

Changing Attitudes Towards War: The Impact of the First World War

JOHN MUELLER*

After the First World War the belief became substantially widespread among developed countries that the venerable institution of war should be abandoned from their affairs. It was an idea whose time had come. Historically, the war does not seem to have been all that unusual in its duration, destructiveness, grimness, political pointlessness, economic consequences or breadth. It does seem to have been unique in that (1) it was the first major war to be preceded by substantial, organized anti-war agitation, and (2) for Europeans, it followed an unprecedentedly peaceful century during which even war enthusiasts began, perhaps unknowingly, to appreciate the virtues of peace. Thus the war served as a necessary catalyst for opinion change. The process through which the change took place owes much to British war aims and to their efforts to get the United States into the war. The article concludes with some reflections on the historical movement of ideas.

The experience of the First World War clearly changed attitudes towards war in the developed world. In an area where war had been accepted as a fixture for thousands of years, the idea now gained substantial currency that war was no longer an inevitable fact of life and that major efforts should be made to abandon it. The war marked, as Arnold Toynbee points out, the end of a 'span of five thousand years during which war had been one of mankind's master institutions'.¹ In his invaluable study of wars since 1400, Evan Luard observes that 'the First World War transformed traditional attitudes toward war. For the first time there was an almost universal sense that the deliberate launching of a war could now no longer be justified'.² There is no way to quantify this change except perhaps through a rough sort of content analysis: before the First World War it is very easy to find serious writers, analysts and politicians in Europe and the United States who hail war 'not merely as an unpleasant necessity', as Roland Stromberg has observed, 'but

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¹ Arnold Toynbee, *Experiences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 214.

² Evan Luard, *War in International Society* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 365; Bernard Brodie: 'a basic historical change had taken place in the attitudes of the European (and American) peoples toward war' (*War and Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 30); Eric Hobsbawm: 'In 1914 the peoples of Europe, for however brief a moment, went lightheartedly to slaughter and to be slaughtered. After the First World War they never did so again' (*The Age of Empire 1875-1914* (New York: Vintage, 1987), p. 326).

as spiritual salvation and hope of regeneration'.³ After the war such people (e.g., Benito Mussolini) become extremely rare.

Obviously, this change of attitude was not enough to prevent the cataclysm of 1939–45 or the many smaller wars that have taken place since 1918. But the existence of these wars should not be allowed to cloud an appreciation of the shift of opinion that was caused by the First World War. The notion that the institution of war, particularly war in the developed world, was repulsive, uncivilized, immoral and futile – voiced only by minorities before 1914 – was an idea whose time had come.⁴ It is one that has permeated most of the developed world ever since, and it has probably been an important element in the remarkably long peace that has enveloped the developed world since 1945.⁵

The first section of this article investigates *why* the First World War had such an impact on war attitudes, and the second assesses the process or mechanism through which this remarkable change took place.⁶

The final section explores some general considerations. Robert Dahl has observed that:

because of their concern with rigor and their dissatisfaction with the 'softness' of historical description, generalization, and explanation, most social scientists have turned away

³ Roland N. Stromberg, *Redemption by War: The Intellectuals and 1914* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1982), pp. 1–2.

⁴ The widespread acceptance of the notion that war had become unthinkable aided Adolf Hitler, history's supreme atavist, in his astoundingly single-minded quest to bring about another war in Europe. After the First World War most people paid Hitler the undue compliment of assuming that, no matter how belligerent his actions and demands, he could not seriously contemplate doing anything that might plunge the world into another cataclysmic war. Throughout the 1930s Hitler, a liar of truly monumental proportions, assiduously played on this perception. In virtually every speech he assured everyone – foreigners as well as the war-fearing German people – that his needs and demands were eminently limited and satisfiable, and that his fear and loathing of war was all-consuming. His arguments on this issue were agile and multifaceted. He proclaimed war to be 'infinite madness' (1933), a 'disaster' (1936), and 'an evil' (1938). Amplifying, he argued that it was intolerably costly ('no possible profits could justify the sacrifices and sufferings that war entails' – 1935), foolishly diverting, beneficial only to Communism and potentially annihilative ('I do not believe that Europe can survive such a catastrophe' – 1935). He also used his First World War experience to support his argument ('these years make me in the depths of my being wishful for peace, since I recognize the frightful horrors of war' – 1939). Incredibly, he even used his *racism* to show his peaceful intentions: 'Our racial theory therefore regards every war for the subjection and domination of an alien people as a proceeding which sooner or later changes and weakens the victor internally, and eventually brings about his defeat ... National Socialist Germany wants peace because of its fundamental convictions' – 1935 (*The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, April 1922–August 1939* (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), pp. 1046, 1348, 1513, 1198, 1231, 1669, 1218–20.)

⁵ For the development of this argument, see John Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); for a comparison of nuclear weapons and changing attitudes towards war as determinants of the long peace, see John Mueller, 'The Essential Irrelevance of Nuclear Weapons: Stability in the Postwar World', *International Security*, 13 (Fall 1988), pp. 55–79.

⁶ This portion of the article is a further and far more fully developed discussion of some considerations presented in Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, pp. 55–6.

from the historical movement of ideas. As a result, their own theories, however 'rigorous' they may be, leave out an important explanatory variable and often lead to naive reductionism.

This criticism applies, I believe, to much social science literature on war. Switzerland and other countries have avoided war for centuries, and this experience strongly suggests that war is not somehow required by human nature or by the cascading forces of history. Rather, war at base is merely a social invention that people have resorted to from time to time.⁷ If they change their ideas about its value and desirability – as happened at the time of the First World War – this can have substantial consequences. Since beliefs and ideas are often, as Dahl notes, 'a major independent variable', to ignore changes in attitude is to leave something important out of consideration.⁸

As Dahl suggests, there may be something of an inherent and rather unpleasant mushiness in the study of the 'historical movement of ideas', and analysis will tend to be inductive and after-the-fact, rather than predictive. (Or, to put it another way, anyone who came up with a good method for predicting ideas whose time had come would be likely to keep it secret because the method, applied to stock markets and commodity production, would quickly make the theorist the richest person in the world.) But it does not seem wise in this area to ignore phenomena that cannot easily be measured, treated with crisp precision or probed with deductive panache. Some preliminary reflections on the historical movement of ideas conclude the article.

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR

What made the First World War so special in its impact on attitudes towards war?

