



An Old Man's Thoughts on War and Peace

Edward Bernard Glick

WHEN I WAS a young man in graduate school, two books impressed me mightily. They still do. One is Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression*. An M.D. and a Ph.D. and a 1973 Nobel laureate in medicine and physiology, Lorenz established the field of ethology, the study of the behavior of animals within their natural environment. In his prologue to *On Aggression*, Lorenz wrote, "The subject of this book is aggression, that is to say the fighting instinct in beast and man, which is directed against members of the same species." According to him, animals, particularly males, are biologically programmed to fight over resources and turf, and this behavior is part of natural selection. In short, to a great degree, aggressive behavior is innate.

The other book that influenced me mightily as a young man was Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative*. Ardrey popularized and expanded on Lorenz's ideas. After reading Ardrey, a Book-of-the-Month Club reviewer asked, "Are we a territorial species? Do we defend ourselves, whether by war or other means, because we have learned to do so—or because, as animals, we must?"

Reading Lorenz and Ardrey provides a good reason for believing the Roman proverb *Si vis pacem para bellum*, "He who wishes peace should prepare for war." (The full text of the proverb goes on to say, "He who desires victory should carefully train his soldiers; he who wants favorable results should fight relying on skill, not chance.")

War is no longer limited to soldiers in uniform battling each other. War now includes terrorists who do not wear uniforms, do not represent a sovereign state, and use civilian airplanes and motor vehicles to crash into buildings in order to kill their enemies.

Despite these changes in war, many pacifists who cling to the notion that war is immoral continue to forget that soldiers, not sermons, stopped Islam from advancing into Christian Europe at the Battle of Vienna in 1683. It was

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PHOTO: German officers captured in French Morocco, June 1940. (U.S. Army, LTC Robert Longini)

not sermons, but soldiers, who freed the American colonists from Great Britain's rule in 1781, and soldiers, not sermons, truly emancipated America's slaves in 1865 and liberated the survivors of the Nazi death camps in 1945.

Counterterrorism is the predominant form of contemporary war. One might say that, after the attack on New York's World Trade Center on 11 September 2001, Americans divided themselves into the September 10th people, the September 12th people, and the September 13th people. The September 13th people blame the United States for the events of September 11th and think that the proper U.S. response is to abandon American "arrogance" and American support of Israel. The September 10th people reject these notions, but think that terrorist acts are crimes that should be countered only by our law-enforcement and intelligence communities. The September 12th people believe that today's terrorists want to destroy Western civilization, and that acts of terrorism are acts of war that we must counter with mainly military responses.

When it comes to terrorism beyond our borders, passages from an article I published in 1979 about the Iran hostage crisis come to my mind:

The essential question—and it will cause us great pain in every sense if any of the hostages are harmed or are still being held when these words are printed—is the extent to which the Western world in general, the Third World in particular, and the United States especially, are themselves responsible for this governmentally condoned terrorism.

In its most recurring form, modern terrorism has manifested itself in the confrontation between the Arabs and the Israelis. . . . Decades ago, Israel warned the world, particularly the Western nations, that internationally tolerated terrorism is a political virus that knows no boundaries. If left unchecked it would spread to other causes, continents, and countries.

So long as they thought they were immune from the terrorist virus, aloof bystanders could adopt this kind of logic and base their actions and inactions on it. But there are no aloof bystanders. The

...internationally tolerated terrorism is a political virus that knows no boundaries.

Tehran terrorists have proven that once and for all. If the countries of the West do not band together against terrorism, whatever the short-term economic sacrifices, their long-term future as truly sovereign states is quite problematical.

Those who hate America like to discuss war within the framework of American imperialism and colonialism. Yes, the United States took land from the native peoples of North America. But so, too, did the French, British, and Canadians. So did the Spaniards and Portuguese in Latin America. So did the Australians and New Zealanders in the South Seas. So did the Russians, Chinese, and Japanese in Asia and Europe. Did the Scots, Welsh, and Catholics of Northern Ireland want to be a part of Great Britain? Do the Tibetans want to be part of Communist China?

