

THE ALTERNATIVE

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Dear Reader,

Talk of war has been unceasing for at least the last six months, if not twenty months. Starting from about September 15, 2001 the metaphor of war has enveloped the United States. A metaphor may not seem important, and in fact the government dismisses it when it is not convenient. Nonetheless, the metaphor makes nearly inevitable what would otherwise be nearly unthinkable. In the last two months the metaphor has led to a real war between a nation that spends 400 billion dollars on the military and a nation that was spending 1.5 billion. No one doubted who the military victor would be. The question was whether war made sense. The omnipresence of the metaphor of war slid into the reality of war without a single memorable statement from a U.S. political leader on the nature of war or the wisdom of this war.

The three essays in this issue examine what lies beneath the surface of war. Even to ask the question whether war is outdated as a means to resolve any conflict is likely to get one dismissed as naive and soft. And, indeed, those who (regretfully, of course) accept war seem to have history on their side. They certainly control the terms of the discussion in which security, strength, courage, dedication, realism, etc. are on the side of war. The only words left over are weakness, passivity, unrealistic, and a willingness to be stepped on.

Until there is a language to discuss peace, there can be no serious debate about war; we simply have a standoff between advocates of Just War and Acivism. The change needed is to take power from its equivalence with military power and distinguish force from war. As the first essay by Gabriel Moran notes, in all situations, outside of international conflict, Force has many degrees and forms; force is not the equivalent of violence. It is no slight distinction to say that the world needs to exercise force, intelligently and legally, so as to avoid wars.

The second essay is excerpted from Chris Hedges's War is a Force that Gives us Meaning. It is one of the few books that gives a feel for actual combat, while also exploring why many people desire war. The third essay is from Jonathan Schell's The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence and the Will of the People. Schell traces the tension between two strands of power in the twentieth century. As a prediction of the future - when cooperative power will reign - he may be too optimistic. But for pointing to those things in our recent past that can give hope, the author does a great service.

OUTLAWING WAR

By Gabriel Moran

On April 6, 1927, Foreign Minister Briand of France communicated the following message to the United States: "France would be willing to subscribe publicly with the United States to any mutual engagement tending to outlaw war, to use an American expression, as between these two countries." After some discussions about enlarging the agreement to include other nations, the treaty was signed in Paris on August 27, 1928. It was ratified in 1929 by the United States Senate with only one dissenting vote. There were 15 other signatories.

This agreement was the fruit of ten years of effort by a committee for the outlawry of war. In light of World War II and subsequent decades, this movement has been dismissed as an embarrassingly naive episode. Or more contemptuously, the attitude reflected in the outlawry of war is seen as emblematic of the weakness that led to Hitler's rise.

Undeniably, the movement was afflicted with naivete, although perhaps not so much as is usually assumed. The leaders of the movement realized that simply passing a law would not eliminate war. Nonetheless, they thought that making all wars illegal could be a step in the right direction. They proposed an international criminal court, recognizing a need that is only beginning to be fulfilled eight decades later. Surely it is a strange fact that terrorism, assassination and torture are illegal but that war is not.

The First World War had changed the nature of warfare or the very meaning of the word war. The entire populace of nations was mobilized for the war effort. War was no longer a battle between competing armies. The line between combatant and non-combatant could never again be clearly drawn. Whatever justification for war had been advanced in the past, all wars henceforth were stupid, criminal and immoral.

The 1920s and 1930s proved to be inept in developing the means to stop war. By the end of the 1930s, Europe was faced with a horrendous situation; there seemed no alternative to war. As a result, World War II, despite the slaughter of fifty million people, is widely hailed as a good war, one that was justified by the evils of Nazism.

The Committee for Outlawry of War at first acknowledged the need for organized force to control violators of international law. However, after 1921 the group's position was that there should be sole reliance on organized moral

sentiment. They claimed it was a false analogy to compare a domestic police force and an international use of force. Although it is the nature of analogy to Aimp,@the comparison of domestic and international policing functions seems quite appropriate.

