatant units and their reports have conveyed some of the drama of battle, but what they were allowed to report has been strictly limited. Too seldom, combatants tell their own tales: I will quote only three sentences from a man who later suffered extreme post-traumatic stress disorder: 'Because we were the initial fighting force, we did not stop to mess around with dead bodies (Iraqis). There was a little girl clinging on to her dead dad screaming her eyes out. We never had time to stop'.

In this context, I should perhaps make clear that, although I was involved as a pilot in World War Two, my own job was a relatively easy one. Sixteen hour patrols over the sea looking for ships or submarines had its moments, but was innocuous compared with what many had to experience. My boyhood friend Graham Cozens-Hardy also joined the Royal Air Force and flew as a navigator with Bomber Command at a time when it was experiencing very heavy casualties. Graham had nearly completed his tour of thirty missions and was 21 when he was killed. I went to the base where he had been stationed to try to find out more about his death from other aircrew. Beyond the fact that he had been lead navigator on a daylight raid and they had broken cloud over the Ruhr, they seemed strangely unwilling to talk about it. I could see the reason in their tired eyes and strained faces: although I also was a pilot, I was an outsider to what they were enduring and I seemed to them almost not to exist. Graham is buried with his crew side by side in a beautifully kept cemetery near the Netherlands/German border.
The war we are all most afraid of now is nuclear war. The horror of nuclear weapons is difficult to convey. Once again, the figures give little idea of the reality. When the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, about 140,000 died in the next few months. And now nuclear weapons are many times more powerful than this. One simply cannot imagine it. I came nearer to being able to see the meaning of the figures when I visited the Peace Museum in Hiroshima a few years ago. It was not the pictures and models of the devastation, nor the figures of casualties, but something more personal. The watches stopped at a quarter past eight. The stone steps with the shadow of a person – was it a man or a woman? – etched on the stone: the person sitting there had been vapourised, the shadow was all that was left.

Nearby in the Museum are glass cases, each with a smock or a pair of trousers, burnt and torn, with a small card with a vignette of the owner. Mostly they were teenagers, clearing a fire-break, about 1000...
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metres from ground zero, dying immediately or the next day. One
little girl, who had been 4,000 metres from ground zero, seemed
unaffected, and grew up into a fine schoolgirl, noted for her athletic
abilities. For ten years. And then the radiation sickness struck. She
died slowly, over the next few months. She believed in a Japanese
myth that if you made a thousand perfect paper cranes, you could
have your dearest wish. Her wish was to live. Many of the paper birds
she made are in the Museum, some no larger than your finger nail.
She made over 500: her school friends made the rest.

You will find another picture of war in the commemoration services
and war memorials, a picture that carries a different sort of truth.
‘Their name liveth for evermore’ and ‘At the going down of the sun
and in the morning we will remember them’. Such words carry
important messages to those suffering the desperate longing of
bereavement. Having lost much of the meaning in their lives, they can
cling to the belief that it was not a total waste (‘Greater love hath no
man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends’) and the name
on a war memorial provides a focus for their grief. My brother was
buried at sea, and I remember my mother saying ‘He has not even got
a grave’: later, she got some comfort from a memorial in a local
church. But one must not forget the euphemisms that are nearly
always present. For the most part they did not ‘lay down their lives’,
they were killed. As the picture of the Cambridge War Memorial
shows, there may be a real contrast between the message on the
memorial and the reality. One of the bloodiest battles of World War
Two is commemorated at Kohima, in Burma. The memorial in the
Kohima cemetery says:

‘When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us And Say
For Their To-morrow, We Gave Our To-day.’

(Attributed to John Maxwell Edmonds, 1875-1958)

Contrast this with descriptions of the battle: ‘The garrison was
remorselessly shelled and mortared and slowly driven into a small
perimeter on Garrison Hill … they were very short of drinking water.
The dressing stations were exposed to Japanese fire, and wounded
men were hit again as they waited for treatment.’ After the long-
drawn out battle, in which there were over 4,000 Allied and 7,000
Japanese casualties, ‘The terrain had been reduced to a fly- and rat-
infested wilderness, with half-buried human remains everywhere.’
Cambridge War Memorial focusing on the victor and glorifying war. The sculptor, Tait McKenzie, described it as ‘...a private soldier in full kit on his triumphant return after the war. With discipline relaxed, he is striding along bareheaded, helmet in hand, a German helmet as a trophy slung on his back and partly concealed by a laurel wreath, carelessly slung over the rifle barrel ...’ Compare this with the reality of the trenches in World War One.
What causes wars?

Let us not dwell further on the horrors of wars: clearly we must focus on how to stop them. That’s impossible, many people will tell you, humankind has always had wars, waging war is in our nature. But we must not be so hasty. A number of countries have abandoned war as a way of settling disputes. Some no longer have armies. Waging war is not envisaged as a possible political tool by, for instance, Sweden or Switzerland. Western European states used to be always in conflict, but now war is almost unthinkable for them. And I hope to convince you that the fact that wars have been frequent in the past does not mean they are inevitable.

If one wants to stop wars, one must go for their causes. No war is the same as any other war, and there is a long list of factors that have been seen as ‘causes’ of wars – religion, racism, revenge, resources, territory, poverty, human aggressiveness, ambitious leaders, militarism, and many others. Most of the wars waged by European powers in recent centuries have concerned the acquisition of territory or resources – recently, especially oil, but in the future fresh water could become a scarce resource seen as worth fighting over. The disputed resources may be far from concrete, and involve, for instance, opening up markets for manufactured goods or, as seems to have been the case with the war in Iraq, creating a sphere of influence in order to obtain resources in the future. United States policy for some years has been to establish bases round the world, and George Bush and his colleagues saw access to Gulf oil as especially important.

The outbreak of war may be influenced by leaders’ beliefs that their religion or system of governance is superior to others. This also has certainly played a part in the wars in which the United States under the George W. Bush administration has recently been involved: while the US administration thought their own brand of democracy should be installed everywhere, their enemies believed that American policies and the American way of life were evil. Again, revenge for real or imagined insults or slights may be carried over generations and used as a basis for war: often these insults are seen as racist or religious issues.

Some wars appear to have started because the leaders were insecure and felt they could unite the country behind them by evoking nationalism in the population: this appears to have been an issue when Argentina invaded the Falklands. Some would go further
and argue that we should put all the blame on the leaders or politicians: after all, it is usually they who take the decision to go to war. It is easy to feel that if only they had more sense, were less greedy and self-interested, they would settle disputes in a better way. Leaders are indeed important, as we shall see, but wars are more complicated than that.

Leaders are unlikely to initiate war unless they think they can win. They must take account of third parties who may supply or deny them the resources that the leaders perceive their country to need, and who may intervene, assisting or opposing them. To take a country into war is seldom an easy decision for a leader, and no leader is likely to take that course unless a number of factors are favourable – including the perception of military superiority and a population that is willing or can be persuaded or coerced to support the war. In a democracy at least, a declaration of war is likely to be valueless without the power and the will of the people to back it up. Those leaders who do not rely on force to maintain their positions must carry the population with them by propaganda or other means, for they cannot wage war unless they can muster an army willing to fight, and rely on the back-up necessary for conducting the war: reciprocally, the demands of the population could be a powerful influence on the leaders.

