



The Psychology of Warmaking

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Abstract

In this paper, historical, cultural, juridical theoretical arguments have been collected to substantiate the conclusion that the only way to prevent nuclear war is by the neutralization of all nuclear weapons.

Why should we analyze the psychology of warmaking? Because understanding its mechanisms should suggest measures to avoid suffering and destruction of resources entailed by war. To prevent even minor local conflicts is impossible – just as preventing any crime is. The vital issue is prevention of major war. In 1932 the issue was debated in a correspondence between Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud. It was published in a pamphlet (“Why War?”), which had minimal diffusion and impact. Both authors treated the problem agreeing on two main points – discussed quite superficially.

The first was the notion that humans are subjected to the instinct to conserve and unify – to love – and also to the instinct to hate and destroy, each as indispensable as its opposite. The phenomena of life were considered to derive from their interaction.

The second point was that the war impulse could only be opposed by forming a superior class of independent thinkers upright and able to enlighten and guide both the intelligentsia and the masses so they would follow the dictates of reason – a utopian hope in the view of the two authors.

We shall discuss these naïve views both based on historical evidence and on theoretical grounds in the substantive conclusions of the present document.

Obviously in the 21st century THE major war would be a thermonuclear war, possibly producing ‘The Holocaust’. Assume, then, that we accept the categorical imperative of preventing the major war. Note that the London Charter of August 8, 1945, signed by the plenipotentiaries of the governments of France, United Kingdom, USA and USSR established the principle that “the mere preparation of total war constitutes an international crime against peace and humanity”. The intent was sensible and meritorious, but in almost seven decades no attempt was made to apply the principle although the four original nations and a handful of others advocating it have indeed experienced total war vastly more devastating than those experienced up to 1945.

Waging major wars historically was decided by autocrats as well as by democratic governments with popular support. The public was often brainwashed to favor war by means of campaigns evoking visceral passions masked by allegedly rational, nationalistic or ethical

motivations. During the Cold War the balance of terror was accepted by millions. They were induced to think evenhandedly about the *unthinkable* global thermonuclear holocaust. The underlying rationale was based on considering the threat of ultimate nuclear warfare as a factor of restraint – a deterrent apt to guarantee peace.

Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) took decades to achieve steps on the path of total elimination of nukes. At the peak of the Cold War the destructive potential in all the thermonuclear weapons arsenals of the world was estimated to be equivalent to 4.5 tons of high explosive for each human being on Earth. After the partial disarmament achieved over the years the amount is now “only” 700 kilograms of high explosive for each of us.

The military confrontation between NATO and Warsaw Pact exists no more. Possession of thermonuclear weapons has now spread to many countries and it appears with increasing probability to be within reach of “crazy states”. This term was coined by Prof. Y. Dror to define countries or regimes which are: unreasonably aggressive, prone to risk taking, apt to choose means unrelated to their goals, sticklers to styles incorporating quaint rites and dogmas. Cases in point are: Crusaders, violent anarchists, Nazis and, more recently, revolutionary Iran and Al Qaeda. The psychology of “Crazy Leaders” is hard to analyze. By definition they tend to be unpredictable.

The systems comprising radar and satellite early warning, aiming, control and real time steering of nuclear warheads vectors are highly sophisticated. Their complexity is comparable to that of systems controlling thermonuclear power stations. The latter have provoked major disasters (Chernobyl, Fukushima). Causes were due to gross incompetence in design, implementation or management – not obviated, although the corresponding situations were widely known and amenable to corrective criticism of experts. In the case of nuclear weapons, designs, structures, functional rules, safeguards are kept secret. Outside experts cannot suggest improvements nor caution about covert risks. The consequence of glitches could be a first thermonuclear explosion, followed by others in retaliation of an assumed attack. To convince the target country that the attack was not deliberate, the attacking country could, perhaps, inflict an identical attack on one of their own major cities. This drama was vividly depicted in *Fail-Safe*, a well known novel and film.

The situation is made more critical because a large part of the complexity is not visible. It is hidden in the software of control and telecommunication systems and of telematics networks and in some cases not even experts are fully aware of how it all works. A critical problem in delegating decisions to computers is integrating software operation with human decisions. Expert systems are of no use in the hands of morons. A vital task is to make software control transparent so that well trained humans may monitor the process and override it if needed (as aeroplane pilots do with automatic pilots).

The most imminent danger, then, is the unleashing of nuclear war caused by malfunction of computerized control systems or by human decision to launch reprisal Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) after having erroneously concluded from faulty early warning radars, that a first strike is about to hit. In 1983 the radars of the Serpuchov 15 Bunker near Moscow signaled the detection of 5 American ICBMs in flight towards Russia. The commanding officer, Colonel S.Y. Petrov of the Soviet Air Defence Forces, correctly identified

the warning as a false alarm and prevented an erroneous retaliatory nuclear attack on the United States which might well have unleashed World War 3.