In the twenty-first century, organized moral sentiment is a powerful force but it is still insufficient to restrain all criminal activity. The technology that changed the nature of war in 1914-18 has now reached dizzying levels of sophistication. The potential for violence has escalated immeasurably. But used wisely, the technology could be used to lessen the violence in international conflict. Few people are so naive as to think that technology itself can reduce violence. But if the technology were under wise international control it could serve that purpose.

Where the twenty-first century does show a possible advance is in the existence of a body of international law, the activities of the United Nations, and the beginning of a permanent international court. Unfortunately, the language to discuss power, force and war remains as confused and unimaginative as it was in the 1920s. Developing a better language is only one step; but we cannot get an answer to a question if the language to ask the question is not available.

John Dewey, agonizing over whether to support United States entry into World War I, tried in several essays to distinguish force and violence, force and war. His efforts were dismissed by commentators who pointed out that in international conflicts, Aforce@and Awar@are used interchangeably. That criticism is true but it is a statement of the problem not a reason for dismissing the question. Until the language of power, force and war is reformed, discussion of war will always be between Arealists@who are certain that war is an inevitable fact of human life and Aidealists@who think that the use of force is immoral.

What is needed is to change the use of the term force in international discussions of conflict. Can the term Aforce@be changed in meaning? Actually, the most common meaning of force is precisely the one that is needed. In practically all uses of the term, outside discussions of war, force is distinguishable from violence. The term is not equated with explosions of obscene amounts of violence that destroys every living being in its path. Why then, in international discussions, do people say Aforce@when they mean war? It seems to be a euphemism that has the unfortunate result of closing off imagination about how force and forces could be used to avoid war. When the European Union in February, 2003, tried to dissuade the United States from war on Iraq, it stated: AWar is not inevitable. The use of force should be the last resort.@ Wouldn't they have spoken more logically, realistically and effectively, if they had said: AForce is

inevitable. But war should be the last resort.@

Force is a pressure upon humans or nonhumans to get them to act in a desired way. For nearly everyone, the use of force is a daily occurrence, from forcing open a jar of pickles to forcing one's way through a crowd. As a one directional action, force is always questionable. Especially in attempting to coerce human agreement to a certain way of acting, force is a restriction on the freedom of another. Force may indeed slide into violence. But where a human being is incompetent or is criminally dangerous, force of restraint is necessary. Force may be needed to keep a child from running into the street, or force may have to be used to stop a would be rapist. Less obvious uses of force are present in the business and political world, and even religious and educational institutions. Force allows for innumerable degrees of exercise from psychological intimidation to a swift blow in the midsection.

Power

The misuse of the term *force* in international conflicts is not likely to be corrected unless a deeper linguistic confusion in using *power* is unearthed. *Power* stands on one side of *force* as *violence* does on the other. Linguistically, force collapses into violence because power has already collapsed into force. Unless the term power is used in ways that do not inevitably lead to force, then a nation's use of force becomes equated with war.

Power, like so many important words, has two almost opposite meanings. When people who call themselves *realists* talk about power, they have one very clear meaning of power in mind. Power means the exercise of force; power in this context is the means to coerce and dominate. The paradox of power is that power can be almost the exact opposite of force. In addition to meaning active coercion, power can also mean passive receptiveness. In fact, this latter meaning is the root from which all power springs. Power belongs to the same linguistic family as possible, potential, passive. In classical and medieval philosophy, power is the lowest and weakest form of being - mere possibility that has yet to be realized or actualized. Power is capacity for action but needs to be brought to act.

When one comes to the human as the paradoxical union of matter and spirit, what was weakness can be turned into strength. The fact that humans, in contrast to other animals, are mostly unformed at birth can be turned to advantage. The humans are born with capacity, the power that is receptiveness.