But my aim is not to list or attempt to classify the causes of war, but to emphasize their complexity. For example, when leaders exploit religious or racial differences in order to unite their followers behind them, as in the break-up of Yugoslavia, or when grudges that go back generations are re-emphasized to the same end, as in Northern Ireland and Cyprus, it may be very difficult to get at the causes that really matter. Too often one hears that World War One started because an arch-duke was assassinated, that World War Two was inevitable because Nazi Germany needed Lebensraum, or that the Japanese came in because they needed oil. It is always more complicated than that. Wars depend on a number of ‘causes’ coming together. Thus it has been suggested that the ‘causes’ of World War One involved misperception by political leaders, belligerence of the German High Command and the militaristic nature of their culture, the belief that Germany needed markets, competition between capitalist economies, the instability of the European political system induced by the growth of German power, and the perceived inferiority of the potential enemies. Additionally, each of these must
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itself have had a multitude of causes.

I suggested earlier that the way to abolish war was to negate its causes. But how can that be possible, given the multitude of causes? And the causes all have causes: one could never cope with everything. In addition, one must be cautious in generalising from past wars, because the nature of war is changing. Confrontations between massed armies have been rendered improbable because such armies are vulnerable to modern weapons: many recent wars have been of a very different nature, involving guerrillas or terrorists hidden among the people.

However, there is another route towards ending wars: we can focus on two matters that are necessary for nearly all wars. Before a leader can take a country to war, two things are essential: arms, and individuals willing to use them. It follows, therefore, that simultaneous efforts to dissuade politicians, to eliminate arms manufacture, and to reduce the willingness of individuals to go to war, could at least make war very much less probable. To explore that proposition, we need to explore further the nature of the wars we are talking about.

3 Aggressiveness and the diversity of wars

A common answer to the question of what causes wars is ‘Human Aggression’. It seems obvious, because that is what war is, people trying to hurt each other. However, it all depends on what you mean by aggression, and what sort of war you are talking about. All wars involve aggression, in the sense of acts directed towards destroying the enemy or his resources, but that does not necessarily mean that the combatants are motivated primarily by a desire to kill or destroy, that is, by aggressiveness. In tribal and gang wars it often does, though the aggressiveness may be the result of rituals, rhetoric, revenge, opportunism or drugs, or to a combination of these. However, even in tribal and gang wars generalizations are difficult. A study of gangs that resisted the oppression of Apartheid in South Africa showed that their motivations were diverse. While some individuals were motivated by their ideals, others wanted to be seen as ‘warrior heroes’, others sought identification with the group, and yet others were seeking a context to vent their pathological aggressiveness. No doubt, for most of those involved, motivations were mixed. In a sense, what
united them was the opportunity to use aggression as a tool to achieve their personal needs, but only for some was aggressiveness a primary motivating factor.

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<td>Aggressiveness: An individual’s propensity intentionally to harm another.</td>
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National acts of aggression are unlikely to depend on the aggressiveness of individuals.

A diversity of motivations is also found in wars between industrialised states, but the picture is quite different. Whereas in tribal and gang wars the combatants and perhaps their leaders are the only categories that matter, wars between industrial states involve complex societies, consisting of individuals playing many different roles. The politicians, the munitions workers, the medics and many others as well as the combatants are all part of the war machine. In World War Two it was usual and appropriate to speak of the ‘Home Front’.

In this context, it is helpful to think of war as an institution. Doing so involves using an arid model to describe reality, but it helps one understand how wars work. An institution can be thought of as a complex of roles, the incumbents of each role having certain rights and certain duties. In Britain, Parliament is an institution with many different roles: Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Members of Parliament, members of the public to name but a few. Each of these roles is associated with certain rights and certain duties. For instance, most Cabinet Ministers have a duty to run a government department – the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Defence, Home Office, and so on. And each Cabinet Minister has the right to vote in the Cabinet. Each Member of Parliament has a constituency, and has the duty to keep in touch with his constituents and the right and duty to vote in Parliamentary debates. Again, each member of the public has the right and the duty to vote in elections.
Institutions and roles

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In the same way, war can be seen as an institution with many constituent roles, each associated with particular rights and duties. In the first place, there are many combatant roles, soldier, sailor and airman; officer, non-commissioned officer and other ranks; infantry, artilleryman, pilot, navigator, gunner and so on. One duty common to all these roles in nearly all circumstances is to obey orders, and in many cases to give them. The roles are differentiated by the nature of the orders they are given. Some combatants have the duty to kill enemy soldiers. The rights of combatants are also varied, but most incumbents of a combatant role feel entitled to equipment adequate for the task they undertake, a certain level of pay, and so on. They also feel entitled to a measure of respect for the risks they run and the sacrifices they make in the common cause.

But the combatant roles are not the only ones in the institution of war. Equally essential are the munition workers who supply the weapons and other necessities for the combatants, and the transport workers who convey the weapons to the front. A modern army can consume vast quantities of munitions: an infantryman’s weapon may be capable of firing hundreds of rounds a minute so that, in action, all the ammunition he can carry can soon be used up. One must also not forget the medics who care for the wounded, the generals who instruct the combatants, the politicians who instruct the generals, and so on. And, as stressed in chapter 1, in World War Two virtually every citizen in the European countries involved became part of the war effort.

The point here is that every incumbent of every role in the institution of war does what he or she does in large measure because that is his or her duty. The gunners fire their shells towards the enemy positions because that is their duty, the navigator guides the pilot of
the bomber to the target because that is his duty, the infantry advance towards the enemy because that is their duty. And the same applies to the non-combatant roles. Munition workers keep the munition factories going, often at considerable sacrifice to themselves, because that is their duty. Merchant seamen face great dangers to bring cargoes to their destination because that is their duty. The Prime Minister guides the war because he sees that as his duty.

Duty can be blind – ‘Theirs but to do and die’ – but to be sustained it needs an objective. The morale that carries the combatant through the horrors of war often depends on a belief in abstractions – the honour of the regiment, loyalty to a buddy, freedom, religion and especially religious fundamentalism, human rights, revenge. Each of these can be seen as demanding aggression as a duty. In civil wars, a similar principle applies; there may be many reasons why individual guerrillas or partisans fight, but duty to an ideal integrates, justifies and motivates their actions. Aggression in war is generally to be seen as a tool, rather than as due to a primary motivation to harm or kill. Of course, combatants may be influenced also by fear, fatigue, ambition, desire for status, and many personal factors as well as duty. The duty imposed by the institution of war on the incumbents of its roles may be reinforced by propaganda and training. In World War Two the BBC played the national anthems of the allies every evening: a potent reminder of duty to King and Country for civilians and military alike. Recruiting posters appeal to manliness, patriotic duty, even to religion (‘soldiers of Christ’). Military training is such as to cause the potential combatant under training to bury his individual identity in that of the group. In battle, abstract duty to king and country may become insignificant and loyalty to colleagues becomes paramount. Loyalty to colleagues, especially potent in wartime, may lead to aggression to the enemy. Aggressiveness, the desire to hurt or kill, may play a part but, as a primary motivation, it plays a progressively smaller part along the continuum from gang and tribal wars, through the civil wars like that in Rwanda and the conflict resulting from the break-up of Yugoslavia, to major international wars. In World War Two aggressiveness may have played a part for some individuals in some circumstances, but very rarely was it a major issue for allied troops. Occasionally, combatants tried to kill their enemies simply because they were angry, terrified, or even excited, and aggressiveness took over. In Vietnam, where enemy and civilian were often difficult to distinguish, innocent villagers were slaughtered.
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at My Lai and on many other occasions, but the killing was not
condoned by those in command.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World War 2</th>
<th>Bosnia</th>
<th>Rwanda</th>
<th>Tribal conflicts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less</td>
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**Individual Aggressiveness**

In the present context, we must focus not only on the motivation of
combatants in battle or preparing for battle, but also on that of those
who join the forces. Many will have been in the Reserve, and already
familiar with military ways of thinking. Some will be new conscripts,
and yet others volunteers. The military is very effective at inculcating
ideas of duty and loyalty, and soon makes conscripts feel themselves
to be superior to those left behind in civvy street. In wartime, group
pressures become conspicuous. Uniforms are everywhere, and jeeps,
armoured cars and tanks are no longer confined to training areas.
Military aircraft are almost constantly overhead.