This section investigates four possibilities. The first is the most obvious: the war was unique in its sheer destructiveness. On evaluation, however, and in broader historical perspective, it seems that the First World War was not all that unusual in its duration, destructiveness, grimness, political pointlessness, economic consequences or breadth. In two important and somewhat related respects, however, the war does seem to have been quite unique: (1) it was the first major war in history to have been preceded by substantial, organized, anti-war agitation; and (2) it followed a century that was most peculiar in European history, one in which the continent had managed, perhaps without fully appreciating it, to savour the relative blessings of substantial periods of

⁷ On this issue, see Margaret Mead, 'War Is Only an Invention – Not a Biological Necessity', in Leon Bramson and George W. Goethals, eds, *War* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 269–74; and John Mueller, 'War as an Institution: Natural, but Not Necessary', in Robert A. Hinde, ed., *The Institution of War* (London: Macmillan, forthcoming).

⁸ Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1971), pp. 182–3, 188.

peace. Finally, the First World War was unique in that it was the first to raise the spectre that the science of warfare had advanced so far that the next such war could bring world annihilation; however, it seems that this belief was probably less a cause of changed attitudes towards war than a consequence of those changes.

The Destructiveness of the First World War

Norman Rich argues that the First World War, 'to a far greater extent' than earlier wars,

nourished some of the worst qualities of the human character. For four years men were systematically trained in the use of violence, for four years hatred and slaughter were extolled as the highest human virtues, for four years men were exposed to suffering and death, their sensibilities blunted to the pain and suffering of others. The brutalizing effect of war was a common experience to the population of all belligerent powers, and it left its mark on them all.⁹

In none of these respects was the First World War remotely unusual either in kind or degree. It is, in fact, difficult to imagine a war that could not be condemned for its systematic violence, intense hatred, suffering, death and blunted sensibilities.

The Great War, as it was known for two decades, was extremely costly of course: casualties were enormous, and they were intense, suffered over what could be considered to be a rather short period of time. But in broader historical perspective, the destructiveness of the war does not seem to be all that unique.

To begin with, it was not the first war of that magnitude. The Taiping rebellion, a civil war that raged through China between 1851 and 1864, probably caused a greater loss of life in absolute terms: over 30 million against less than 20 million in the First World War.¹⁰

If one looks at the costs of previous wars in relative terms, the uniqueness of the First World War is even less obvious. There were about 430 million people in Europe in 1914.¹¹ Of these a high estimate is that some 17,860,000 Europeans died in the war – 11,867,000 of the military forces, 5,993,000 civilians. This high estimate of the death rate would suggest that about 4.1 per cent

⁹ Norman Rich, *Hitler's War Aims: Ideology, the Nazi State, and the Course of Expansion* (New York: Norton, 1973), p. xxx.

¹⁰ Taiping: Ho Ping-ti, *Studies on the Population of China, 1368–1953* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 275; First World War: Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1987/88* (Washington, DC: World Priorities, 1987), pp. 29–31 (all Sivard estimates are based on data gathered by William Eckhardt). Sivard estimates the Taiping total deaths at 2,000,000, a figure that is almost inconceivably low: see pp. 236–47 in Ho's book.

¹¹ Colin McEvedy and Richard Jones, *Atlas of World Population History* (New York: Penguin, 1978), p. 19.

of the European population perished in the war.¹² A war in which one in twenty-five dies is calamitous, but there had been hundreds, probably thousands, of wars previously in which far higher casualty rates were suffered.

For example, the destruction of Carthage by Rome in 146 BC was essentially total. Indeed, in ancient times it was not uncommon for victors to 'consecrate' city-states to the gods by killing every person and animal in them and by destroying all property.¹³ If the Bible is to be taken as literal truth, the Israelites launched a series of such wars. God was reportedly concerned that the current occupants of the promised land might subvert the Israelites by teaching them the 'abominations which they have done unto their gods', thus causing the Israelites to sin. Accordingly it was required that they kill the heretics before such damage could come about (Deuteronomy 20: 16–18), and the book of Joshua relates the consequent utter annihilation of the peoples of Jericho, Ai, Libnah, Lachisk, Eglon, Hebron, Debir, Hazor and the areas in between (the people of Gibeon, however, cut a deal and were merely enslaved).

History is filled with examples of such slaughter. According to Thucydides, when the Athenians invaded the island of Melos in 416 BC, they 'put to death all the grown men whom they took and sold the women and children for slaves, and subsequently sent out five hundred colonists and inhabited the place for themselves'. Josephus' classic account of the Jewish War that ended in AD 79 catalogues massacre, pestilence, human sacrifice, famine, cannibalism and the slaughter of prisoners, resulting in the death of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions.¹⁴ When Genghis Khan's hordes moved into Russia in the thirteenth century, whole towns 'vanished' – they were smashed, burned down and depopulated. In Riazan, the captured men, women and children were killed with swords or arrows, thrown into fires or bound, cut and disembowelled.¹⁵ When Constantinople fell to the Crusaders in 1204, the victors were soon

¹² This high estimate takes the war death figures as detailed in Sivard (*World Military and Social Expenditures 1987/88*, pp. 29–31) for the European combatants – that is, it excludes the deaths suffered in the war by Australia (60,000), Canada (55,000), India (50,000), New Zealand (16,000), Turkey (1,450,000), and the United States (126,000). If these non-European peoples were included in the calculations, the proportion killed in the war would be lower because their populations would dramatically inflate the percentage base. McEvedy and Jones estimate that a total of 8 million military deaths were suffered in the war (*Atlas of World Population History*, p. 34), substantially lower than Sivard's 12,599,000. A careful and widely accepted 1923 estimate of total military deaths is also lower: between 10 and 11 million (Samuel Dumas and K. O. Vedel-Petersen, *Losses of Life Caused by War* (London: Oxford University Press, 1923), p. 144). Others estimate total battle deaths at 9 million: J. M. Winter, *The Experience of World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 206; Melvin Small and J. David Singer, *Resort to Arms: International and Civil Wars, 1816–1980* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1982), p. 89. Another estimate is 7,734,300: Jack S. Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), p. 91.

¹³ G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1986), pp. 189–98.

¹⁴ Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War* (New York: Modern Library, 1934), p. 337; Gaalya Cornfeld, ed., *Josephus: The Jewish War* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 1982), pp. 450–1.

¹⁵ Peter Brent, *Genghis Khan* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), pp. 117, 120.