Probably, then, warmaking would not be the outcome of deliberations by politicians nor of decisions by the military. Analyzing the psychology of decision-makers in these groups may well be irrelevant: a first nuclear strike is likely to be the random consequence of malfunctions of control systems or the improvised extemporaneous demented action of crazy states or of self styled freedom fighter groups or jihadists.

“Warmaking can be blocked by the strength of culture.”

The only way to prevent nuclear war is then the neutralization of all nuclear weapons.

More than the psychology of warmaking we have to investigate the psychology of absentee populations who don't realize that eliminating nukes is the only salvation from total war. We cannot expect international diplomacy to achieve this goal: their progress in this direction has been too slow. We cannot expect a benevolent tyrant to decree the elimination of A- and H- bombs. We have to bring back the nuclear disarmament issue on the political agenda of our nations and of supranational bodies (UNO, UN Security Council, FAO, ILO, OECD, International Court of Justice, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO). These organizations will have to be prompted by the people through all channels: from mass media to academia, from the WWW to local groups, from political structures to NGOs. Spiritual leaders of organized religions and of informal movements have to be challenged. If they persist in ignoring this ultimate risk, they should be branded as unreliable and irrelevant.

Warmaking cannot be fettered by a superior (benevolent?) brute force. It can be blocked by the strength of culture. This statement is proved by historical evidence.

In the '30s, militarist, nationalistic governments were ready to start war and they did start it in cold blood. The culture of that time was not uniform. It hosted democracy descending from British parliamentarianism, Jeffersonian principles, the French Revolution. It also contained Nazi-fascist and Bolshevik dictatorships, negating basic freedoms and actively exercising extreme violence. There are still dictators as well as crazy states around, but no big powers advocate war as a superior mystic value.

“European peace stems from European culture.”

In 2012 the European Union and the European Commission were awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace as they *“for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe.”*

Prof. H. Menuhier of Nouvelle Sorbonne University celebrated this Peace Prize in Vienna at OECD on December 18, 2012. He said that from 1870 to 1945 in 75 years France and Germany fought 3 fratricidal wars with a disastrous material, human and moral toll – whereas today the very notion of a Franco-German war sounds utterly absurd.

European peace stems from European culture. It is true that some diehard, extreme violent politicians still have followers in France, Greece, Hungary. However aggressive ranting in the style of Hitler or Mussolini would not find large audiences today.

Peace is not global in the 21st century. Europeans have intervened, fought and died in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Mali. Even now, local wars erupt in Asia and Africa. Escalations are still to be feared. So we have to study, plan and act to identify the applied psychology of war prevention. This would not be effective, if it was limited to the dissemination of do-gooder exhortations. The message MAKE LOVE, NOT WAR was not a success. The symbol is vaguely interpreted by most people as “for peace”, whereas it stands for “ND” – Nuclear Disarmament [it is the superposition of the letters N and D in the flag semaphore alphabet].



The Anti-nuclear weapons culture has to be disseminated explaining the meaning of symbols, the cause-effect mechanisms of the threats – the unique solution being Nuclear Disarmament. These vital factors have to be brought to bear to understand and modify the psychology of absenteeism.

Culture should certainly continue to be fostered and renewed as a factor of human growth, of scientific progress, of research and development. In a specific sense, it should be oriented toward Nuclear Disarmament – a worldwide movement to be revived in the wake of the great thinkers Linus Pauling and Bertrand Russell.

The goal here is to raise cultural levels so that entire populations understand the numbers and the probabilities involved – the fact that we are facing **extinction**, not just hardships and decimation. To really grasp this impending tragedy, the public should learn how to forecast future events, how to identify real dangers and how to calculate their consequences. The fact that the equivalent of 700 kilograms of high explosive for each human is stored in nuclear arsenals could destroy most of our world, should motivate the public to accept and disseminate a new BAN THE BOMB manifesto. This cannot be a single purpose edifying text.

The manifesto must be an appeal to design and implement a large international endeavor involving many public and private sponsors, academia, firms, communicators, Web operators, agencies and all the media.

Hi-tech war is a much more severe threat than conventional war. The movement should, then, promote the spreading of technological upgrading of the public. High technology runs the risk of being strangled by lack of culture. Very fast and powerful personal computers are less and less expensive, but (apart from professional tasks) the public predominantly uses them for playing games, reproducing non-descript images, listening to music, watching films and for swapping improvised words. These instruments should be used, instead, for significant aims of knowledge processing, acquisition and creation. If the public understands the world better, it will be convinced that war has to be avoided.