For volunteers, many motivations probably come into play. I have
often reflected on why I volunteered for aircrew. My father was a
veteran of World War One, and my elder brother was already in the
army: patriotism was a real though not a major part of family life. Yet
my father had seen the horrors of Gallipoli and the slaughter at Gaza
in World War One, and was certainly not a militarist. He did not want
me to volunteer, but he felt it his duty not to try to stop me. I cannot
say that duty to King and Country was a major issue for me, but it
provided a handy rationalisation. Many of those in my school but a
year or two older than me were already involved: I have a vivid visual
memory of a hand-written notice that appeared on the school notice
board: 'A.B.W. Illius, killed in action' with a date. This made me want
to join myself: of course, I assumed I would be one of the survivors.
If I am honest I must confess that I was not uninfluenced by
advertisements that appeared in the papers: Join the RAF and get a
pair of silver wings and fly above the clouds' or some such nonsense.
And acceptance at 17 meant entry into what was then seen as the most
glamorous of the three services. (This does not mean that, on
reflection, I feel the decision was wrong: in retrospect, the use of force
in World War Two to prevent evil was necessary. And further
occasions in which this is true, or in which force must be used to
ensure peace, are certainly possible, but the force must be under
Does this admittedly superficial understanding of the motivations of those who join and serve in the military help us to understand the nature of war? In particular, if duty is such a major issue in the behaviour of the incumbents of the many roles in the institution of war, including the leaders, does this provide a clue for ways to make war less likely? If we could somehow undermine the institution of war, would not people then lack a major incentive and justification for going to war? In democracies, politicians have immense power, but even they could not take their country to war in the face of strong public opposition. Institutions must be continually maintained and supported: they do not merely exist. So in the next three chapters I shall look at some of the factors that support the institution of war.

4

Everyday factors supporting the institution of war

War is not to be accepted as a necessary evil: what we need is a whole new attitude to war. The heroic acceptance of war illustrated by ‘An Airman’s Letter to his Mother’ (see chapter 5) now seems dated, but we must go much further and cease to recognise war as an acceptable way to settle disputes. One route to a new attitude lies in the recognition that there is a two-way relation between what is generally accepted in society and the assumptions of individuals: societal norms both influence and are influenced by how individuals think and behave. We can help to change attitudes to war by making slight adjustments to the way we speak and behave. Let us start with an example of a different sort.

Many who read this will have experienced a major change in conventions about the differences between what men should do and what women should do. Before World War Two, many people saw the proper place for a woman to be the home. During the war women took over some men's jobs, working as radar operators and lorry drivers in the army, and in many other jobs previously done by men. They were even allowed to ferry aircraft from factory to squadron – a big change from pre-war. Some went as couriers into Occupied France and fought with the Resistance. In civilian life also they took over men's jobs in farms, factories and offices. My own mother was out patrolling the streets as an Air Raid Warden, checking the blackout and giving help where needed in a raid.
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When the men came back to civvy street, many women resented being displaced and sent back to the housework. Of course the demand for greater gender equality had been there for a long time, but in the years after the war it was greatly helped by a change in general attitudes. It became improper not to recognise the change in the way one should talk and behave. Anyone who made a remark derogatory to women, or wrote 'he' when 'he or she' was meant, was regarded as a male chauvinist. Journals gave advice on how to avoid 'sexisms', like the he/she problem, for instance by writing in the plural.

Whether people say 'he' or 'she' seems a trivial matter, but disapproval of the use of 'he' for both sexes helped to promote recognition of greater sexual equality. In the same way, banishing 'warisms' can help make war less respectable. That will be no easy task because our everyday discourse is peppered with them. We talk about 'keeping your head down' (good advice in trench warfare), 'outflanking your rival' (a useful cavalry tactic), and 'digging in' (trench warfare again). It seems a trivial matter, no doubt, but eliminating warisms can help to make war seem less ordinary, less a part of normal life. Perhaps even worse are phrases like 'war on want': they may help motivate people to try to eliminate poverty, but there is a hidden cost, because the way in which we think is shaped by the language we use. Bush's totally illogical phrase 'war on terror' is particularly dangerous because it both encapsulates what Bush wanted to do (go to war) and indicates what people ought to do: many lives could have been saved had he asked why Bush’s America had become so much hated.

Another factor here is war kitsch. Shell cases used as umbrella stands, cigarette lighters shaped like pistols. Some such objects are war left-overs: indeed I confess to keeping in a drawer two table knives marked with the German swastika that I am ashamed to say I 'liberated' in 1945, but others are manufactured solely to cater to the perverted tastes of those who are trying to establish a link between the war and themselves. Perhaps by keeping the knives I also am guilty here.

A similar issue arises with children's toys. Construction toys for making warplanes, battleships or army vehicles seem to have a greater appeal than their civilian equivalents. I have become convinced that it is almost impossible to stop boys in our culture from using pieces of wood as pretend guns and playing 'bang bang you're dead' games: it
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seems to be part of their nature, and is much less prevalent in girls. But there is no need to make war toys available. Children enjoy making civilian aircraft and cruise liners, and war toys make them feel that war is ordinary.

When I was a child, in the period between the wars when war seemed very real, we played very sophisticated war games, using blank cartridge pistols (now banned as highly dangerous) and borrowing Graham’s father’s World War One revolver. We even had a trench and made charges against an imaginary enemy. We were encouraged by Graham’s father, who had lost a leg in 1917: I now believe our games were helping him come to terms with his disability.

Computer games can be vicious purveyors of violence. While some earlier research has suggested that on average they have little effect, the question is whether they increase the tendency to violence in susceptible individuals. Of that there seems little doubt.

Most, but not all, films and books about war focus on the victors, while the defeated are mere cardboard figures. The victors’ manly qualities of courage and endurance are emphasized, and a mythology is created that portrays war as glorious and exciting. This has been true for a long time, perhaps as long as books have been written. My own boyhood experience was with Victorian/Edwardian novelists such as Henty and Rider Haggard: violence and war played a major part in most. Modern Boy, a weekly boys’ paper, carried serials on Biggles (World War One pilot), Grey Shadow (World War One spy), Professor Flaznagel (Science Fiction) and others. I must be careful to say that not all films and books glorify war. All Quiet on the Western Front was an early and honourable exception, and some of the post-Vietnam war films emphasize war’s horrors. But this is a difficult line to tread. Even films that do not conceal the suffering that is an integral part of war can exert a fascination for some. Too much vivid realism can either encourage violence or numb the senses, too little makes war acceptable.

