

ROTARY DISTRICT 5440 NEWSLETTER FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACEBUILDING

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MILITARISM AND HEALTH

Rethinking the U.S Role as the “World’s Cop” given our need for National Health Care

William Timpson, Bob Meroney and Lloyd Thomas

Fort Collins Rotary Club

David Swanson

Author, Journalist, radio host, Executive Director of World Beyond War

In these newsletters of the Rotary District Peacebuilders, we want to invite readers for contributions and ideas, suggestions and possibilities for our efforts to educate others by promoting the foundational skills for promoting sustainable peace and civility, i.e., nonviolent conflict resolution, improved communication and cooperation, successful negotiation and mediation. We also want to encourage the critical and creative thinking that can help communities move through obstacles and difficulties among people in more sustainable ways, i.e., with the interconnected health of their people, their economies and their environments. In this issue we focus on the traditions and thinking that rely on military responses to conflicts.

Sustainable Peacebuilding Fellowship

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Confronting the Health Threat of Militarism

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All are invited. Share this newsletter and the ZOOM link with a friend or colleague.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/494943309?pwd=SmtTUDYzTlZrcVBhbVLRmdvbVh6dz09>

MILITARISM AND HEALTH

Confronting the Health Threat of Militarism

DAVID SWANSON

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When we think of a human health threat from militarism, within a culture dedicated to accepting war, we probably think of all the efforts of the past 150 years to regulate war so as to not target hospitals, patients, and ambulances. These efforts have had some limited success, of course, but are far from being accomplished, and far even from persuading the population of any part of the world that they should be accomplished.

Efforts to carve out a zone of safety for healthcare in the midst of war has been part of an effort to do the same for civilians and all those not deemed proper to murder. This enterprise has been a dramatic failure. During the past 75 years, war has become a machine that kills primarily civilians. No longer an exception to be reformed out of war, the one-sided mass-slaughter of helpless civilians is the bulk of what war consists of.

This situation has led health advocates, even in the nation that does the most weapons dealing and war waging, the United States, to address war as a general health threat, not just a threat to healthcare within war. A remarkable article appears in the June 2014 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health*. The authors, experts in public health, are listed with all their academic credentials: William H. Wiist, DHSc, MPH, MS, Kathy Barker, PhD, Neil Arya, MD, Jon Rohde, MD, Martin Donohoe, MD, Shelley White, PhD, MPH, Pauline Lubens, MPH, Geraldine Gorman, RN, PhD, and Amy Hagopian, PhD. They note that:

“In 2009 the American Public Health Association (APHA) approved the policy statement, ‘The Role of Public Health Practitioners, Academics, and Advocates in Relation to Armed Conflict and War.’ . . . In response to the APHA policy, in 2011, a working group on Teaching the Primary Prevention of War, which included the authors of this article, grew Since the end of World War II, there have been 248 armed conflicts in 153 locations around the world. The United States launched 201 overseas military operations between the end of World War II and 2001, and since then, others, including Afghanistan and Iraq. During the 20th century, 190 million deaths could be directly and indirectly related to war — more than in the previous 4 centuries.

"The proportion of civilian deaths and the methods for classifying deaths as civilian are debated, but civilian war deaths constitute 85% to 90% of casualties caused by war, with about 10 civilians dying for every combatant killed in battle. The death toll (mostly civilian) resulting from the recent war in Iraq is contested, with estimates of 124,000 to 655,000 to more than a million, and finally most recently settling on roughly a half million. Civilians have been targeted for death and for sexual violence in some contemporary conflicts. Seventy percent to 90% of the victims of the 110 million landmines planted since 1960 in 70 countries were civilians."

War kills, injures, and traumatizes millions of people every year, directly through its violence. It also causes deaths and injuries through the destruction of infrastructure, through the devastation of ecosystems, through the poisoning of water supplies, and through the creation of refugee crises. War preparations, including weapons testing, are also a major cause of death and injury. And war's contribution to the collapse of the climate of the Earth, as well as its role in justifying the existence and proliferation and threat of use of nuclear weapons makes it a threat to all life on the planet in two additional ways. As a concentrator of wealth and corrupter of governments, war is also a significant contributor to poverty in wealthy and poor nations alike, poverty being a major contributor to deficiencies in healthcare.

Militarism's status above most rules and regulations, its exclusion from climate agreements, the exclusion of troop transfers from pandemic protocols, the power of the CIA to use a phony vaccination program to search for a target in Pakistan (thereby discouraging polio vaccinations and even motivating the murder of health workers) etc., also contributes to health damage.