The number and complexity of technological choices to be made by governments, international bodies and enterprises are growing. The consequent impacts are large on society's wealth, health and stability and also on international dramatic issues. The latter are: poverty, injustice, violence exerted to secure resources, migrations to the West and the North. Many least developed countries have vast potential natural resources (minerals, energy, arable land) which are blocked due to lack of culture and investments. They don't need short term

emergency measures, but major international enterprises aimed at their pacification and stabilization and then at advanced technical solutions. The socio-economic impacts of technology are positive, if it is permeated with culture and if culture is disseminated and offered as a real option. These results would also diminish international tensions generated by the determination of securing more equitable distribution of resources and wealth. Raising cultural levels is the prescription to avoid not only ultimate total war, but also stark inequalities and local grievous conflicts.

1. Resources, Tools, Mileposts

The World Wide Web offers data banks, software packages, sophisticated financial and banking services, highly significant texts, information on advanced control and decision systems, but the majority of people (often including managers, planners and decision makers) are not knowledgeable enough to use them. In fact they are often unable to tell high quality information and services from valueless, illusory items of which there is ample supply. They end up accessing irrelevant, volatile materials.

It is necessary to create alliances and task forces enrolling culture, academies, parliaments, business enterprises of all sizes, to use the media in order to offer to the public tools for continuous cultural upgrading. This improvement will boost not only demand and profits for hi-tech industries, but also the value added by human activity to any other resource. Affluence grows in societies where the search for knowledge is an accepted and financed value.

This endeavor will use all media: newspapers, TV, radio, magazines, electronic publishing. The very concept of entertainment will have to be redefined. The new contents will not be volatile, but edifying.

The art of communication will be at the service of culture. The dissemination of culture is the basic task of schools, but their functions need to be integrated, stimulating emulation. School systems are slow to innovate. It is advisable to start new cultural enterprises outside of schools. No single firm, even among the largest, could be so wealthy to be able to finance such a large program. It would be appropriate to create an international consortium of firms (publishers, information and communication technology producers, engineering companies), advertisers and experts, all united to promote a cultural revolution. Culture may not be surrogated by television spots, slogans and platitudes.

The following goals and resources will have to be publicized by highly visible, authoritative, learned individuals who will credibly twist the arms of politicians, entrepreneurs, publishers, media moguls. Their non-participation or lack of support will have to be construed as a scandal. A detailed program prepared with the help of an adequate number of experts will have to be submitted to sponsors – a major undertaking.

2. Indoctrination for Cooperation

The cultural upgrading enterprise needs vast popular support in order to succeed. Indoctrination of academics, teachers, human resources managers, parliamentarians, publishers, journalists, media moguls will have to be organized. Examples of positive rational

thinking as well as abstention from abstract, ill-defined, vaguely optimistic endeavors will be proposed.

From prehistoric times the psychology of the majority has been warped to believe that egotism and avidity in the end are profitable. In fairly recent times the mathematical theory of cooperation has proved that the reverse is true. Cooperation is more advantageous to all concerned than self-seeking and self-aggrandizing. However logical proof and rational thinking are often disregarded: people trust conventional alleged wisdom and gut feeling more. A first step should be to teach cooperation theory in schools at all levels.

Obvious word of mouth channels will be used and advertising experts will be enrolled shifting their pitch from their traditional approach (more sales, larger audiences, sacrifice taste and rigor to popularity, centering messages on logos and slogans) to intellectual yardsticks. Their abilities will be aimed at a viral diffusion of the equation “cultural upgrading = salvation”. There is no surefire prescription for this. Many cut-and-try empirical attempts will have to be experimented.

“Cultural upgrading will not advocate a mere scientific and technological rehabilitation program spread by geek missionaries but will spread knowledge of teaching from the classics.”

3. Tenets to be Carved in Collective Awareness

The ablest wordsmiths have to produce memes which are apt to carve themselves in people’s minds. Not slogans – but meaningful, easy to remember tenets to foster motivation.

4. Teachings from the Classics, not just from Technology

Cultural upgrading will use modern ICT technology. It will not advocate a mere scientific and technological rehabilitation program spread by geek missionaries. It will revamp cultivation of the “two cultures” and of many more. It will spread knowledge of teaching from the classics.

5. Outstanding Contributors

Support will be sought from first class scientists already active in cultural upgrading, as for example,

1. Prof John L. Casti, Senior Research Scholar at IIASA
2. Prof. Richard Dawkins, author of “The Selfish Gene”, Foundation for Reason and Science
3. Prof. Freeman Dyson, physicist.
4. Sir Harold Kroto (discoverer of C60 buckyballs carbon molecules), founder of the Vega Science Trust (www.vega.org.uk) enrolling scientists to disseminate their knowledge; founder of the Kroto Research Institute for nanoscience and technology, connected to the University of Sheffield.

5. Carl Weiman (Physics Nobel 2001) who has defined programs for improving post-secondary education (see www.livescience.com/technology/080725-sb-education-future.html)

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