'transformed into a mob driven by hate, greed, and lust', as Donald Queller puts it, and sank into a frenzy of pillage, rape and massacre, and then, in fifty years of occupation, systematically looted the city of its treasures, reducing it to ruins.¹⁶

Most appropriately, perhaps, the First World War should be compared to earlier continent-wide wars fought in Europe, such as the Thirty Years War of 1618–48, the Seven Years War of 1756–63 and the Napoleonic Wars that ended in 1815. In proportionate, and sometimes in absolute, terms these wars were often at least as costly as the First World War for individual belligerent countries. According to Frederick the Great, Prussia lost one-ninth of its population in the Seven Years War,¹⁷ a proportion higher than almost any suffered by any combatant in the wars of the twentieth century.¹⁸ And Germany's population dropped by about 20 per cent in the Thirty Years War.¹⁹ Using a high estimate for the death rate for the First World War and a low one for that of the Napoleonic Wars, it seems that, proportionately, about three times as many people died in the later war as in the earlier one – a substantial difference, perhaps, but not clearly a revolutionary one. Using a low estimate for deaths in the First World War and a high one for deaths in the Napoleonic Wars, the death rates for the two wars are about equal.²⁰ Winners lost heavily in the First World War, but some of the worst losses of the Napoleonic Wars were also suffered by a winner, Russia. And the expression 'Pyrrhic victory' stems from a battle fought in 279 bc.

Not only were there many massive, hideously destructive, wars before the First World War, but there was a substantial belief that many of the wars had been even more horrible than they actually were. Often – in fact, *typically* – war stories would substantially exaggerate the extent of the destruction and bloodshed. It seems unlikely that the utter annihilation of all those cities in Canaan as detailed in the book of Joshua actually took place, but when the authors of the Bible got around to writing the story a few centuries later

¹⁶ Donald E. Queller, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople 1201–1204* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), pp. 149–53.

¹⁷ Luard, *War in International Society*, p. 51.

¹⁸ Small and Singer, *Resort to Arms*, pp. 82–99.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Parker, *The Thirty Years War* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), p. 211.

²⁰ Sivard estimates 2,380,000 military and civilian deaths in the Napoleonic Wars (*World Military and Social Expenditures 1987/88*, p. 29) when Europe had a population of 180,000,000 (McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, p. 18), and this generates a death rate of 1.3 per cent as against 4.1 for the First World War. However, authoritative estimates of deaths in the Napoleonic Wars by nineteenth-century historians (more relevant for present purposes since these would inform the perspectives of their contemporaries) were often much higher. For example, Sivard estimates total military deaths to have been 1,380,000, but most historians held that the French alone suffered between 1,700,000 and 3,000,000 deaths; and even those who discounted that estimate argued that total military deaths in the wars were 'less than 2,000,000' (Dumas and Vedel-Petersen, *Losses of Life Caused by War*, p. 28). Levy's estimate of battle deaths in the war, 1,869,000, is substantially higher than Sivard's (*War in the Modern Great Power System*, p. 90). For the First World War estimates, see fn. 12 above.

they apparently concluded that annihilation made for a good yarn. Similar exaggerations – some of them quite spectacular – characterize much other writing on war. For centuries a legend prevailed holding that Germany had suffered a 75 per cent decline in population during the Thirty Years War.²¹ Yet common beliefs like this had never brought about a widespread revulsion with war as an institution nor did they inspire effective, organized demands that it be banished. Instead war continued to be accepted as a normal way of doing things.²²

Nor was the First World War special in the economic devastation it caused. Indeed, within a few years after the war, most of the combatant nations had substantially recovered economically: by 1929 the German economy was fully back to prewar levels, while the French economy had surpassed prewar levels by 38 per cent and the American economy by 70 per cent.²³ By contrast, many earlier European wars had been fought to the point of total economic exhaustion. Richard Kaeuper's study of the economic effects of decades of war in the late middle ages catalogues the destruction of property, the collapse of banks, the severing of trade and normal commerce, and depopulation of entire areas, the loss of cultivated land, the decline of production, the reduction of incomes, the disruption of coinage and credit, the hoarding of gold and the assessment (with attendant corruption) of confiscatory war taxes.²⁴ The Thirty Years War set back the German economy by decades and the Seven Years War brought Austria to virtual bankruptcy.²⁵ Because of war, argues Bertrand Russell, 'North Africa has never regained the level of prosperity it enjoyed under the Romans'.²⁶ The 'most meaningful question', observes Alan Milward, 'is whether the cost of war has absorbed an increasing proportion of the increasing Gross National Product of the combatants. As an economic

²¹ The legend is reported in C. V. Wedgwood, *The Thirty Years War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), p. 516.

²² One partial caveat might be made to this argument about the loss of life in war. The moral notion about the 'sanctity of life' (as opposed to the sanctity of the soul) seems to be a fairly new one, apparently arising in the course of the nineteenth century. If human life becomes more greatly treasured, the costs of war effectively rise as a consequence of such a change in perspective or values.

²³ R. J. Overy, *The Nazi Economic Recovery 1932–1938* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 16.

²⁴ Richard W. Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order: England and France in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 77–117.

²⁵ During the Thirty Years War – when almost two-thirds of the expenditures of the city of Nordlingen were devoted to direct military demands – the average wealth declined precipitously. The city gradually recovered during the next twenty years, but then another cycle of wars left it 'helpless to solve its own financial problems'. It took fifty years to recover (and then only with outside intervention) at which point it was plunged once again into deep debt by the wars of the French Revolution. See Christopher R. Friedrichs, *Urban Society in an Age of War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 154, 169.

²⁶ Bertrand Russell, *The Impact of Science on Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 74.

choice war, measured this way, has not shown any discernable long-term trend towards greater costliness'.²⁷

The First World War toppled political regimes in Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary, but it was hardly new in this respect. And to suggest that the First World War was new in the annals of warfare in its tragic futility and political pointlessness would be absurd – by most reasonable standards huge numbers of costly previous wars would rival, and often surpass, it on those dimensions. For example, the Trojan War stemmed from the abduction from Greece of the beautiful Helen. The point of the war receives the following analysis by a soldier in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*:

For every false drop in her bawdy veins,
A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple
Of her contaminated carrion weight,
A Trojan hath been slain. Since she could speak,
She hath not given so many good words breath
As for her Greeks and Trojans suffered death.

It is true that the First World War was soon viewed as a tremendous waste – enormous sacrifice for little gain. But the war *could* have been accepted as a noble necessity. After all, the war did appear to crush German expansionism and militarism, and initially at least it established a new order dominated by the victors – rather along the lines of the costly wars against Napoleon a century earlier. The revulsion and disillusion did not emerge because this massive war was peculiarly pointless but because people were ready to evaluate war using new standards.

In some respects the First World War could be seen to be an *improvement* over many earlier wars. Civilian loss, in the West at least, was proportionately quite low, while earlier wars had often witnessed the destruction of entire cities. Modern instances would include Magdeburg in 1631, Moscow in 1812 and Atlanta in 1864.²⁸ Moreover, logistics were vastly improved in the First World War so that, unlike in olden days, soldiers did not have routinely to forage among the civilian population for food, sexual release and shelter. Nor was pillage and booty-seeking, a commonplace in many wars, the standard in the

²⁷ Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society, 1939–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), p. 3.