Schooling has not helped. History has been taught as a history of wars and conquests, of the world as composed of rival states led by warrior heroes. It then reflects the view of generals and politicians, not the combatants who suffered war’s agonies or the bereaved who mourned their loved ones.

One might think that veterans would broadcast their impressions of the horrors they have experienced. Some do, but the great majority do not. My father, who was involved in the campaigns against
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the Turks in World War One and experienced the Gallipoli campaign and the battles for Gaza, would tell me stories about the war, but never the bad bits. The nearest he got to it was a story about how a sniper had covered the path between his dugout and the latrines.

I went to St. John's College, Cambridge almost immediately after World War Two, where there were already about a dozen ex-service men. With one exception, who was obsessed by his role in the war, we never talked to each other about it. My war was relatively tame, so I had little to talk about. But some of the others were multiply decorated. My roommate had been a thrice-decorated night fighter pilot, but I did not know that or what he had done until I went to his funeral over sixty years later. Another had been a navigator in the Pathfinder force of Bomber Command, also multiply decorated, but he never talked about his experiences. Yet another ex-naval friend had no legs, but I never knew how he lost them. We treated it as rather a joke, and I remember calling out 'Come on, Peg-legs' as he tried to keep up with us on the way to the pub.

Why this reticence? There are many possible reasons. Perhaps it was a by-product of the psychological mechanisms that protect many veterans, when reflecting on the past, from the full horrors of their experiences. Failure of these mechanisms can lead to breakdown and what has been known successively as cowardice, shell-shock, LMF (lack of moral fibre), and post-traumatic stress disorder. Perhaps fear of being seen to be shooting a line sealed our lips: boasters were seen as beyond the pale. Perhaps we just wanted to leave the war behind us. But I believe the two most important reasons were survivor's guilt, which I think we all felt, and for some, guilt at having killed, which I was fortunate not to have to feel.

The issues I have discussed in these paragraphs suggest ways of changing the public attitude to war, to seeing it no longer as something acceptable though with regret, as not an inevitable part of human existence. As attitudes change, war will become less likely. War is not inevitable, there are better ways of settling disputes, even in the world of competing states that we have created. Of course, each of these issues is itself trivial, and they are not the only ones that help to maintain the institution of war, as we shall see in the next chapter.
Pervasive cultural factors that maintain the institution of war

As well as the everyday issues discussed in the last chapter, other aspects of the culture in which we live affect our attitudes to war. The cultural climate is influenced by a country’s history, but also both reflects and affects the attitudes of its citizens. For example, nation-states differ markedly in the frequency with which they have experienced war. Some have a long history of militarism, others, like Switzerland, have managed officially to stay out of it even while war raged all around. Sweden, formerly one of the most belligerent states in Europe, took a deliberate decision in favour of neutrality. In general, aggressive attitudes towards outsiders are related to the structure of the society, and to the incidence of violence within the society: amongst industrial societies, those with high rates of homicide tend to be frequently involved in war. Perhaps it boils down to the value placed on human life.

In Britain the culture is deeply entwined with the military. As Head of State, the Sovereign is Head of the Armed Forces. The Queen and other members of the Royal Family hold appointments and honorary ranks in the Armed Services both in the United Kingdom and in parts of the Commonwealth. Furthermore there is a long tradition of embarking on a military career. Prince William, like his father the Prince of Wales, learned to fly with the Royal Air Force and was then seconded to the Royal Navy. Prince Harry entered Sandhurst and served in the Household Cavalry’s Blues and Royals. To what extent is this royal involvement in the military of value to our society, and to what extent does it support and encourage militarism? Certainly our cultural values would be enhanced if the Royal Family placed more emphasis on their altruistic roles, as exemplified by Princess Anne who is president of the Save the Children Fund.

The importance of the cultural climate is demonstrated in the impact produced by ‘An Airman’s Letter to his Mother’ (see box). Published in The Times on 18th June 1940, when the UK’s situation seemed almost hopeless, and written by an airman expecting to be killed in the near future, it had an amazing impact. By the end of the year over 500,000 copies had been sold. King George VI wrote personally to the mother. Later a film based on the letter was made. Facsimiles are still obtainable. It could have been Government
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propaganda, but its authenticity seemed to be confirmed by a letter from the airman’s commanding officer.

Extracts from An Airman’s Letter to his Mother

‘Dearest Mother: Though I feel no premonition at all, events are moving rapidly and I have instructed that this letter be forwarded to you should I fail to return from one of the raids that we shall shortly be called upon to undertake. You must hope on for a month, but at the end of that time you must accept the fact that I have handed my task over to the extremely capable hands of my comrades of the Royal Air Force, as so many splendid fellows have already done.

Though it will be difficult for you, you will disappoint me if you do not at least try to accept the facts dispassionately, for I shall have done my duty to the utmost of my ability. No man can do more, and no one calling himself a man could do less …

Those who serve England must expect nothing from her; we debase ourselves if we regard our country as merely a place in which to eat and sleep …

History resounds with illustrious names who have given all; yet their sacrifice has resulted in the British Empire where there is a measure of peace, justice and freedom for all, and where a higher standard of civilization has evolved, and is still evolving, than anywhere else …

For all that can be said against it, I still maintain that this war is a very good thing: every individual is having the chance to give and dare all for his principle like the martyrs of old. However long the time may be, one thing can never be altered – I shall have lived and died an Englishman. Nothing else matters one jot nor can anything ever change it …

I have no fear of death; only a queer elation … I would have it no other way.

Your loving son’

I have given space to this letter because it illustrates how one’s attitude can change with the culture, and how the cultural climate can be changed by people’s attitudes. At the time, I took it at its face value and found it inspiring: it was probably a factor in my joining the RAF. As an aircraftsman, frustrated by delays in my pilot’s training, I adopted the cynical attitude of my peers. We had another version which started ‘Dear Mother, It’s a bugger. I’ll send you ten shillings but not this week …’. And now I share what is probably your view – the letter is over precious and the appeal to Empire is absurd.
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Not only the cultural climate of the nation as a whole, but also the existence of differences, especially differences in race, colour and creed within it or between it and other states, can affect the likelihood of violence when exploited by leaders to further their own ends. Conflict and war are facilitated when there is a clear distinction between 'us' and 'them', between the in-group and the out-group. In everyday life, inter-group rivalry exists even between groups picked at random, such as two football teams: one can say that the propensity to denigrate 'them' is part of human nature. The difference becomes more potent when exploited and emphasized by leaders to increase loyalty to their own group. Thus in Northern Ireland the differences, originally basically economic, came to be portrayed as religious, Protestant versus Catholic, and rivalries going back hundreds of years have been resurrected to intensify the conflict. Such internal violence can spread beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. The terrible civil war between Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda was facilitated by the former colonial masters having insisted on distinct identity cards for the two tribal entities. It has led to devastating violence also in the neighbouring states, especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Uganda, partly as the result of their interference, and partly due to the emigration of refugees.

Rwanda is an example of how, in the colonial era, the seeds of civil conflict were sown when new national boundaries were drawn without regard to cultural or tribal differences. In Yugoslavia, also, groups that saw themselves as culturally distinct were united—eventually with disastrous consequences. In such situations individuals who had been good neighbours and friends may forget their common humanity and, almost overnight, be at each other's throats.

