

The War to End War 100 Years On: An Evaluation and Reorientation of our Resistance to War

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Theme: [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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British author and social commentator H.G. Wells may have coined the expression that originally popularized World War I as [The War that Will End War](#), as his book, based on articles written during that vast military conflict, was titled. In any case, in one version or another, the expression was one of the most common catchphrases of the Great War of 1914-1918 and has survived as an expression, often used with a grimace of sarcasm, ever since.

As we commemorate the passing of the 100th anniversary of the armistice ending ‘the war to end war’, one can only marvel at how wrong humans can be sometimes. Not content with the violence inflicted during World War I, humans used the twentieth century to systematically decimate human and other life as violence and war raged across the planet with an increasingly massive and sophisticated armory. In fact, by mid-century, in a tribute to their technological ingenuity and psychological dysfunctionality, humans had invented a weapon that could destroy life on Earth.

And by the beginning of the 21st century, humans were living in the era of perpetual war against life – see

[‘Humanity has wiped out 60% of animal populations since 1970, report finds’](#) and [‘Living Planet Report 2018: Aiming Higher’](#) – with war also the largest contributor to the climate catastrophe: ‘Not only is the Pentagon the single largest industrial consumer of fossil fuels, but fighter jets, destroyers, tanks and other weapons systems emit highly toxic, carbon-intensive emissions, not to mention the greenhouse gases that are released from the detonation of bombs. How quickly the world forgot the toxic legacy of Saddam Hussein’s oil fires!’ See [‘War and Climate Change: Time to Connect the Dots’](#).

So advanced is our war against life that human extinction is now imminent. See [‘Human Extinction by 2026? A Last Ditch Strategy to Fight for Human Survival’](#).

Resisting war historically

Of course, the failure to end war has not been the outcome of lack of effort. And while there have been many efforts focused on ending a particular war, efforts directed at ending a particular aspect of war (such as the use of a type of weapon), and efforts aimed at preventing a type of war (such as ‘aggressive war’ or nuclear war), there have also been ongoing efforts to achieve ‘the holy grail’: to end war itself.

These attempts have included ongoing grassroots mobilization by anti-war organizations spawned by World War I (such as the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom

founded in 1915 and War Resisters' International founded in 1921) and many equivalents since that time, official attempts to outlaw war such as the Kellogg-Briand Pact that outlawed war in 1928 but has been ignored ever since – see League of Nations 'Treaty Series' vol. XCIV, 1929, p. 63 – and institutional efforts to prevent it, particularly by establishment of the League of Nations in 1920 and its successor the United Nations in 1945, both also readily ignored or manipulated.

Separately from the above, however, there has been a long history of nonviolent activism to end wars and this has been conducted by individuals and groups all over the world. Undoubtedly the most effective anti-war movement in history was that undertaken in response to the US war against Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. Inspired and supported by the nonviolent resistance of the civilian population, and building on the long history of resistance to war within the military – see, for example, [The Soldiers' Strikes of 1919](#) – there was widespread nonviolent resistance undertaken by US troops and conscripts to end the US war against Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos from 1968 until it ended in 1975.

If you like, you can read detailed descriptions of the systematic and ongoing resistance (nonviolent and otherwise) within the US military, in many forms, which progressively incapacitated the US Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force during the last years of the war, forcing the US out of Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. See [Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War](#) and [Self-Destruction: The Disintegration and Decay of the United States Army during the Vietnam Era](#) with a summary of the first book in '[Antiwar Resistance Within the Military During the Vietnam War](#)' and a review of it in '[The soldiers' revolt in Vietnam: Rebellion in the ranks](#)'.

For a documentary account of the conscientious objection by more than half a million US conscripts to military service in South East Asia during this period, which overwhelmed the legal system making prosecutions beyond a token few impossible and, combined with soldier resistance and civilian efforts, forced Presidents Johnson and Nixon to curtail plans to escalate the war and make plans to end it, see the forthcoming film [The Boys Who Said NO!](#)

Reanalysing the Cause of War to Reorient our Resistance

So, if we are to use this 100th anniversary to renew our struggle to end war and to work effectively to achieve that purpose, then clearly we need to reassess our analysis of the cause(s) of war so that we understand the problem more precisely, and then use this revised analysis to guide the development and implementation of a strategy that addresses the cause(s). Of course, I am not suggesting that ending war will be easy, even with a sound analysis and a comprehensive strategy. But at least it will be feasible.