²⁸ Because of this phenomenon the First World War was somewhat more notably destructive compared to earlier continent-wide wars if one deals only with battle deaths. Levy calculates battle deaths as a percentage of the entire population of the continent and concludes that the First World War was 3.6 times more destructive than the Napoleonic Wars by this measure and some 2.4 times more destructive than the Thirty Years War (*War in the Modern Great Power System*, pp. 89–91). However, if a war generates horror, this should logically spring from its total destruction, not simply from the deaths it inflicts on young men in uniform. Indeed, the 'unnecessary' deaths of 'innocent civilians' has usually been seen to be war's chief outrage. For an able discussion, see Robert L. Holmes, *On War and Morality* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

First World War. It was the motto even of the well-organized Gustavus Adolphus that 'war must support war'.²⁹ Starvation, both of soldiers and of civilians, very often found in earlier wars, was far less of a problem in the First World War. An Italian writer in the 1530s observed that for over twenty years civilians had seen 'nothing but scenes of infinite slaughter, plunder and destruction of multitudes of towns and cities, attended with the licentiousness of soldiers no less destructive to friends than foes'.³⁰ Knights in the fourteenth century, observes Kaeuper, 'seem to have accepted arson and pillage as normal and expected accompaniments of campaigning'. As Henry V put it jauntily, 'War without fire is like sausages without mustard'.³¹

In the First World War prisoners of war were generally well treated by many standards. In ancient warfare it was routine for the victors to slaughter the retreating enemy: after routing the Persians Alexander the Great's forces pursued and supposedly killed 100,000 in a massacre that lasted for miles and for hours; it was Genghis Khan's motto that 'the vanquished can never be the friends of the victors; the death of the former is necessary therefore for the safety of the latter', and some 18,000,000 reportedly fell victim to this policy in China alone.³² Nor, of course, were soldiers or civilians enslaved in the First World War. In many earlier eras defeat in war meant automatic enslavement for any survivors.

Moreover, with the successful development of modern medicine and of institutions like the Red Cross, a wounded soldier was far more likely to recover than in earlier wars where the non-ambulatory wounded were characteristically abandoned on the battlefield to die in lingering agony from exposure and blood loss. Disease was also becoming far less of a scourge than in most earlier wars. In addition, the battle dead were accorded comparative respect and honour in the First World War: after Waterloo the tens of thousands of corpses left on the battlefield were systematically stripped of valuables, equipment, brass, clothes and finally of teeth, used at the time for dentures which for years thereafter were known as 'Waterloo teeth'.³³ And, while regimes toppled in the First World War, the political leaders who started the war, unlike

²⁹ Allan R. Millet and William B. Moreland, 'What Happened? The Problem of Causation in International Affairs', in Klaus Knorr, ed., *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976), p. 15; see also Philippe Contamine, *War in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), p. 57.

³⁰ J. R. Hale, *War and Society in Renaissance Europe 1450-1620* (New York: St Martin's, 1985), p. 179.

³¹ Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order*, p. 84.

³² Lynn Montross, *War Through the Ages* (New York: Harper, 1944), pp. 27, 145. To Genghis Khan, the greatest pleasure of life is 'to defeat your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to ride their horses, and to clasp to your breast their wives and daughters' (Anthony Kelleet, *Combat Motivation* (Boston, Mass.: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982), pp. 292-3).

³³ David Howarth, *Waterloo: Day of Battle* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 207.

Henry V, Frederick the Great, Gustavus Adolphus or Napoleon, did not have to be concerned about being killed in battle.

The First World War is often seen to be unusual because it was so unromantic. As Roland Stromberg observes, 'romantic illusions vanished in the grimness of trench warfare and mass slaughter . . . [the war] was to destroy forever the heroic image of war'.³⁴ But if that is so, it is because people were ready to see, and to be repulsed by, the grimness of warfare.³⁵ Mud, filth and leeches were not invented in 1914 but are standard correlates of warfare, and 'mass slaughter' is the whole point. Because of improvements in sanitation it is probable that the average soldier in the trenches was less afflicted by dysentery than was the average knight encased in shining armour; but this perennial wartime affliction somehow was taken to give evidence of war's degradation and repulsiveness only in the modern case.

In the First World War, as in every war before it, men met in swarms and attempted to annihilate one another with projectiles and by hacking and slashing with sharp or blunt instruments. Why the 1914 method should somehow be seen to be worse than the earlier is not at all clear. The machine gun was an innovation, but the air of battle had been filled with showers of deadly lead since firearms had been invented. Tanks and long-range artillery (like the long bow before them) may have made some aspects of battle more 'impersonal', but men generally tend to find killing each other at long range less repugnant than up close – consider the repellent impact of the phrases 'hand to hand combat' and 'killing in cold blood'. Thus, technological advances could have been taken to be a psychic improvement, making warfare less crude and dirty, more nearly immaculate. People found gas to be a repulsive form of warfare, but in fact gas was not a great killer: among Americans, for example, only 2 per cent of those wounded by gas died as compared to 24 per cent of those wounded by bullets or shrapnel; for the British the comparison was 3 and 37; for the Germans it was 3 and 43.³⁶ Therefore it would have been entirely possible to embrace gas as a more humane form of warfare – one

³⁴ Stromberg, *Redemption by War*, p. 152; see also Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford, 1975), chap. 1.

³⁵ Conceivably this receptivity was heightened by the hothouse romanticism, glorifying war, death, annihilation and destruction for their redemptive and cleansing qualities, that was so fashionable among intellectuals before 1914. For example, in 'Peace', a poem written as the war began, Rupert Brooke thanks God for having 'matched us with His hour', compares the entry into war 'as swimmers into cleanness leaping', and finds 'release' in war where 'the worst friend and enemy is but Death'. (For a superb discussion, see Stromberg, *Redemption by War*.) Because of this phenomenon, it seems possible Europeans were peculiarly ripe for disillusionment. However, romanticism about war goes back to the origins of the institution. And the famous and pathetic demise of the quintessential romantic, Lord Byron, in the Greek war of independence in 1824 seems to have had no lasting impact on war romanticism.

³⁶ H. L. Gilchrist, *A Comparative Study of World War Casualties from Gas and Other Weapons* (Edgewood Arsenal, Md: Chemical Warfare School, 1928), p. 48.

allowing battles to be decided with minimal loss of life.³⁷ And it is far from obvious why a man wearing a gas mask is held to be foolish, inhuman and monstrous, but not one whose head is encased in a knight's helmet.³⁸ Ugliness, as the poet didn't say, lies in the eye of the beholder.