Religious differences are especially potent as labels accentuating conflict. Many facets of religious belief probably arose as labels for cultural distinctiveness. The Hebrews saw their distinctiveness to lie in the fact that they worshipped a single god in contrast to the polytheistic tribes with which they were surrounded, and the strict dietary laws of Leviticus were a constant reminder that they were different from others. Religious labels are especially potent because they seem to legitimise war and portray it as a sacred endeavour. In the thirteenth century a Dominican preacher commented of those who died in the Crusades 'by this kind of death people make their way to Heaven who perhaps would never reach it by another road'.

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might well have been writing about the modern suicide bomber.

As noted already for Northern Ireland, religious and secular issues are often intertwined. The motivation for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon seem to have been primarily politically motivated – anger at the unconditional American support for Israel and the presence of western troops in Saudi Arabia, but in the longer term religious factors have played a major part in uniting the opponents to western interference in the Middle East.

The importance of government propaganda in exaggerating cultural and religious differences in time of war cannot be overestimated. On posters, in the newspapers, and in the radio and television the enemy are portrayed as evil, dangerous, even subhuman. In retrospect, it is remarkable how successful this was in World War Two. In spite of the facts that Germany and the Allies were both mainly Christian, and that many Germans had been naturalised several generations back in the United States, stories of German atrocities in Belgium in the first War, or that German pilots shot British pilots descending by parachute in the Battle of Britain in the second, were held with the same certainty as beliefs that the behaviour of British troops was always impeccable.

The difficulty is, of course, that many propaganda claims have a basis in fact, though a very small one. I could perhaps believe that some German troops did rape women in Belgium, and that the great majority of British troops behaved well. It is certainly true that allied aircrew showed enormous dedication and courage, though the implication that they were all so fearless in the face of death as the Airman’s letter implied is certainly dubious.

What is the answer to these pervasive cultural issues? First, as I have tried to illustrate with the ‘Airman’s Letter’, we must remember that cultures change and can be changed. My attitudes were affected by the cultural climate in which I found myself, and the cultural climate was changed by my attitude and those of thousands like me.

Second, to repeat the key words in the memorandum originated in 1955 at the height of the Cold War by the philosopher Bertrand Russell and physicist Albert Einstein, and signed by scientists from both sides of the Iron Curtain, ‘REMEMBER YOUR HUMANITY’. War becomes almost inconceivable if one sees the other side not as ‘them’ but as human beings just like oneself, feeling hungry and frightened, with hopes and fears, parents and partners and children. They are human beings whatever the propaganda says. In modern
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Categorisation and denigration of the enemy: a US First World War recruiting poster. (Imperial War Museum)
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war, when so much killing is done at a distance, this may not be so easy. The bomber pilot sees himself as doing his duty, and does not need to visualise the suffering he is causing on the ground below him. One bomber pilot, describing his role in attacking a city that had already been identified by flares dropped by the Pathfinder force, wrote: ‘Our own part in the fighting was quickly over … what we had to do was to search for the coloured lights dropped by our own people, aim our bombs at them and get away’. Only later this pilot came to realise the enormity of what he was doing. Ordered to lead a raid on a small German town, he knew that civilian ‘casualties were bound to be high because the roofs of cellars and shelters would collapse with the heat and a weight of rubble that they could not carry’. Later ‘I could see I was trapped … I was sure that what we were doing was not only wrong but stupid … (yet) I had to believe that the top brass thought this the best way to win the war.’ Many years after the war, I asked the widow of a distinguished fighter pilot what he had felt about the people he had killed. She replied, ‘Well, of course, it was not like that. His goal was to destroy enemy aircraft, not to kill people’. And I do not suppose that the German submarine commander who sank my brother’s troopship had any need to think about the human consequences of what he was doing.

In the longer term, we must strive for a world which is not built around the independence of nation states. A fine line must be drawn here: we certainly do not want the glorious diversity of local cultures to be submerged in a uniform Coca Cola world, but at the same time we must search for leaders concerned with global governance and not solely with their own countries’ interests.

Above all, hope must lie in education. Education can put a country’s traditions in perspective, and induce a properly cynical insight into propaganda. Nowadays the history taught in schools is getting to lay less emphasis on wars and conflict, and is more concerned with the lives of ordinary people. Many U.K. schools try to bring home the true nature of war by taking their pupils to the battlefields of Flanders and Normandy. There they can see the rows and rows of graves, the names of the ‘missing’, and imagine the horror of the trenches. I remember my own thirteen-year-old coming back from such a trip where they had been shown a mass grave of unknown soldiers and saying with horror and disbelief ‘Dad the grave was only this big, and there were over five hundred people buried there’.
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Unhappily, not all schools are so enlightened. The school in which I was educated still has a military display from serving soldiers, sometimes a parachute drop onto the playing field or a display of aerobatics, on speech days. It even has a ‘War Games Society’: apparently the children re-enact famous battles on sand trays or in the fields. How could they imply that war is a game? In another arena, encouragement by the UK government of single faith schools is hardly likely to encourage religious tolerance: for those who are religious it is important to be taught about their own culture and to worship in their own way, but it may be even more important that they should learn to respect the cultures of others.

6

The machinery of war

In the last chapter I discussed the importance of pervasive cultural factors in supporting the institution of war. A more tangible issue is what Dwight Eisenhower, formerly Allied Commander in Europe in World War Two and later President of the United States, called the ‘military-industrial complex’ and others have called the ‘military-industrial-scientific complex’. Eisenhower argued that this complex had a pernicious economic, political and spiritual influence on society and was self-perpetuating.

The complex can be seen as itself an institution, with three sub-institutions, each of which has many sub-sub institutions. Its nature differs greatly between countries: many countries have no arms industry but rely on those of other countries, but everywhere the means for obtaining weapons is one of the most important factors supporting, and also required by, the institution of war. In a world consisting of nation states, each state sees its primary duty to be protecting the security of its citizens. This is almost invariably seen as security from outside aggressors and, for that, arms and a military willing to use them are regarded as necessary. (It is becoming increasingly apparent that other aspects of security, such as the threat of the consequences of global warming, are at least an equally important aspect of security for many countries.)

Security in the old-fashioned sense demands a military, and in those countries that manufacture some or all of their own weapons, that means a sophisticated industry. And because each country needs weapons of high quality, that is weapons effective in killing people, the
industry needs scientists and engineers. The desire of the military for ever more efficient weapons, the scientists and engineers who develop new weapons and improve old ones, and the manufacturers who make them, form a powerful force that drives competition in military hardware between firms and between states. As an outstanding example, it was scientists who invented nuclear weapons and were thus in part responsible for the Cold War. Once the United States had them, the Soviet Union had to have them too, and each improvement by one side led to imitation and counter improvements by the other. Of course, the competition in the number and nature of the nuclear weapons possessed was insane. Their continued possession is equally so.