This last point begins to touch on the primary means by which war causes death and physical injury, which we have not yet mentioned, and which is too seldom considered. War kills -- at least thus far, and perhaps until nuclear or environmental disaster achieves major proportions -- primarily by diverting funding from where it is needed. When 3% of the military funding of a single nation could end starvation on Earth, and just over 1% could end the lack of clean drinking water, and a slightly bigger slice could outdo the wildest dreams of environmental advocates, this is where the health threat is greatest. This is also why we do well to focus on reducing and eliminating the entire war industry, as opposed to putting the same energy into efforts to reform it.

CAN WE ENFORCE "PEACE"?

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The dilemma: All nations uniformly insist they desire peace, and they all insist that they are "peace-loving" people who disparage the paradoxical belligerent behavior of aggressor countries. Thus, we find the international community is anxious to discourage the use of force and criticize other nations that "initiate" violence. So why do wars occur, and how do we achieve peace?

One theory of international relationships between nations which explains why wars continue to occur is based on the cynical concept of "political realism" espoused by Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980).¹ He argued that each sovereign nation's primary interests are centered on a universal lust for power and selfishness. Hence, morality and universal good may play a momentary role in foreign relations, but national self interest will eventually govern behavior, and a nation's primary loyalty is always to its own national survival. There are times when chaos, or war, advances a nation's interest more than peace or the status quo.

The proposals for achieving peace announced during the San Francisco conference that founded the United Nations in 1945 are based on the theory that as a last resort peace can be "enforced" by "peace-loving, "sovereign" nations on obstinate, defiant, and intractable nations that defy the common good. This idea replicated similar ideas proposed by Immanuel Kant in his book "*Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*" in 1795,² the Concert of Europe among the Great Powers of the 19th century that followed the Napoleonic Wars,³ and even Woodrow Wilson's arguments upon which the League of Nations was founded in 1920.^{4,5} The presumption was that a critical mass of "great" powers would idealistically and righteously chastise any recalcitrant nations by force if necessary if they disturbed the peace.

In the case of the United Nations, the Security Council made up of five permanent members from

¹ Hans Morgenthau (1948), *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*,

² Immanuel Kant (1795), *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*, 114 pp.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Perpetual_Peace:_A_Philosophical_Sketch

³ Concert of Europe 1814-1914, Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concert_of_Europe

⁴ Woodrow Wilson (1916), Address delivered at the First Annual Assemblage of the League to Enforce Peace: "American Principles", <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-delivered-the-first-annual-assemblage-the-league-enforce-peace-american-principles>

⁵ H.N. Brailsford (1917), *The United States and the League of Peace*, *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1917/04/the-united-states-and-the-league-of-peace/564827/>

the People's Republic of China, the French Republic, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States held the power to direct force against "aggressor" states. But a permanent member can veto any substantive resolution or negate any control by force initiative desired by other nations or the general assembly.

The effect of all these international initiatives has been to maintain the status quo, oppose revolutionary and liberal movements and weaken forces of nationalism. Even the value of peace treaties is dubious, in most cases:

...peace treaties are drawn, like many European treaties, not to reflect prevailing political trends, heal wounds and restore the lost equilibrium, but to impose unnatural conditions. In an industrial age such treaties tend to produce social diseases, peculiarly cancerous in their virulence...⁶

Although they tended to dampen major wars for a period of time after their formation, military incursions, civil wars, terrorism, and internal conflicts did not stop. Eventually, conflict between the great power "police" nations themselves destroyed the consensus for peace. The political theory of "political realism" might argue that individual national self-interest makes such stress inevitable. The Concert of Europe ended with World War I, the League of Nations ended with World War II, and the United Nations has had only limited effect reducing regional conflicts.⁷

Even American forefather Alexander Hamilton argued in 1787 that the use of force to maintain peace as a component of our own US constitution is unworkable. He pointed out that for a group of states to impose their will on other states by coercion is doomed to failure and destroys the very premise of cooperation for the good of all,

...the principle of legislation for sovereign States, supported by military coercion, has never been found effectual. It has rarely been attempted to be employed, but against the weaker members. And in most instances attempts to coerce the refractory and disobedient, have been the signals of bloody wars; in which one half of the confederacy has displayed its banners against the other half.⁸

Conclusion: There appears to be a difference between Enforcing the Peace vs Keeping the Peace. Enforcing the Peace involves armed intervention to force combatant parties to stop fighting each other and killing civilians. Peace Keeping involves token forces or monitors to "observe" compliance with a settlement that the formerly warring parties themselves have made. There are some unpleasant truths associated with these two missions:⁹