They are able to exercise control of their surroundings by ideas and language. True, elements of force are mixed in with the human efforts of control. When threatened, humans may mistakenly equate their power with force. For

defending themselves against hostile animals or dangerous weather, force may be an appropriate defense. But with other human beings, human power resides in listening and responding. Between humans, force is a sign that human power has failed.

When human beings enter into mutual exchanges, then the power of each is enhanced. Human life become richer the more that receptivity to others is exercised. Of course, not all human encounters are mutually affirming. Some people, for whatever causes, never grasp the paradox of human power. For them, the world has a top and a bottom; they are willing to do whatever is necessary to get on top. Other people who are on the receiving end of this kind of force are tempted to act the same in return. Worse, they are pressed to accept this picture of the world with a top and a bottom. One of the worst aspects of being a slave is that it can make you desire to be a slave owner.

The most human response to a force that has turned violent is to act asymmetrically. That is, human power resides in not returning violence for violence. Whatever is done, it must be action to break a cycle of violence so that a degree of mutuality can be restored. Doing good to one's enemies is not a form of weakness but of human strength. What is sometimes called *passive resistance* can be misunderstood as doing nothing. But *passive resistance* is an action, the most intensely human action. The Sermon on the Mount is often cited as an advocacy of doing nothing in the face of evil. But showing love to one's enemies and deliberately refusing to offer violence for violence requires courage, determination and an understanding of power.

The United Nations is the present fragile structure for international cooperation. The right wing in the United States contemptuously dismisses the United Nations as a debating society but that is precisely what it should be. As a forum for discussion, it needs the help of other international or transnational bodies to facilitate numerous forms of national exchanges, such as business, athletic or religious dealings. It also needs a legal and judicial structure to be a restraint on the misuses of force that continue to be part of human experience.

War should be made illegal, although policing action by a legitimate international body is still a necessity. Terrible conflicts are not likely to disappear soon but it is time to start speaking a language of power, force and war that will reduce human violence and unlock human power. A country that equates power and military power is on the way to self-destruction. The alternative is to use the human power of mutual pacts that provide as much security as human beings are likely to have in this world.

THE MEANING OF WAR

By Chris Hedges

The enduring attraction of war is this: Even with its destruction and carnage it can give us what we long for in life. It can give us purpose, meaning, a reason for living. Only when we are in the midst of conflict does the shallowness and vapidness of much of our lives become apparent. Trivia dominates our conversations and increasingly our airwaves. And war is an enticing elixir. It gives us resolve, a cause. It allows us to be noble. And those who have the least meaning in their lives, the impoverished refugees, disenfranchised immigrants, even the legions of young who live in the splendid indolence of the industrialized world, are all too susceptible to war's appeal.

The flags that proliferated in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center were our support for a war against evil. On Friday, Sept. 14, 2001, three days after the attacks, Congress granted the President the right to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks. There was in the House only one dissenting vote, from Barbara Lee, a Democrat from California, who warned that military action could not guarantee the safety of the country and that as we act, let us not become the evil we deplore.

The attacks on the World Trade Center illustrate that those who oppose us, rather than coming from another moral universe, have been schooled well in modern warfare. The dramatic explosions, the victims plummeting to their deaths, the collapse of the towers, were straight out of Hollywood. Where else, but from the industrialized world, did the hijackers learn that huge explosions and death above a city skyline are an effective form of communication? They have mastered the language. They understand that the use of violence against innocents is a way to make a statement. We leave the same calling cards.

As the battle against terrorism continues, as terrorist attacks intrude on our lives, as we feel less and less secure, the acceptance of all methods to lash out at real and perceived enemies will distort and deform our democracy. For even as war gives meaning to sterile lives, it also promotes killers and racists.

Organized killing is best done by a disciplined, professional army. But war also empowers those with a predilection for murder. Once we sign on for war's crusade, once we see ourselves on the side of the angels, once we embrace a theological or ideological belief system that defines itself as the embodiment of goodness and light, it is only a matter of how we will carry out murder.