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THE WORLD’S TOP DEFENCE BUDGETS, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Budget</th>
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<td>USA</td>
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<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

The military-industrial-scientific complex is extraordinarily stable. In the first place, the three arms of the military-industrial-scientific complex reinforce each other. The military wants the best weapons, and scientists compete in producing them. Every improved weapon is seen as a necessary acquisition by the military, and industries compete in producing them. Each arms manufacturer tries to out-do the others. At a lower level the career ambitions of those involved contribute to the stability of each institution. The incumbents of each role in each sub-institution act as they do to achieve the life-goals to which they aspire. Those in industry and in the military, the scientists and engineers, seek recognition or promotion in their own ways, and in doing so, they support and strengthen the institution to which they belong. Furthermore, the whole system has strong governmental support. Indeed it becomes intertwined with government as high-level civil servants and retired military men are employed by arms companies.
Each sub-institution also has coercive rules or conventions that constrain incumbents to conform: these are most conspicuous in the military, where failure to carry out one’s duty can have dire consequences. Military regulations and conventions are such as to legitimise the institution, with loyalty and patriotism inculcated by propaganda and tradition. In industry, job security and the desire for promotion and higher pay ensures that individuals do their duty. And the hierarchical nature of the institutions ensures that it is in the interests of leaders at every level to maintain their own sub-institution.

While the military and the scientists, and perhaps even industrialists, can sometimes see their roles as at least partly morally justifiable as peace-keeping or defensive, it is difficult to see how this can be the case for the arms dealers. In those countries that manufacture weapons, a large part of the core expenses must be covered by arms sales to other countries. This is encouraged by the governments of the countries that manufacture the weapons, as it reduces the cost of the arms for them. That is bad enough, and the arms trade makes possible wars in other countries without arms industries that meet all their needs. Pakistan spends more on its military than on health and education together. In some countries, such as Israel, Colombia and Turkey, the purchase of arms has had a disastrous effect on human security. The United Kingdom’s declared policy is not to provide arms or military equipment to countries where they would provoke or prolong armed conflict or aggravate existing tensions, yet, since 1997, they are reported to have done so to more than 20 countries in that category.

In addition the armament industry conceals a network of operators who persuade the representatives of other countries that they need the weapons, bribe politicians or leaders to persuade their country to buy them, provide bogus legitimization for their export and spurious end-user certificates. Even worse are the arms traders who acquire weapons, often from pre-existing conflicts and sell them on without caring where they are going or to what use they will be put. So far as small arms are concerned, the world is already awash with weapons: arms traders make them available to terrorists, guerrillas and other non-state combatants. This is largely a result of the circulation of weapons after wars are over, but also of countries such as the United States that have few restrictions on the possession of weapons, in spite of their effect on the incidence of homicide amongst civilians. The arms dealers see what they are doing as purely financial transactions,
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and pay no regard to whether the weapons go to legitimate police forces or terrorists, or to the killing and suffering which may result, or even to the condition of what they sell. The New York Times (27/03/08) has published details of how the US Government, in arming Afghan forces to help in its war on the Taliban and Al Qaeda, awarded a contract to a private firm operating out of an unmarked office in Miami Beach. Much of the ammunition supplied was over 40 years old, in decomposing packaging, largely coming from stockpiles of the old Communist bloc, and proving to be sub-standard. Arms dealers excuse themselves by claiming that how the weapons are used is no business of theirs.

ARMS SALES

In 2001, the United Kingdom sold a $28 million military air traffic control system to Tanzania, although an adequate civilian control system, recommended by the World Bank, was available at one-eighth of the cost. At that time half of the population of Tanzania lacked regular access to clean drinking water.

A country that produces its own weapons soon finds that arms interests become a near-essential element in its economy. Arms industries can earn large sums from third world countries who believe that the possession of weapons brings them prestige. The armament industry also provides employment for large numbers of workers. And once the industries are there, it is surprisingly difficult to dismantle them. This has been well exemplified by the 2007 decision of the UK government to acquire a new generation of nuclear-armed submarines. The submarines are incredibly expensive, the military leaders would mostly prefer the money was spent in other ways, yet the Government has been unable to specify a situation in which they might be used, and merely argues that they must be continued for ‘political and industrial’ reasons. Presumably that implies a belief that the possession of nuclear weapons brings the country political prestige, which is clearly no longer the case. Indeed, the United Kingdom could earn enormous international respect if it were the first of the original nuclear states to abandon them. And the industrial reasons presumably refer not just to the number of individuals involved in the manufacture and maintenance of the submarine fleet, but also to preservation of the skills necessary for the manufacture of
submarines, missiles and warheads, an argument that quickly becomes circular.

Interestingly, there are economic arguments against arms sales. It is more productive to invest in civilian than in military research and development. Countries that export a lot of arms have had lower growth rates in civilian exports, and money spent on military hardware cannot be spent on raising the standard of living of the people. The greater the military spending as a proportion of the Gross National Product, the poorer the economic performance in advanced capitalist countries. In the decades following World War Two, Germany and Japan, with minimal military spending, showed markedly better economic performance than the United Kingdom or the United States. It would be in everybody's interest if arms sales were reduced, but one country cannot opt out of the competition without disadvantaging itself relative to others. Yet the money could be better used for the health, education and well-being of the civilian population.

We have seen that the military-industrial-scientific complex is self-perpetuating. Turning the manufacture of swords into that of ploughshares is going to be a matter of extraordinary difficulty. But there is hope. Efforts are being made to help Russian weapons scientists to use their skills towards non-military ends. In the United Kingdom, non-governmental organisations perform valiant work in discrediting the arms trade, but economic and conservative forces make the going tough. This complex is both fed by and feeds the institution of war. If we can undermine the institution of war, the military-industrial-scientific complex must then wither.

7

Morality and legality

Two issues relevant to whether an individual, or indeed a country, should go to war are whether it would be morally right to do so, and whether the war would be in accord with international law.

The Morality of War

Though we condemn all killing in peacetime, those who kill enemies in war are praised and rewarded. To understand how this can be, it is necessary to consider briefly the nature of morality. Nobody knows for certain how moral codes came to be, but what follows represents a
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sketch of what I believe to be the case.

Early humans lived in small groups that competed with each other for food, space, sexual partners and other resources. Both between groups and within groups the resources available were inadequate fully to satisfy people’s needs. As a result, the groups competed against each other and the individuals within each group competed against the other individuals in that group. But the groups in which the individuals competed with each other less viciously and helped each other more tended to be more successful in competition with other groups. Thus within the groups the individuals had both to compete with each other and to cooperate with each other, and the balance was inevitably a delicate one. Individuals who were too cooperative would be done down by selfishly assertive peers, while groups composed of individuals who seldom cooperated would be out-competed by groups in which individuals did help each other. Over time moral rules were elaborated that resulted in the maintenance of a balance between cooperation and competition amongst the members of each group. But cooperation with out-group members would have been counter-productive, and assertive competition against them could be unconstrained. In other words, individuals must limit their assertiveness where other members of their group are concerned, but not to members of other groups.

If this is anywhere near the truth (and there is considerably more evidence for it than I have given here), it explains why we find it easier to be kind to our friends and to people in our own group than to strangers. Early human groups were small and everyone would have known everyone else. But now that we live in much larger groups we find it easier to be kind to those whom we know than to strangers, and also rely on resemblance in physical characteristics or in behaviour to differentiate between those in our own group and outsiders. Beyond that, we use accepted customs, styles of dressing, flags and other symbols to demonstrate our group membership. I have already noted that it is probable that the strict dietary laws of the Hebrews served to remind each individual of the distinctiveness of his own group from others.

