Does War Have a Future?

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"War is the darkest spot on humanity's history."
"Struggle is the essence of life."

P.R. Sarkar[2]

Given that the 20th century was one of the bloodiest ever, and that scores of low grade wars are currently maiming and killing countless thousands, asking if war has a future may appear ludicrous.[3]

But we must raise that question. We must challenge the notion that war is here to stay as if it were an evolutionary natural. Not only do we need to devise new methods to resolve international conflicts, we need to challenge the entire notion of armed conflict, symmetrical and asymmetrical.

Doing so requires a multi-level approach. The traditional view of ending war begins with the two poles - the individual and the state. This is often described as: Peace must begin in the hearts and minds of men and women or that states need a super-ordinate authority (a world governance structure or at least global treaties) to ensure that war is not the preferred (or among the possible) method of conflict resolution.

But clearly more is needed beyond the individual inner and the collective outer pole. First of all, we need to move beyond this litany to the systemic level.

Transforming the system of war

Ending war means essentially transforming the nature of the arms export industry. One option is to make the export of killing products illegal, as with dangerous drugs. This would have great benefits for the whole world, even if it reduces the profits of the leading arm manufacturing nations - the USA, China, Britain, Israel and other rogue armament nations.[4] However, given current economic dependence on arms exports, as with tobacco exports, nations should be given a decade to overcome their addiction to easy arms money. Of course, there would still be illegal arms smuggling but at least the large states would not be condoning it.

However, this measure alone would not work unless there were security guarantees for those states afraid of aggression. That is, states import arms because they are afraid of enemies within the nation and without (and use this fear to hold on to and extend their power). As well, the military elite in all states becomes accustomed to living in a shopping plaza with endless goodies. Global disincentives would be needed as well. A world governance structure that could provide security - through a type of global security insurance scheme or through a global police system - may help to reduce the demand aspect of global weapons. The supply option would require big states to end their addiction to easy money. The billions saved could be spent on forming peace

activist forces trained in mediation and peace-keeping skills.

The military-industrial complex is not the only problem. Other dimensions of the system need transformation including education   The educational system helps to create not war but certainly the conditions for war. Moments of national trauma become part of identity creation. Whether it is the defeat of Serbs in Kosovo; the Star Spangled Banner and the victory of the American colonists over the British; Anzacs and Gallipoli; Partition in South Asia, or even the murder of Hussain at Karbala for the Shias -war defines who we are. Instead we need peace education that celebrates ahimsa, that celebrates moments of transcendence, that teaches us how to mediate conflict and that celebrates the challenges humanity has faced (not any particular tribe within it). Doing so means rewriting the textbooks in nearly every nation and moving away from the Great Man or Dynastic theory of macrohistory.[5] Creating alternative futures requires not only requires a rethinking and reacting of the present but recovering our lost and alternative histories.

Transformation must occur in other parts of our life as well, most urgently, in the global economy in creating a "glocalization" where poverty is ended, and wealth circulates with more justice than at present.

Transforming the worldviews of war

Underneath this system of war is a defining worldview. This worldview has a variety of pillars. The central pillar is patriarchy or dominator oriented politics. Truth, nature and reality are defined in dominator terms and not in partnership terms. Second, evolution is seen as survival of the fittest and thus war is seen as just in terms - since the fittest have survived - instead of an evolutionary failure.[6] Third, identity is defined in terms of geo-sentiment, race or linguistic politics and not in more universal terms. Religion is seen as exclusionary, the chosen few, or those with special access to the transcendental.

Thus, challenging the idea of war as 'natural', means challenging these three pillars. Firstly,

by asserting that cooperation can lead to mutual learning. Second, evolution is not merely about survival of the fittest, but involves three additional aspects. These are (a) an attraction to the sublime, even spiritual, (b) that evolution is not random but can be guided through human reason and action and (c) evolution can become ethical. Third that we can develop a planetary Gaian consciousness. However, in our quest for universal peace, this does not mean that we are forgetful of injustices. Movements to counter linguistic, religious, cultural suppression and oppression are necessary to create a better society. However, these movements, even as they claim authenticity and essentialize gender, language and economy need over time to move out of their identity polities and become part of a global consciousness. Otherwise, they will reinforce the traumas of history as they focus on the "enemy" and not on the desired future.

Transforming the field

This worldview transformation is a change in the broader field of what it means to be human. Field change means moving outside the two main symbols we use to metaphor war. This is the hawk and the dove. Can there be a third space, another species that can represent a world without war but with justice? Coming up with a new metaphor will not solve the issue, but our failure to do so highlights our conceptual problems. Perhaps looking for stories in our evolutionary past - up and down the food chain - is not the way to go. Creating a post-war world may mean looking to the future for ways out.

Prior to the war on Saddam Hussain and Iraq, Robert Muller[7] commented that he was not depressed at what might happen, since millions were in fact waging peace. Yes, it was unlikely that Bush and Hussain were capable of a peaceful and just resolution but the stupidity of their worldviews had motivated millions to express their frustrations, and to call for, indeed, meme the possibility of a new world.