The eruption of conflict instantly reduces the headache and trivia of daily life. The communal march against an enemy generates a warm, unfamiliar bond with our neighbors, our nation, wiping out unsettling undercurrents of alienation and dislocation. War, in times of malaise and desperation, is a potent distraction.

George Orwell in *1984* writes of the necessity of constant wars against the Other to forge a false unity among the proles: AWar had been literally continuous, though strictly speaking it had not always been the same war....The enemy of the moment always represented absolute evil.@

ALTERNATIVE TO WAR

Jonathan Schell

Until very late in the day, the Eastern European activists who initiated the process of the Soviet collapse did not envision even the downfall of their local, satellite governments, much less the downfall of the whole Soviet system. On the contrary, one of their greatest achievements in the late 1970s was to discover a way to fight for more modest, immediate goals without challenging the main structures of totalitarian power. Their ambition - itself widely condemned as utopian by Western observers - was merely to create zones of freedom, including free trade unions, within the Soviet framework.

Activism, Havel said, should be directed at achieving immediate changes in daily life. He proposed what he called *Living in truth*,@which consisted of an unshakeable commitment to achieving modest, concrete goals in one's life and locality. ADefending the aims of life, defending humanity,@he asserted, Ais not only a more realistic approach, since it can begin right now and is potentially more popular because it concerns people's everyday lives; at the same time (and perhaps precisely because of this) it is also an incomparably more consistent approach because it aims at the very essence of things.@

Once the disintegration of totalitarian rule had begun in society, it turned out, to the surprise of its creators, to spread unstoppably to the satellite regimes, and from there, in new variations, to the heart of the empire, the Soviet Union. Seeking modest, limited change, the anti-Soviet activists found that, to their own amazement and everyone else's, they had opened a new era in world history.

The liberal democratic revival must have a central place in any discussion of peacemaking. The goal of taming the violence endemic in human affairs has always been at the core of the liberal program. To the degree that the ideal is realized, a country's constitution and its laws become a hugely ramified road map for the peaceful settlement of disputes, large and small. The liberal democratic

state systematizes nonviolence. For if it is true, as the Romans said, that when arms speak the laws fall silent, it is equally true that when the laws speak arms fall silent. Otherwise, who would bother with the laws? Every peaceable transfer of power in accord with the decisions of an electorate is a coup d'état avoided. And so the spread of democracy, if it rests on a solid foundation, is an expansion of the zone in which the business of politics is conducted along mainly nonviolent lines. In this basic respect, the long march of liberal democracy is a *Peace movement* - possibly the most important and successful of them all.

Thus in some parts of the world, at least, a beneficent cycle - a sort of cycle of nonviolence - had made a dramatic appearance. Peaceful revolution tends to produce peaceful rule which in turn has contributed to international peace. Even as thanks to nuclear arms, the structures of war - the immemorial final arbiter - were being paralyzed, a new arbiter, a new kind of political power, was making its debut. It was the political power of people to resist oppressors and achieve self-rule, and it didn't flow from the barrel of a gun. Nor was the appearance of this force - let us call it cooperative power, as distinct from the coercive power of warfare and other violence - a marginal historical phenomenon.

Political power is a capacity to decide something and make the decision stick in the realm of human affairs. In conventional wisdom, power has been equated with force. If you didn't use force you would lose, and therefore to shun force was to abdicate: to let the foe into your country, perhaps to destroy your town and kill your family; to dictate your faith; to rule over you; to determine the shape of the future. If force remained the essence of power and the final arbiter in politics, then the British today would rule India, the United States would preside over South Vietnam, the Soviet Union would rule over Eastern Europe.

That none of these things is the case testifies to the capacity of cooperative power to defeat superior force. The popular resistance that brought down the Berlin Wall was as historically consequential - as final an arbiter - as either of the two world wars. Has what William James called the *Amoral equivalent of war* ever been more clearly demonstrated. It set in motion the creation of more than a dozen new countries. It was the equivalent of a third world war except in one particular - it was not a war.

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