In wartime, propaganda is used to exaggerate the difference between friends and the enemy. The enemy is denigrated by labels such as ‘Huns’, ‘Wops’ or ‘Goons’, and portrayed as evil and dangerous, thereby marking the difference between them and us, between those whom one should kill and those whom one should not.
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Readiness to distinguish between ‘us’ and ‘them’ is, of course, a fundamental characteristic of our behaviour. It plays a part in antipathy towards anyone who is different, from team games to racism. Much of our morality is based on the distinction, and war is justified because ‘they’ are not ‘us’. But because, in large groups and complex modern societies, ‘us’ no longer refers simply to those who seem familiar, the distinction has come to vary with the context. For instance, the French were seen as part of ‘us’ in the World Wars, but as ‘them’ if we are discussing the edibility of frogs’ legs or snails. And in wartime the differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are reinforced by propaganda exaggerating differences, the enemy being represented as evil and subhuman. It is terrible to think that people one considered as friends can be turned into enemies by propaganda, yet this is exactly what happened in the break-up of Yugoslavia. The remedy must lie in exposing the superficiality of the propaganda, and recognising that all people everywhere are members of the human race, and thus extending the boundaries of ‘us’ world wide. Interestingly, there have been times when it has been seen as wrong even to kill in battle. At the beginning of the last millennium, the Church demanded penances for having killed and even for having participated in a battle. After the Battle of Hastings, the Norman Council of Westminster imposed penances on those of William’s soldiers who had killed an enemy, wounded an enemy or participated in the battle. Even the archers who fought at long range and did not know if they had hit anyone had to perform penance for three successive Lents. Perhaps we should learn from the Normans.

Legal issues

International law is concerned both with the initiation of war and its conduct. The Charter of the United Nations stipulates that states should settle international disputes by peaceful means and refrain from the threat and use of force. Only the Security Council is allowed to use force, and then only to maintain peace. Individual states are allowed to defend themselves if attacked, but only until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to restore peace.

Sadly, the international laws relating to the initiation of war are not always observed. States have attacked other states without the agreement of the United Nations. The US/UK invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the UK’s declaration of war against Argentina, were examples, and the aerial bombardment of Kosovo is still
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controversial. Unfortunately, the UN, designed for the post World War Two world, needs an up-dated charter with stronger powers. There is a strong case for abolishing the power of veto on Security Council decisions held by some major powers, and for the UN to have the means to enforce its decisions. The problem is that, of course, those states that have the power of veto will veto any attempt to remove it. At the moment the UN is the best we have and must be respected.

Because war is abhorrent, laws have been drafted in attempts to reduce its horror. For instance, Hindu law specified the hours of the day at which an attack is permitted, prohibited attack on unarmed civilians and on persons working in the fields, and so on. In 1139, the second Lateran Council ruled that the crossbow and siege engine were too wicked to be used in warfare according to Christian teaching. International agreements prohibiting the use of expanding bullets have been in place since the nineteenth century, and over time have been extended to cover the treatment of prisoners-of-war, the protection of civilians, the use of disproportionate force, the use of chemical and biological weapons, and so on. By the Nuremberg Principles, an individual who commits a war crime or a crime against humanity, even though under orders from a superior, is responsible and should receive a fair trial.

An important study by the International Red Cross found consensus amongst members of many countries in acknowledging International Humanitarian Law, which concerns such issues as the treatment of prisoners, the status of civilians, and so on, but not in their application. Group pressure, esteem of comrades, the defence of collective reputation, and the desire to contribute to the success of the group lessened individual responsibility within the collective responsibility of the group. Individuals who had either perpetrated or suffered from acts of violence were found to be more ready to commit them themselves. Violations were excused by appeal to orders received from superiors, and by reference to comparable actions by the enemy. Perpetrators often saw themselves, their group or their ancestors as victims, allowing them to act reciprocally.

Of special importance is the legal position of nuclear weapons. In Hiroshima, as I noted earlier, 140,000 died from the explosion of a single bomb, most almost immediately, but others over the following days and months. (Modern nuclear weapons are many times more powerful.) The great majority of those who died were civilians. The
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bomb caused horrendous injuries, and many more died of radiation sickness years after the bomb was dropped. As a result of millions of signatures collected from all over the world, the General Assembly of the United Nations referred the question of the legality of nuclear weapons to the International Court of Justice. The Court was unanimous in deciding that nuclear weapons offend so many principles of International Law that they should be abolished. Unfortunately, however, a small loophole was left in that the Judges, with the exception of Judge Weeramantry, refused to express an opinion as to whether it was allowable to use nuclear weapons in an extreme situation where the survival of the state was at stake. Given the indiscriminate killing and disproportionate damage caused by a nuclear weapon, this failure on the part of the majority of the judges is highly regrettable: it can be seen as a product of the division of the world into sovereign states resulting in priority being given to the state over its inhabitants.

Although laws concerned with the conduct of war are generally universally accepted, crimes may be committed without even the excuse that they were perpetrated in the heat of conflict, as became apparent from the use of torture in the Second Iraq War. This was sanctioned by the relevant officials in the US administration, apparently on the all-too-easy assumption that in war the end justifies the means. It remains to be seen whether they will go unpunished.

8
What can I do?

A human being is part of the whole called by us universe, a part limited in time and space. We experience ourselves, our thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest. A kind of optical delusion of consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from the prison by widening the circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. The true value of a human being is determined by the measure and sense in which they have obtained liberation from the self. We shall require a substantially new method of thinking if mankind is to survive.

Albert Einstein, 1954
In the first chapter I illustrated the personal suffering that war causes. We must keep that always in mind: you cannot have a war without people suffering. And it does not matter whether the suffering is on one’s own side or the other. We are all human.

War is illegal, except in the special circumstances where it has been authorised by the Security Council (Chapter 7). Almost inevitably, war involves infringements of International Humanitarian Law. Those who initiate war can be held to account, and those actively involved can be prosecuted for breaches of the Geneva conventions.

War is immoral by even the most basic criteria. It involves doing to others what one would not have done to oneself. It cannot be confined to combatants: of those killed in war in the last half century, over 80% have been civilians.

War is liable to lead to the use of the ultimate weapon, the nuclear bomb.

War kills.

War leads to destruction of the environment, to the displacement of populations, and often to poverty, disease and starvation.

War is a gross misuse of resources. In round figures the United States spends around $500 billion, and the United Kingdom around $50 billion a year on defence. Figures like these are incomprehensible, but the fact that rich countries spend up to 25 times as much on defence as they do on overseas aid perhaps brings it home.

War disrupts all forms of human security, trade and education, and makes sustainable development impossible.

War can never be a satisfactory or acceptable way of settling disputes. Modern war imposes injury on both winners and losers, and no one gains.

**The time to stop the next war is now**

The trend is in our favour. The popular response to impending war changed dramatically during the last century. In 1914, news of the declaration of war was greeted by cheering crowds, patriotism and nationalism were the dominant emotions. In 1939 it was quite different. Premonition of a repetition of the horrors of 1914-1918 was in nearly every heart. My mother was ill at the time and we listened to the declaration of war in silence in her bedroom. It was no surprise when the air raid sirens sounded a few minutes later, though it proved to be a false alarm. When the second Iraq war was impending, it is probable that the majority of the UK population were against it, and vast demonstrations took place in London and many other cities and in other countries. After the terrible costs in lives, happiness and
security in Iraq and Afghanistan, and their consequences all over the world, it is extremely doubtful if any sane politician could ever lead the UK into war again. But we must make sure. And the self-interested support for one country or party within a country by a major power can foster war while the major power stays on the sidelines.