Before proceeding, I would like to record my own passion for this subject. I lost two great uncles to World War I: Tom Farrell was killed in action at Gallipoli and Les Burrowes was a victim of 'shell shock' – later labeled post-traumatic stress disorder – after being wounded in action three times at Gallipoli and then dying prematurely some years after the war.

My [father served in World War II as a coastwatcher](#) and [both of his brothers, including his twin, were killed](#). I am named after my father's older brother. Bob died when the Japanese POW ship *Montevideo Maru* was torpedoed by the *USS Sturgeon* on 1 July 1942. 1,053 Australian POWs died that night. And my father's twin, Tom, died when his Beaufort Bomber was shot down on 14 December 1943 killing the entire crew.

So my childhood is dotted with memories of occasional commemorations of war which, for me, always ended with the same question: Why? But not just 'why war?' Given other manifestations of violence I observed around the world during my childhood, including exploitation of peoples in Africa, Asia and Central/South America as well as destruction of the environment, the deeper question was always my focus: 'Why violence?'

Well, despite considerable research over three decades, I was never content with any version of the answer to this question that I found. Consequently, 14 years in seclusion with Anita McKone 'taking our own minds apart' finally gave me the answer I wanted. In ugly detail. If you would like to read this answer, which explains the unrelenting 'visible', 'invisible' and 'utterly invisible' violence that adults inflict on children and the enormous lifetime damage (including the legacy of unconscious fear, self hatred and powerlessness) that this causes, you can do so in ['Why Violence?'](#) with our process described in ['Fearless Psychology and Fearful Psychology: Principles and Practice'](#).

Needless to say, understanding a problem makes developing a strategy to address it far easier (which does not mean that the problem is easy to resolve). However, it is also the case that violence has many manifestations - notably including war, violence against huge sectors of the human population in various contexts (ranging from violence against women and indigenous peoples to military occupations and dictatorships), economic exploitation and destruction of the biosphere - and tackling each of these effectively requires its own sophisticated nonviolent strategy.

This is partly because certain manifestations of violence are *structural* - see 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research' - or *cultural* - see ['Cultural Violence'](#) - as Professor Johan Galtung describes these terms, and they originated long ago and have been recreated and 'built-in' over successive centuries.

However, it is important to understand that the nature of any given structure or cultural symbol/process reflects the psychology of those who create and/or maintain it. That is, it is dysfunctionalized human beings who create and maintain dysfunctional (that is, violent and/or exploitative) structures and cultures.

So, for example, while the origin of capitalism can be explained in terms of the development of economic structures and processes that took place over preceding centuries (in a particular socio-political-legal setting), fundamentally the exploitative nature of capitalism is a direct outcome of the badly damaged psychology of those men who progressively created it and now those men (and some women) who maintain it, expand it and primarily benefit from the manner in which it exploits most others.

And if those men and women were not psychologically damaged by the violence they suffered during childhood, then they would devote their efforts to creating egalitarian economic structures and processes that benefited everyone equally and nurtured the biosphere. In short, a human being who is psychologically whole regards the idea of killing or exploiting a fellow human being as deplorable. This is not a moral stance. It is a psychological outcome for the child who is parented lovingly: such parenting produces compassionate identification with others (and, in fact, everything that lives and the biosphere as a whole).

The same reasoning applies to the institution of war particularly as it has evolved and is now conducted by western nations, led by the US, and their allies such as Israel. War is a method

of conducting conflict. It has a great many components including elites who promote war-for-profit by using various channels such as 'think tanks', the corporate media, government propaganda and education systems to call for and 'justify' it, political processes to order it, legal processes to defend it (including against those who take nonviolent action against it), military command, control and communication structures to plan and implement it, corporations employing a labor force to manufacture weapons and other hardware to be used in it, military personnel to deploy and fire the weapons, and citizens willing to pay taxes (or too scared to resist doing so) to finance it.

But at every level of the institution of war, and despite vast advances in peace, conflict and nonviolence theory and practice during the past 60 years, it requires individuals who were terrorized during their childhood into believing that killing fellow human beings is an appropriate way to deal with conflict (or, a variation, that killing human beings is a reasonable way to earn a wage or make a profit). And because they are so psychologically damaged and now deeply embedded within the institution of war, consideration of alternatives to violence is only tokenistically contemplated, if at all (with occasional exceptions by those whose conscience survived the childhood violence they suffered). If you like, you can read a little more about how childhood violence creates insane individuals who perpetuate violence and war in articles such as ['The Global Elite is Insane Revisited'](#) but there is plenty more on that website.