A most instructive comparison can be made with the American Civil War of 1861–65, which is often called the first modern war. There are quite a few similarities between the two wars. Both were triggered by incidents that, in historical perspective, were fairly trivial. Both initially inspired great enthusiasm. And both came to rely on conscription and degenerated into four years of warfare characterized by grindingly inconclusive battles, appalling bloodshed and rising bitterness. Thus, in its own terms the American Civil War was as brutal and horrible as the First World War. Yet the experience did not bring about a rejection of war among the American people – indeed quite soon Americans were romanticizing about war just like Europeans who had not yet undergone the experience of modern war.³⁹ Clearly, the war's massive destructiveness was not enough, alone, to discredit the time-honoured institution. Like previous wars, the Civil War came too early historically to have a lasting impact on war attitudes, even among Americans. The notion that war should be eliminated from the course of human affairs was an idea whose time had yet to come.

The Existence of the Prewar Anti-war Movement

While the costs and horrors of the First World War may not have been notably unusual in historical perspective, the war seems to have been truly unique in that it was the first in history to have been preceded by substantial anti-war agitation. There have been individual war opponents throughout history, but organized peace groups appeared for the first time only in 1815 and they

³⁷ Some people, in fact, did draw this lesson. H. L. Gilchrist, the US Army's leading expert on the medical effects of chemical warfare, concluded that gas 'is the most humane method of warfare ever applied on the battle field' (*A Comparative Study of World War Casualties*, p. 47). In 1925, the British defence analyst, Basil Liddell Hart, speculated that 'gas may well prove the salvation of civilization from otherwise inevitable collapse in case of another world war' (John Mearsheimer, *Liddell Hart and the Weight of History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 90). See also Richard Stockton, *Inevitable War* (New York: Perth, 1932), pp. 536–9.

³⁸ Interestingly, in Serge Eisenstein's classic 1938 film, *Alexander Nevsky*, invading Teutonic knights are made to appear menacing and inhuman precisely because of their helmets.

³⁹ Gerald F. Linderman, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987), pp. 266–97; Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, pp. 30–2, 38–9. Paul Fussell argues that the First World War was the first literary war (*The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 157). However, as Edmund Wilson points out, much the same could be said about the American Civil War (*Patriotic Gore* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), p. ix). J. M. Winter observes that the difference was that the First World War writings became 'vastly popular', producing such spectacular best sellers as Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Such literature, he argues, 'emphatically and repeatedly touched a chord in public taste and popular memory' (*The Experience of World War I*, p. 826). That is, the war was not new because it affected the writers, but because it touched the postwar readers.

achieved significant public notice and momentum only by the 1880s or so. For some forty years before 1914, then, there had been a voice in European and American politics urging that war was repulsive, immoral, uncivilized and futile.⁴⁰

Constructed on arguments that had been around for centuries and were sometimes related to other thought patterns of the era like liberalism and the idea of progress, the anti-war movement of the late nineteenth century was a shifting, and sometimes uncomfortable, coalition of voices calling for the elimination of war. There were the moralists, like Quakers, who found war, like other forms of killing, to be immoral. There were those whose objections were essentially aesthetic: they found the carnage and destruction of war to be disgusting and repulsive. There were those who felt war to be uncivilized, a throwback to a barbaric past that the progressive, cultured sophisticates of nineteenth-century Europe ought now to reject. There were those whose objections were primarily practical: war and conquest, they had come to believe, were futile and counterproductive, particularly from an economic standpoint, and, as an institution of international contest, war ought now to be replaced by trade and the commercial spirit. These war opponents were joined by socialists and others who had concluded that war was essentially a mechanism through which the capitalist class carried out its disputes, using the working classes as cannon fodder. Among their activities, the various elements of the anti-war movement were devoted to exploring alternatives to war such as arbitration and international law and organization, and to developing mechanisms, like disarmament, that might reduce its frequency or consequences.

The anti-war movement was growing substantially at the turn of the century, but it was still very much a minority movement. Its voice was largely drowned out by those who still held war to be a method for resolving international disputes that was natural, inevitable, honorable, thrilling, manly, invigorating, necessary and often progressive, glorious and desirable.⁴¹

But while the anti-war people were often ridiculed, their gadfly arguments were persistent and unavoidable, and the existence of the movement probably helped Europeans and Americans to look at the institution of war in a new way when the massive conflict of 1914–18 entered their experience. The First World War served, therefore, essentially as a catalyst. It was not the first horrible war in history, but it was the first in which people were widely capable of recognizing and being thoroughly repulsed by those horrors and in which they were substantially aware that viable alternatives existed.

⁴⁰ A. C. F. Beales, *The History of Peace: A Short Account of the Organised Movements for International Peace* (New York: Dial, 1931); F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Roger Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World Without War: The Peace Movement and German Society, 1892–1914* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), chap. 1; Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978), chap. 2; Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, chap. 1.

⁴¹ See Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, chap. 2.

The Peculiarity of the 1815–1914 Experience

Another unique aspect of the First World War derives from its historical setting: for Europeans, the war followed a century characterized by peace and by wars that had proved to be small and manageable. Between 1815 and 1854 there was an era of near-total peace within Europe, something that was utterly unprecedented in its history. There were several significant wars in Europe between 1854 and 1871, but these were all short and, in their own terms, efficient – goals were accomplished at costs that were quite small by most historical standards. Then, from 1871 until 1914 Europe lapsed into another period of near-total peace that was even longer than the first (though it was marred by small wars on the fringes of Europe, by colonial wars and by a distant Great Power war between Russia and Japan in 1904). The uniqueness of these peaceful periods in French and British history is indicated by the data in Table 1.⁴²

Before 1815 there were no prolonged periods of peace on the continent, and for the most part war was a regular, expected part of the rhythm of events. As Luard observes, the two long stretches in the nineteenth century in which all major European countries ‘were at peace with each other, both in Europe and outside, despite many disputes and much competition for territory,’ represent ‘a dramatic change from the pattern of war in the preceding age, when major powers were in recurrent warfare against each other’.⁴³ Partly because of this remarkable new phenomenon, economic and demographic growth in Europe exploded.⁴⁴

These developments were used by members of the anti-war movement to

⁴² As Luard points out, however, there were quite a few civil wars in Europe during this time, many of them with international implications (*War in International Society*, pp. 54–6).

⁴³ *War in International Society*, pp. 58–9.