I should be cautious here – there are circumstances in which it is conceivable that the use of force, sanctioned by the United Nations, is the only option. It would have been right to send in troops to stop the genocide in Rwanda, but at what point the infringement of human rights, or the killing and displacement of civilians, justifies intervention by a third party is likely always to be controversial.

Leaving that issue aside, what can be done to prevent war? In chapter 2 I suggested that politicians would not enter war without arms and people willing to use them. We have seen that with the latter we must include all the ancillary services that form part of the institution of war. So far, I have said too little about politicians. How far they are likely to consider the moral and legal aspects of any decision they make is an open issue. The decision to go to war depends primarily on how they, or their advisers, interpret the situation when accurate interpretation is almost impossible. The politicians decide whether the goals would be worth the probable costs. That decision must be influenced by perception of the possibility of victory, which in turn depends on resources (size of forces, weapons, information systems) and the support from party, military and public, as well as unreliable information on the intentions and capabilities of the enemy. Domestic issues may be important, and the politicians’ own careers may be at stake. A decision to go to war will not be taken lightly, yet may be taken when leader and advisers are exhausted by long discussion. And politicians have a way of being convinced that their own view is the right one.

Politicians are not demigods, but fallible human beings who are open to suggestion or dissuasion. They can be voted out, and even tyrants can be overthrown.

This is not saying that politicians are stupid, but they may not be in possession of all the facts. Here non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have an important role to play. They may have access to information not available to the decision makers or, with their different background, they may be able to interpret it differently. The Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs shared the 1995
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Nobel Peace Prize with its moving spirit, Sir Joseph Rotblat, for facilitating many of the Treaties that restrained either side from using nuclear weapons during the Cold War era. The Pugwash organisation has also been responsible for promoting peace in a number of conflict areas by acting as a non-biased intermediary. To be effective in this way they must avoid loose statements and maintain a reputation for absolute integrity.

NGO’s also have an important role in influencing the popular support that politicians need. In a democracy, if leaders are to have the will to lead their people to war and to sustain them in battle, they must have the support of the people. The Soviet Union collapsed in part because it lost the support of the people – crucially when the invasion of Afghanistan failed to produce quick results, the people saw that the war was unnecessary and peripheral to their security. As another example, in their war with the Algerian liberation forces the French were militarily successful but lost the popular support necessary to keep Algeria part of France. And the United States lost the will to fight in Vietnam as the war lost its acceptability to the people.

By presenting the case against war or nuclear weapons in a language that all can understand, NGOs can mobilise public opinion. Some, like the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, focus primarily on a section of society which has relevant expertise or experience: others, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and the Movement for the Abolition of War, have a more general appeal. Politicians can be influenced by popular opinion. Leaders are not likely to go to war unless they think they can take the country with them. But public opinion must be overt before the decision to go to war is taken. Part of the tragedy of the Second Iraq war was that the real demonstration of public opinion came too late. Here NGOs can play a crucial part.

But you do not have to be part of an NGO to play a part in reducing the probability of war. As we have seen, the institution of war is supported in part by everyday factors, by the way individuals behave, and the language they use in their ordinary lives. These in turn can influence the cultural climate, the norms and accepted values, and in turn can undermine the institution of war. Individuals can influence politicians in public demonstrations or by writing letters to their members of parliament, and encouraging others to do likewise. Politicians do not read all the letters they get, but they do
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count them. Thousands of individuals speaking with the same voice and taking the trouble to stick a stamp on an envelope means something.

In these ways the probability of war can be reduced and the cultural climate changed. If the demand for weapons is reduced, the military-industrial-scientific complex will die of starvation. Politicians’ attempts to motivate the population for war, to accept the suffering that will inevitably be involved, by appealing to loyalties – religious, patriotic, revenge, idealistic, and so on – will fall on deaf ears. But in the long term there is nothing more important than education. In 1974, UNESCO recommended that member states should strengthen education for international understanding and cooperation, for the establishment of social justice and the eradication of the prejudices and misconceptions that hinder these aims. Unhappily, Finland was virtually the only country that took these obligations seriously. The time has come, indeed has passed, when we must return to these goals. And not just in schools: education for all, and especially mothers so that they in turn pass on the message. The UNESCO recommendation could more easily take root in a globalised world where local cultures can flourish in mutual understanding, and the integrity of sovereign states is seen as less important. We must move beyond a world ruled by threat and force to one ruled by law and mutual understanding.

Conclusion

This booklet started with the prediction that war would become an unacceptable way of settling disputes. It has discussed ways in which the fulfilment of that prediction can be accelerated. The belief that war can never be abolished is one of the reasons why war is still with us, but I hope that the existence of ways to accelerate the end of war has convinced you that it can be done. When people recognise the futility of war, it will cease to be seen as a sensible way to settle disputes. But the abolition of war needs action. There are too many people who are against war but do nothing about it. Of course, everybody cannot do everything, but everyone can do something.
The Russell-Einstein Manifesto
Issued in London, 9 July 1955

There lies before us, if we choose, continual progress in happiness, knowledge, and wisdom. Shall we, instead, choose death, because we cannot forget our quarrels? We appeal as human beings to human beings: remember your humanity, and forget the rest. If you can do so, the way lies open to a new Paradise; if you cannot, there lies before you the risk of universal death.
Further Reading


‘War must cease to be an admissible human institution’ Prof. Sir Joseph Rotblat F.R.S., Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, (1908-2005)
Some Peace Organisations

Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation  
www.spokesmanbooks.com

Buddhist Peace Fellowship  
www.bpf.org

Campaign against the Arms Trade  
http://www.caat.org.uk

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament  
http://www.cnduk.org/

Carter Center Conflict Resolution Program  
http://www.cartercenter.org/peace/conflict_resolution/index.html

International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War  
http://www.ippnw.org/

Movement for the Abolition of War  
http://www.abolishwar.org.uk/home.shtml

Oxford Research Group  
http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk

Pax Christi  
http://www.paxchristi.net/international/eng/index.php

PeaceJam  
http://www.peacejam.org

Ploughshares  
http://www.ploughshares.org/

Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs  
http://www.pugwash.org/

Stop the War Coalition  
http://www.stopwar.org.uk/
Robert A. Hinde was a Coastal Command Pilot, flying Catalinas and Sunderlands, in World War Two. After the war he worked as a biologist/psychologist at Cambridge University. He was appointed a Royal Society Research Professor in 1963, and was Master of St. John’s College, Cambridge from 1989 to 1994. He is Deputy Chair (recently Chair) of the British Pugwash Group, Patron of the Movement for the Abolition of War, and Patron of the Weapons of Mass Destruction Awareness Programme.

The British Pugwash Group is an affiliate of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, recipient of the 1995 Nobel Peace Prize. Production and printing of this booklet was supported by an anonymous donation. Additional copies are available (price £5.00 each including postage and packing in the UK, £6.00 abroad) from the British Pugwash Group, Flat A, Museum Mansions, 63A Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BJ. Cheques should be made payable to the 'British Pugwash Trust’. The booklet is also available online (http://www.pugwash.org).