Yes, the United States conquered the Philippines and Puerto Rico in the 1898 Spanish-American War and remained in de facto control of Cuba until 1934. But this country gave the Filipinos independence in 1946, and it has promised statehood or independence to the Puerto Ricans whenever they want to have it.

Yes, President Theodore Roosevelt, influenced by U.S. Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan's sea-power theories, took advantage of a revolt against Colombia to acquire what became the Panama Canal Zone in 1903. The new Panamanian government gave the United States the French concession to construct the Canal, which the United States completed in 1914. But President Jimmy Carter returned both the Zone and the Canal to the Panamanians in 1977.

Yes, in 1945, President Harry Truman ordered the U.S. Army Air Force to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, thus ending Japan's participation in World War II. Yes, for a few years, the United States was the only power with nuclear



U.S. Air Force

The *Bockscar* and its crew, who dropped the “Fat Man” atomic bomb on Nagasaki, 1945.

weapons on this planet, but we blackmailed no one. Nor did we take anyone’s land. By contrast, the Soviet Union incorporated huge swaths of post-war Poland and Germany.

If we compare the United States to Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome—or for that matter, Ottoman Turkey, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Russia, Britain, and France—we can only conclude that the United States was and is the least warlike and least imperialistic super power in history.

Of course, there is the question of war within the context of a nuclear-armed Iran. A few years ago, Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* wrote, “I’d rather live with a nuclear Iran because it is

the wisest thing under the circumstances.” Thomas Friedman may feel this way, but for the leaders of Israel, an Iranian nuclear bomb and its associated delivery systems raise existential questions.

Can the Jewish state live with an Iran that possesses nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them? Can it ignore an Iranian leader who labels the country “a fake regime” that ought to “be wiped off the face of the Earth?” How should it react to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad’s plans for a second Holocaust, even as he denies that the first one ever happened? Millions of Israelis are descendants of those who died in the Holocaust. In 1981, when Iraq threatened Israel, Israel’s then prime minister, Menachem Begin, ordered the Israeli Air Force to

destroy Iraq's nuclear reactor and then declared that "Israel has nothing to apologize for. In simple logic, we decided to act now, before it is too late. We shall defend our people with all the means at our disposal."

One sometimes hears the argument that if Iran can live with an Israeli bomb, why can't Israel live with an Iranian bomb? The answer is that no Israeli leader has ever threatened to eradicate Iran.

Iran is a large country, but Israel is a tiny one, smaller than New Jersey. At its narrowest point, it is only nine miles wide. Israel's nuclear arsenal can deter its enemies only if they have the wisdom and the sanity to be deterred. During the Cold War, the Russians and the Americans operated under a political and military doctrine known as MAD, for mutual assured destruction. The doctrine assumed that no matter how bad things got between the Soviet Union and the United States—the 1962 Cuban missile crisis being a case in point—neither side would risk annihilation.

The leaders of Iran do not think that way. They reason as follows: "We have 70 million people, and Israel has 7 million. If we attack the Zionists with nuclear bombs, they will respond in kind. If they are lucky, they will kill half of us, but if Allah wills it, we shall kill all of them, and there will still be 35 million of us left."

We humans may enjoy periods of peace—sometimes for a long time—but we shall never entirely rid ourselves of war because we are "wired" to fight over pieces of land. Konrad Lorenz, Robert Ardrey, and Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus (the man who coined the Latin phrase *Si vis pacem para bellum*) are correct. So, too, is Max Boot, the American author and military historian. He rejects the "sunny, if ahistorical, Enlightenment faith that peace is the natural order of things and war a temporary aberration."

Like it or not, this is the world in which we have lived in the past. This is the world in which we live now. And this is the world in which we shall live in the future. **MR**



U.S. Navy, JO1 Preston Keres

A New York City fireman calls for 10 more rescue workers to make their way into the rubble of the World Trade Center, New York City, 15 September 2001.