⁴⁴ Between 1700 and 1800, the population of Europe increased by 50 per cent; between 1800 and 1900, it increased by 117 per cent (McEvedy and Jones, *Atlas of World Population History*, p. 18). In the 120 years between 1700 and 1820 the real gross domestic product per capita in Britain increased by 52 per cent; in the ninety-three years from 1820 to 1913, it rose by 229 per cent. For France the comparable figures were 37 per cent and 213 per cent (Angus Maddison, ‘A Comparison of Levels of GDP Per Capita in Developed and Developing Countries, 1700–1980’, *Journal of Economic History*, 43 (1983), 30). In the eighty years from 1750 to 1830, the real gross national product per capita for developed countries rose by 30 per cent; in the eighty-three years between 1830 and 1913, it grew by 179 per cent (Paul Bairoch, ‘The Main Trends in National Economic Disparities since the Industrial Revolution’, in P. Bairoch and M. Levy-Lebager, eds, *Disparities in Economic Development since the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1981), p. 7). In 1850, ten countries had adult illiteracy rates of less than 30 per cent; in 1913, seventeen had adult illiteracy rates of less than 10 per cent. In the sixty years between 1780 and 1840 world trade increased by 245 per cent; in the sixty years between 1840 and 1900 it increased by 1,241 per cent (Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875–1914*, pp. 345, 349). Obviously, this growth in trade did not prevent the small European wars in mid-century or the cataclysmic one in 1914. But, while trade may not lead inexorably to peace, it seems clear that peace leads to, or at any rate facilitates, trade and economic growth. That is, peace ought to be seen not as a dependent, but rather as an independent, variable in such considerations. Thus the 1992 economic unity of Europe and the building of a long-envisioned channel tunnel should be seen as the consequences of peace, not its cause.

TABLE 1 *Soldiers Killed or Wounded in Battle, as a Percentage of the Population, by Decades, 1630–1919*

Decade	France	Great Britain
1630–39	0.09	–
1640–49	0.32	0.45
1650–59	0.05	0.70
1660–69	0.01	0.16
1670–79	0.21	0.13
1680–89	0.01	–
1690–99	0.31	0.35
1700–09	0.58	0.58
1710–19	0.26	0.12
1720–29	–	–
1730–39	0.10	–
1740–49	0.36	0.33
1750–59	0.14	0.17
1760–69	0.07	0.06
1770–79	0.01	0.05
1780–89	0.03	0.09
1790–99	1.48	0.23
1800–09	1.19	0.13
1810–19	1.54	0.37
1820–29	*	*
1830–39	–	–
1840–49	–	*
1850–59	0.13	0.10
1860–69	–	–
1870–79	0.43	–
1880–89	–	–
1890–99	–	0.01
1900–09	–	0.01
1910–19	5.63	2.61

* 0.001 or less.

Source: Quincy Wright, *A Study of War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), pp. 658, 660.

argue that peace was a blessed condition and that war was a barbarism people in civilized Europe ought now to put behind them. But the warlessness and the economic and social progress of nineteenth-century Europe did not by themselves lead to a broad rejection of war. As noted, most people still found war to be thrilling and many argued that it was progressive and desirable, a point of view that if anything became *more* popular and trendy at the end of the century.⁴⁵ None the less, the inhabitants of nineteenth-century Europe, perhaps without fully noticing, enjoyed the benefits of peace even as they continued to assume war to be a normal fact of life and even as most continued

⁴⁵ See fn. 35 above and Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, pp. 38–46.

to thrill at the thought of it. Accordingly, when they plunged into the cataclysm of the First World War the experience came as a special shock.

Moreover, the peculiarities of the 1815–1914 period seem even to have affected many war advocates who had come to operate under the assumption that war would be not only heroic and decisive but also minimally inconvenient. Quintessential war glorifiers like Heinrich von Treitschke idealized war in considerable part because they believed ‘wars will become rarer and shorter, but at the same time far more sanguinary’.⁴⁶ In their experience, long, continent-wide wars like the Napoleonic Wars or the Seven Years War were a thing of the past. All the mid-century wars in Europe had been brief, and this was new: as Luard observes, ‘very short wars (two months or less) have been virtually confined to the last century or so, since it is only in this period that mobility has been sufficient to allow the type of lightning military campaign required’.⁴⁷ Advocates of war deftly ignored the contemporary long wars in other parts of the world – including the American Civil War, which one German general dismissed as ‘armed mobs chasing each other around the country, from whom nothing can be learned’.⁴⁸ And they assumed that a war in Europe would be ‘brisk and merry’, as one German diplomat put it in 1914.⁴⁹

For war advocates like Treitschke, this condition was literally a godsend: one could still have wars with all their nobility, heroism and sublimity, while the downside of war – the distasteful bloodshed – would be kept to a bearable minimum. He found it inevitable that ‘the God above us will see to it that war shall return again, a terrible medicine for mankind diseased’. He observed, however, that wars would become ‘both shorter and rarer’ because of the ‘progress of culture’, which ‘renders men’s lives ever more harmonious’.

It is often argued that as economic interdependence increases people will turn against war. For Treitschke, clearly, the opposite was the case: because of the burgeoning, interdependent economic system, he argued,

civilized nations suffer far more than savages from the economic ravages of war, especially through the disturbance of the artificially existing credit system, which may have frightful consequences in a modern war ... Therefore wars must become rarer and shorter, owing to man’s natural horror of bloodshed as well as to the size and quality of modern armies, for it is impossible to see how the burdens of a great war

⁴⁶ Heinrich von Treitschke, *Politics* (New York: Macmillan, 1916), Vol. 2, p. 443. In England, the Revd Father H. I. D. Ryder was observing that war ‘is calculated to evoke some of the best qualities of human nature, giving the spirit a predominance over the flesh’. And he reminded his readers that ‘under the touch of civilisation war has lost some of its most offensive features’. In particular, he felt, non-combatants could now be regarded ‘as henceforth excluded from the casualties of civilised warfare’ (H. I. D. Ryder, ‘The Ethics of War’, *The Nineteenth Century*, 45 (1899), 726–7).

⁴⁷ Luard, *War in International Society*, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, p. 48.