⁶ Edwin Borchard (1946), "The Impracticability of 'Enforcing' Peace," Yale Law Journal, Vol. 53, Issue 5, pp. 966-973. <https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yj/vol55/iss5/7/>

⁷ Alexander Wiley, Chairman (1955), "Enforcement Action Under the United Nations," Review of the United Nations Charter, 83rd US Congress, Staff Study No. 7, US Printing Office, January 1955, pp 187-215. https://www.google.com/books/edition/Review_of_the_United_Nations_Charter/X90FAAAIAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Alexander+Wiley+Enforcement+action+under+the+United+Nations,&pg=PA187&printsec=frontcover

⁸ Publius (Alexander Hamilton) (1787), Federalist Paper Number 16, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed16.asp

⁹ David C. Acheson, (2001), Enforcing the Peace: An American Bird's Eye View, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Occasional Paper, 20 pp. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/in-depth-research-reports/issue-brief/enforcing-the-peace-an-american-bird-s-eye-view/>

- Often peace enforcement means maintaining the “status quo” which is not necessarily just,
- Politically the tendency is for a nation considering forceful intervention to minimize the implications of such intervention so as not to shock their public, subsequently the scale of intervention increases upward in increments,
- Experts argue if force intervention occurs, one should think in terms of ten to twenty-five years before reconciliation can take hold, but unfortunately governments tend to lose patience long before,
- Timidity about force intervention is bad when explaining to public, but also dangerous in solving conflict. Often the extreme desire to avoid ANY casualties results in more deaths in the long run,
- Most ground troops are not trained for peace enforcement,
- Most troops do not want to be deployed for more than one or two years max,
- Good economy at home makes soldiers not want to remain in the military, which might require reintroduction of draft, which will be a difficult pill to get congress to accept,
- Most governments will not be enthusiastic at “seconding” their military to independent control of a third party like the United Nations, nor pay for it,
- There are limited people available or trained in peace enforcement or peace keeping,
- There is always a tension between humanitarian instinct (stop mass slaughter) and national interest, and
- The US does not need to always command everything or veto what it does not like.

Despite the frequent failure of nations to maintain peace, there have been some cases where the national interests of the great powers align sufficiently to preserve peace at least at the nuclear level. The unprecedented “long peace” during which there has been no conflicts between the major powers since the end of World War II to today has been variously attributed to the deterrence of nuclear weapons, the economic incentives toward cooperation caused by globalization, an increase in democratic nations, the empowerment of women, the reduction in birthrates, increased education, and peacekeeping by the United Nations.^{10,11,12}

AVOID EASY ANSWERS AND EMBRACE COMPLEXITY

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In my 2019 book, *Learning Life’s Lessons*, that built on Fulbright Awards and Rotary Global Grants, I connected progress toward peacebuilding with issues of diversity. For example, in July of 2005 the Provisional Irish Republican Army called an end to their 30-year long war against the British occupiers and Protestant loyalists in Northern Ireland After the tragic events of “Bloody Sunday” in 1972 when British soldiers fired into a demonstration of civilians in Derry, killing 14 and

¹⁰ Steven Pinker (2011), *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*, Viking Books, 832 pp.

¹¹ Steven Pinker (2013), Gifford Lecture, *The Better Angels of Our Nature: A History of Violence and Humanity*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o5X2-i_poNU#t=03m40s

¹² Long Peace, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Long_Peace

wounding 16 more, bombings and revenge killings spiked while a grass roots peace movement, led by women, slowly took shape in the thirty years that followed.

As Nobel Peace Prize recipient, Mairead Corrigan Maguire said, “bombs and bullets” were used for 400 or so years and the violence only continued. It was past time for ordinary citizens to inspire others with a vision of a new more inclusive direction toward a future that would not be Catholic or Protestant but a dynamic, healthy mix of both. As peace took hold, integrated schools would also emerge as a place that could identify common ground in a shared history, not favoring one side or the other. The following quote comes from our 2019 second edition of *147 Practical Tips for Teaching Diversity*.

All too often, instructors reinforce dichotomous thinking by focusing too much on correct answers. It would be foolish for us to claim that there are simple answers to the complexities inherent in teaching about human diversity. Issues of diversity contain an overlay of factors that requires real sophistication to address, especially where there has been conflict.

I would argue that we need real sophistication in our collective thinking to get past age-old reliance on military forces to address our conflicts.

LESSONS FROM A PANDEMIC

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After living sixteen months with the COVID-19 pandemic raging across the world, I have discovered a few “life lessons” that emerged from it. Here are a few. They are not in their order of importance.