Another world is possible! We need a field that begins the process of moving beyond the world of hawks and doves. And a world that recognizes that multiple traditions are required to

transform war and peace. Within our histories are resources of peace, whether Islamic, Vedic, Christian, Buddhist or secular.

But first we must challenge the litany of war. Unless it is contested, we will assume that because it is, it always will be. The next task is to challenge the systems that support war: the military-industrial export complex; national education systems; our historical identities. We also need to challenge the worldviews that both support and are perpetuated by war: patriarchy and survival of the fittest.

Ultimately, we need a new story of what it means to be human.

Alternative Futures

What then are the alternative futures of war?

First, **war now and war forever**. We cannot transform war because it is at the root of who we are as humans - violent and greedy for land, territory and ideas. History is an example of this. Whether it is capitalists ruling, or prime ministers and priests or warriors and kings, or workers revolting, it is war that results and is used by each social class to maintain power. Of course, other forms of power are used first - ideas, wealth, definitional power - but violent power remains ever ready to be used to maintain authority. The nature of war changes depending on which social class is in power (worker, warrior, intellectual or capitalist) and also changes depending on the nature of technology. Most recently it has been air power with real time surveillance that have changed the nature of war. Nano-technology will enable humanity's war capacity and behavior to become both more destructive and more precisely targeted. The capacity of one leader to hold a population hostage - as with Milosevic, Pol Pot, Saddam Hussain - is likely to decrease dramatically. However, at the same time, the capacity of any person to hold a nation hostage will increase.

Second, **war disappears**. It does so because of changes in the system of war (the military-industrial complex), changes in the worldview that supports war (patriarchy, capitalism, identity politics) and changes in the nature of what it means to be human - an evolutionary

movement toward full humanness. This is the idealistic view, however we have had periods in history without war. Moreover, humans have begun to imagine a world without war. To create the new means being able to first conceptualize it. Next is finding the means to make the impossible, possible. The last stage is merely one of details. The details in this case are about creating a culture of meditation and of conflict resolution. This means making it central in schooling at one level, and beginning to create the process of global-local governance, where war becomes impossible.

Third, **war becomes ritualized or contained**. Generally, in this future, we move to a peace culture, but periods of war remain. However, these are rapidly contained or conducted with the authority of a global governance system. War remains an option, even if a less desirable one. As well, war is used by those challenging the world governance system, and by areas not totally integrated by the world system. War could even become ritualized, either conducted through virtual means or via sports. In such ways, aggression is contained and channelled.

Fourth, **war itself changes**. Genetic engineering and other invasive technological procedures search for the "aggression gene" with the hope of eliminating the behavior that leads to war. Deeper efforts to transform systems of war are not attempted, as nations are unwilling to let go of their war-industry profits. War and weapons of mass destruction remain in the hands of the most powerful nations, while war and violence are seen as issues that can be fixed through the right technologies. The removal of war is used as a way to maintain the status-quo. In this future, the danger and horror of war become governmentalized, used to maintain power. Some states reserve the right to manipulate the "aggression" gene to make even fiercer fighters.

Which of these futures is most likely? Historical experience suggests the first scenario - war now and forever (perpetual war). The most compelling future and the one informed by new readings of evolutionary theory, suggests that "war disappears" is possible. However, since new

ideas are often appropriated by structures of power, we could expect the containment of war or the geneticization of war.

What should we do? Remain idealistic about creating a future without war while we act in ways to create the second scenario: peace within, mediation and conflict resolution in our institutions, and participate in the wider struggle against systems"

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Notes
1 Professor, Tamkang University, Taiwan; Sunshine Coast University, Australia. www.metafuture.org. Associate editor, New Renaissance. www.ru.org. I wish to thank Patricia Kelly of the University of the Sunshine Coast for her considerable editorial assistance in preparing this article.
2 For more on Sarkar, see Sohail Inayatullah, Understanding Sarkar: The Indian Episteme, Macrohistory and Transformative Knowledge. Leiden, Brill, 2002.
3 For more details, see the works of Johan Galtung. He remains the inspiration of this essay. See: www.transcend.org.
4 Certainly realizing this will not be easy. It would require international treaties that could be verified. But why might this occur? As with other regulations, pressure from lobby groups, social movements and nongovernmental organizations might lead to new arms sales regulations. In addition, a global regime is possible if a player wants advantage, that is, because of too many arms dealers, a particular player, like the USA intervenes to regulate the market so that it can enhance its own trading at the expense of others. It also may be realized in a step by step fashion, that is, certain arms are banned - land mines - as a first step, and then slowly other arms are banned. Of course, ultimately, only a true world government or strict governance system could control arms trading. For more on

the arms trade, see: Gideon Barrows, The No-Nonsense Guide to the Arms Trade, London, Verso and New Internationalist Publications, 2002.
5 The work of Riane Eisler is exemplary - www.partnershipway.org
6 David Loye's alternative reading of Darwin is crucial here. See David Loye, Darwin's Lost Theory of Love. Iuniverse, 2000
7 http://www.westbynorthwest.org/artman/publish/printer_340.shtml. Article by Lynee Twist, March 14, 2003.