⁴⁹ Richard Ned Lebow, *Between Peace and War* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 251.

could long be borne under the present conditions. But it would be false to conclude that wars can ever cease. They neither can nor should.⁵⁰

Thus, although there were a few war advocates who even welcomed the prospect of a long war,⁵¹ much of the prewar enthusiasm for war was based on the assumption that any future war would be brief and bearable.⁵² As Sigmund Freud reflected in a 1915 essay, 'we pictured it as a chivalrous passage of arms, which would limit itself to establishing the superiority of one side in the struggle, while as far as possible avoiding acute suffering that could contribute nothing to the decision'. While they disagreed with war opponents about the value of war, most war enthusiasts would agree that a long war of attrition was singularly undesirable. When a war of that sort eventually materialized, the premise upon which their romanticism rested was shattered. The war brought 'disillusionment', observed Freud:

Not only is it more bloody and more destructive than any war of other days ...; it is at least as cruel, as embittered, as implacable as any that preceded it ... Moreover, it has brought to light an almost incredible phenomenon: the civilized nations know and understand one another so little that one can turn against the other with hate and loathing.⁵³

In this regard, one other consideration might be mentioned. Kaeuper has observed that war became 'an essential and characteristic function of Medieval states' not only because the medieval chivalric code glorified 'war as the greatest test and expression of manhood', but also because war was seen to be economically profitable: 'making a profit, and looking forward to it eagerly, was entirely compatible with the chivalric ethos; only post-Medieval adaptations of the ideas of chivalry have considered profit-making a strain and debasement of pure ideals'.⁵⁴ It is not particularly clear when this change took place, but the nineteenth-century historian, H. T. Buckle, gives much of the credit for initiating it to Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* of 1776, which Buckle calls 'probably the most important book that has ever been written'. The book helped to undermine the 'warlike spirit', Buckle suggests, because it convincingly demonstrated that the best path to prosperity was in the free trade of

⁵⁰ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, pp. 69–70.

⁵¹ The German general, Friedrich von Bernhardi, thought that another seven years war 'will unify and elevate the people and destroy the diseases which threaten the national health' (Friedrich von Bernhardi, *Britain as Germany's Vassal* (New York: Doran, 1914), p. 233). Some other Germans agreed: see Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World Without War*, pp. 390–1.

⁵² On the short-war illusion, see Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, pp. 46–51; L. L. Farrar, Jr, *The Short-War Illusion* (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio, 1973); Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Stephen Van Evera, 'The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War', *International Security*, 9 (Summer, 1984), 58–107. Stanley Engerman suggests a sort of parallel in the history of boxing where rule changes have fended off the moralists and kept the sport alive by introducing rounds, shortening the duration of matches and creating the technical knockout.

⁵³ Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. 14 (London: Hogarth, 1957), pp. 278–9.

⁵⁴ Kaeuper, *War, Justice, and Public Order*, pp. 11–14.

commodities, not, as previously supposed, in the accumulation of gold, which tended to be played, to use jargon not then in vogue, as a zero-sum game.⁵⁵

Whatever the process, the notion that war could be economically profitable had been substantially undermined by the late nineteenth century.⁵⁶ Treitschke, in fact, is disgusted by the notion that something as sublime as a war should be fought for mere 'material advantage'. 'Modern wars', he urged, 'are not fought for the sake of booty.'⁵⁷ Homer Lea, an American military analyst, determined that commercialism was a 'debased' form of strife because it lacks 'honor or heroism'.⁵⁸

Accordingly, where earlier war enthusiasts had celebrated war both for its nobility *and* for its profitability, those in 1914 had restricted themselves primarily to its nobility alone.⁵⁹ To that degree, war enthusiasm had already been undermined when the war came about, and it was therefore easier to shatter.

Premonitions of Apocalypse

Finally, it is possible that the First World War is unique because it raised the spectre that through some combination of aerial bombardment and gas or bacteriological poisoning the next large war could lead to world annihilation – the destruction of winner and loser alike.

This view was rather widely held between the wars. In 1925 Winston Churchill observed that war was now 'the potential destroyer of the human race . . . Mankind has never been in this position before. Without having improved appreciably in virtue or enjoying wiser guidance, it has got into its own hands for the first time the tools by which it can unfailingly accomplish its own extermination'. And Freud concludes his 1930 book, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, by declaring, 'Men have brought their powers of subduing nature to such a pitch that by using them they could now very easily exterminate one another to the last man'.⁶⁰

As these statements suggest, it was largely the impressive achievements of science that were inspiring these apocalyptic visions, and it is true, of course, that during the war science had fabricated effective new methods for killing

⁵⁵ Henry Thomas Buckle, *History of Civilization in England*, Vol. I (New York: Appleton, 1862), pp. 151–8.

⁵⁶ See Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, p. 28.

⁵⁷ Treitschke, *Politics*, Vol. 1, p. 15.

⁵⁸ Homer Lea, *The Valor of Ignorance* (New York: Harper, 1909), p. 45.

⁵⁹ In 1910 William James concluded that war 'in ancient times' was 'profitable, as well as the most exciting, way of living', while 'modern war is so expensive that we feel trade to be a better avenue to plunder'. War persists, he felt, not for economic reasons but because 'modern man inherits all the innate pugnacity and all the love of glory of his ancestors . . . Without any exception known to me, militarist authors take a highly mystical view of their subject' (William James, *Memories and Studies* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1911), pp. 268–9, 277).

⁶⁰ Winston S. Churchill, *Amid These Storms: Thoughts and Adventures* (New York: Scribner's, 1932), p. 248; Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (London: Hogarth, 1930), p. 144.

large numbers of people. With the development of long-range artillery and particularly the bomber, it was reasonable to anticipate that these methods of slaughter might well be visited directly upon the civilian population in the next great war. And in fact, of course, they were – though not to the point of extermination.

There are at least two reasons for discounting this phenomenon as an important cause of the shift of opinion on war, however. Firstly, as indicated earlier, wars of annihilation and wars in which civilians were slaughtered were hardly new: history is filled with examples. The fact that annihilation could now be *mutual* was new perhaps, but this distinction may be a bit delicate. In eras in which wars of annihilation were common, the fact that winner and loser were not simultaneously destroyed was more a matter of sequencing than anything else. Side A might annihilate B, but unless A could then dominate all others it stood a significant risk that in the next war with side C it would itself be annihilated. A war syndrome with stakes like that had not led to substantial efforts to abolish war in the past.

Secondly, it seems likely that this phenomenon was more a result of anti-war feeling than its cause: that is, people opposed to war in a sense *wanted* to believe it would be cataclysmic in the desperate hope that this would make it less likely to occur. This is suggested by the timing of the apocalyptic literature: for the most part this came late, in the 1930s, when the danger of another war was growing, not in the 1920s as a direct result of the First World War.

Among the fiction of the era, a few stories and novels depicting the next war as a world-wide cataclysm did appear shortly after the First World War. But, as I. F. Clarke notes in his study of the fiction of the era, 'it is noteworthy that the large-scale production of tales of the future did not begin until 1931'. And his observation that 'the authors all described war in order to teach peace' seems especially apt.⁶¹ It was less that the anticipated horrors of the next Great War created the yearning for peace than that the yearning for peace caused people to anticipate that the next war would be cataclysmic.