- **COLLABORATION:** Peter Kuhn, Dean’s Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Southern California (USC) wrote: “Global citizenship is now more important than ever. COVID-19 and the challenges of racial disparities made us recognize that we are all in this together as we are sharing this one planet. A global threat can only be addressed jointly to mitigate the impact by minimizing the loss of human life and the impact on society as a whole. ...my individual survival and well-being depends above all on the common good and on public health and well-being. It is impossible to know what the future holds. But working together we can anticipate it, shape it and meet it head-on with creativity and compassion.”
- **REDEFINING “ESSENTIAL” WORKERS:** “The pandemic disease has exposed systemic sickness --- our failure to provide universal health care, our marginalization of immigrants and others, and our devaluation of the caring work that makes lives possible.”---Manuel Pastor, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and American Studies and Ethnicity at USC.
- In Phillip Morris’s essay, “How a Virus and Social Unrest Became a Test of Our Humanity” appearing in *A World Gone Viral*: “We know with certainty that select groups of people will continue to remain at high risk of getting sick or dying from the virus for the simplest

of reasons: They don't have access to health care or, ...the work in essential frontline jobs where exposure is all but certain. Each time we enter a grocery store, we stare into the eyes of a desperate mother or of others who are unable to shelter in place. That's the interconnection that we suddenly recognize: Some of our most vulnerable are our most essential."

- **THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD GOVERNMENT:** Manual Pastor also wrote: "...that government is our ultimate backstop to a good society --- is the new common sense."
- **THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEAKING THE TRUTH AND THE VALUE OF SCIENCE:** "The pandemic shows the importance of science and truth. If anything good may come out of this [pandemic], it is a recognition that health and social problems are complex and solutions need to be based on sound science." ---Arie Kaptevn, Professor of Economics and Director of the Center for Economic and Social Research at USC.
- **THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING AHEAD:** "Some of the most powerful lessons that we as a society are learning in this moment are long overdue. We need a plan to become much better prepared for future pandemics." ---Amber D. Miller, Dean of USC College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.
- **THE IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN (RACIAL, GENDER, ETC.) EQUALITY:** "We need concrete action to reform a system that has failed to meet its promise of racial equality. And we need to build a greater appreciation for our common humanity." ---Amber D. Miller, Dean of USC College of Letters, Arts and Sciences.
- **THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION:** Albert Einstein once wrote: "Two things are infinite: the Universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the Universe." So Amber D. Miller also wrote, "These past few months have also shown a light on the fact that academic expertise is critical to solving our most complex problems."
- **THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS:** "The catastrophic health threat that now exposes our weaknesses as a species also illuminates our connection. Under the threat of plague, we have been given the opportunity to reconsider how communities and societies depend on one another, despite long-standing, artificial divisions." "It's not hyperbole to say we are all pieces in a global chain of dominoes. Some of us are much more susceptible, but all are dangerously at risk of falling." ---in Phillip Morris's essay, "How a Virus and Social Unrest Became a Test of Our Humanity" appearing in "A World Gone Viral."
- **RETHINKING NEW WAYS TO LEARN.** Arizona State University president, Michal Crow, wrote, "One positive aspect of schools closing may be how districts are innovating to improve learning from home. Although equal access to tech remains a barrier, tools will be designed that may bridge divides. K-12 students will use technology to help with homework, set goals, and measure progress. And college students may find campus to be optional. ASU is one of a number of schools evolving into a new 'national service university,' ballooning its enrollment to provide high-quality and low-cost education on a larger scale." ---National Geographic Nov. 2020.
- **THE RECOGNITION OF POVERTY AND HUNGER.** "Nearly half of the world's population

lives in poverty,” according to Oxfam, an international charitable organization focused on alleviating global poverty. “The combined wealth of the world’s 2,153 richest people exceeds that of 4.6 billion people.” The Kaiser Family Foundation Health Tracking Poll has reported that “26 percent of Americans reported that since February [2020], they or a household member had gone without meals or relied on charities or government programs for groceries---including 13 percent who said they had visited a food bank or pantry for supplies. ‘The awful truth is that food insecurity is exploding here in our own backyard,’ said Oxfam America CEO and president Abby Maxman.” ---appeared in National Geographic (Nov. 2020).

Onward from 2021, it is my hope that our worldwide human community will learn at least some of the above life lessons and take appropriate actions to *implement* and address *solutions* to what they have learned.

PRIORITIES OF THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

See the RI website: <https://my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/our-priorities>. You can find some of our past issues at the Rotary District 5440 website: <https://www.rotary5440.org/sitepage/peace-building-newsletters>.