In essence, if most human beings were not so psychologically damaged by the violence inflicted on them during childhood (leaving them unconsciously terrified, self-hating and powerless), there would be a mass uprising against the barbarity of war: the large-scale industrial slaughter of people like you.

So what are we to do?

Well, if we consider war as an outcome *not* of political and economic differences manifesting as military violence but, fundamentally, as an outcome of psychological dysfunctionality preventing intelligent resolution of conflict, then our strategy for ending war can acquire a sophistication it must otherwise lack. Put simply, by understanding the psychological roots of violence we can develop and implement a strategy that intelligently addresses these, both in the short and medium terms.

So how do we tackle, strategically, the interrelated set of problems that constitute the institution of war?

If your primary interest is focusing on war itself, check out the [Nonviolent Strategy Wheel](#) which simply illustrates the 12-point strategic framework necessary to conduct an effective nonviolent campaign and then consider [the basic list of 35 strategic goals necessary to end war](#). Choose one or a few goals appropriate to your circumstances and conduct a strategically-oriented nonviolent campaign, as explained on the same website, to achieve those goals.

If you are concerned that you need some form of military defense against those who might attack your country, it is actually strategically superior to use a strategy of nonviolent defense, which is explained in detail in [The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach](#) and presented more simply in [Nonviolent Defense/Liberation Strategy](#). In fact, this strategic framework can be used to plan and implement a nonviolent strategy to defend against a foreign invading power or a political/military coup, to liberate your country from a

dictatorship or a foreign occupation, or to defeat a genocidal assault.

As an aside, if your preferred focus is the climate catastrophe, some other assault on the biosphere or a social justice campaign of any kind, the [Nonviolent Strategy](#) website will assist you to develop a comprehensive and focused strategy.

When conducting any campaign, keep in mind a clear understanding of [‘Nonviolent Action: Why and How it Works’](#) and remember the distinction between [‘The Political Objective and Strategic Goal of Nonviolent Actions’](#). By keeping these points in mind, your campaign (including each of your tactics) will be focused for strategic impact.

If your interest in ending war is more focused on undermining it at its source, consider making [‘My Promise to Children’](#) and nisteling, whenever appropriate, to children too. See [‘Nisteling: The Art of Deep Listening’](#).

This will mean that any children in your life are supported, at least by you, to become self-loving and powerful individuals who are immune to the seductions and indoctrination of those who advocate and make war while developing the capacity to pursue life-enhancing behavioral options when dealing with conflict.

If parenting children in this manner feels beyond you, consider allowing yourself the time to heal from the violence that you have suffered throughout your life. See [‘Putting Feelings First’](#).

And don't forget: while depending on our psychological dysfunctionality to accept, finance and conduct war as a means of dealing with conflict, at its most mundane level, war is a conflict over resources, particularly fossil fuels, strategic minerals and fresh water, and it is our consumption of these, in all of those products (such as meat and cars) and services (like airline flights) that we buy, that fuels the wars conducted in our name while also destroying the biosphere in various other ways. (If you want to understand the psychological origin of this obsession with material goods, see [‘Love Denied: The Psychology of Materialism, Violence and War’](#).) *In short, there is no point deluding ourselves that we can subvert this violent world order without substantially reducing our consumption on all fronts.*

So another way you can have strategic impact in undermining the institution of war (and capitalism), while slowing destruction of the biosphere, is to join those participating in [‘The Flame Tree Project to Save Life on Earth’](#). The Flame Tree Project outlines a simple plan for people to progressively reduce their consumption, by at least 80%, involving both energy and resources of every kind – water, household energy, transport fuels, metals, meat, paper and plastic – while dramatically expanding their individual and community self-reliance in 16 areas.

You might also be interested in signing the online pledge of [‘The People's Charter to Create a Nonviolent World’](#) where the names of many people who are working to end war (and other violence) are already listed.

Ending war is not impossible. Far from it, in fact. But it is going to take a phenomenal amount of intelligent strategic effort, courage and commitment.

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