A similar pattern is found in the official discussions in Britain about the future danger of aerial bombardment. As early as 1917 the Cabinet was informed that 'the day may not be far off when aerial operations with their devastation of enemy towns and destruction of industrial and populous centres on a vast scale may become the *principal* operation of war'.⁶² But this fear seems to have become general only in the 1930s when another war began to loom as a distinct possibility (and when, of course, the aeroplane had been developed much more fully). It was, as one military analyst put it at the time, 'a brain child born in the early years of the century and turned into a Frankenstein in the early 1930s'.⁶³

⁶¹ I. F. Clarke, *Voices Prophesying War, 1763–1984* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 169–70.

⁶² Uri Bialer, *Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics, 1932–1939* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1980), pp. 1–2.

⁶³ Bialer, *Shadow of the Bomber*, p. 12, see also p. 2.

It is also noteworthy in this regard that those few in Europe who still wanted war – Adolf Hitler in particular – correctly assumed that the doomsday theorists were wrong.⁶⁴

THE MECHANISMS OF ATTITUDE CHANGE

Before the First World War, the idea that war ought to be abolished had received considerable notice, but it appears that this idea was boosted to ascendance at the end of the war – it became an idea whose time had come – in substantial degree because of two key phenomena relating to the victors: (1) permanent peace became a central British war aim from the start of the war, and (2) the promise of a war to end war became important to entice the Americans into the conflict. The groundwork for this had been laid by the prewar peace movement.

Peace as a British War Aim

Most of the belligerents – France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary – were fighting for motives that were rather old-fashioned and easily understood: they were locked into mortal combat over issues of turf and continental hegemony. The British, on the other hand, were fighting for more ephemeral reasons to a substantial degree. Although such tangible issues as their naval arms race with Germany and strategic calculations about the continental balance of power were hardly irrelevant, their entrance into the war was triggered when Germany brutally invaded neutral Belgium and Luxembourg, and it was this circumstance, more than any other, that impelled the remarkable public outcry in Britain against Germany as the war broke out in August 1914. As David Lloyd George recalls, the war ‘leapt into popularity’ with ‘the threatened invasion of Belgium’ which ‘set the nation on fire from sea to sea’.⁶⁵ Thus, Britain was fighting in part for a rather pacifistic principle: small countries which wish to avoid being engulfed by Great Power conflicts, and in fact wish to drop out of the war system entirely, should be allowed to do so.

As early as 25 September, Britain’s Liberal Prime Minister, H. H. Asquith, was not only making this clear (the smaller countries ‘must be recognized as having exactly as good a title as their more powerful neighbours . . . to a place in the sun’), but he was also broadening the principle, calling for ‘the definite repudiation of militarism as the governing factor in the relations of states and

⁶⁴ Bialer, *Shadow of the Bomber*, pp. 133–4. For non-apocalyptic visions in the 1930s of a future war, see Stockton, *Inevitable War*, pp. 501–49; and R. Ernest Dupuy and George Fielding Eliot, *If War Comes* (New York: Macmillan, 1937).

⁶⁵ David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. 1 (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1933), pp. 65–6. For the impact of the invasion of Belgium in turning pacifist and neutralist factions in Britain into war supporters, see Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The ‘Peace Movement’ in Britain, 1914–1919* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976), pp. 30–2.

in the future moulding of the European world' and for 'the substitution for force ... of a real European partnership based on the recognition of equal rights and established and enforced by a common will'.⁶⁶ This is impressive because, although Britain had been a hotbed of anti-war agitation before 1914, Asquith had not been in those ranks (although he had supported, somewhat self-servingly, efforts to dampen the costly prewar international arms competition).⁶⁷ Accordingly, in his 1914 speech he appears to be rather startled to hear himself suddenly making noises similar to those made by the most idealistic members of the anti-war movement: 'A year ago', he observed, his proposals 'would have sounded like a Utopian idea'. But, he argued, 'If and when this war is decided in favour of the allies it will at once come within the range and before long the grasp of European statesmanship'.⁶⁸ Thus, for the British at least, peace early on became a war aim – not merely victorious peace but, if at all possible, perpetual, permanent, enforced peace.

The Americans

The United States also played an important role in the growth of this idea. In an illuminating study of this process published in 1940, the Swiss political scientist William Rappard observes (with flourish) that, while the 'seed' of the idea may largely have been developed in Britain, it 'fructified in America, where it was transplanted with assiduous care by British gardeners and whence it was later carried back to Europe in countless specimens upon the wings of President Wilson's eloquence'.⁶⁹

From the beginning the British took a considerable interest in American opinion on the war, and of course they were fully aware that American military participation on their side could help substantially to achieve victory. As David Lloyd George, who became Prime Minister in 1916, frankly recalled later, 'allied statesmen were all conscious of the fact that a time would come when America

⁶⁶ William E. Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 20. For a similar statement by the Labour party on 14 October, see Arno Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917–1918* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959), p. 143.

⁶⁷ Robbins, *The Abolition of War*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War*, p. 20. Before the year was out H. G. Wells, also no particular friend of the prewar peace movement, had penned a book on the issue of war aims in which he apparently created the slogan later to be recalled with such bitterness and irony: 'The War That Will End War'. The immediate cause of the war, Wells observed, was the invasion of Luxembourg and Belgium, but the war had quickly become not one of 'nations but of mankind' and its object should be to 'exorcise a world-madness and end an age'. It was, he urged, 'a war for peace' (H. G. Wells, *The War That Will End War* (New York: Duffield, 1914), pp. 9, 12, 14).

⁶⁹ Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War*, p. 21.

could intervene with irresistible effect'. Accordingly, 'peace aims were framed in such a way as to convince America, and especially the pacific and anti-Imperialist American President, that their objectives were fundamentally just'.⁷⁰

During his tenure in office, that President, Woodrow Wilson, twice ordered American troops into Mexico and rather half-heartedly even sent some to Russia during the civil war that followed the 1917 revolution there. Accordingly it would certainly not be accurate to characterize him as the purest of pacifists. None the less, as the British were well aware, his inclinations were strongly in that direction: his 'distaste for war', observes Russell Weigley, was 'so acute that it verged on pacifism'. As Arno Mayer has put it, Wilson 'had a pronounced horror of war'. Alexander and Juliette George discuss his 'antipathy to violence'.⁷¹

To play on Wilson's proclivities and to entice him into the war on their side, the British emphasized arguments to which they were naturally inclined anyway and which, further, were sensible for maintaining the morale of their own troops. Firstly, they stressed the attractive nobility of their cause: as Asquith put it in 1917, they were 'waging, not only a war for peace, but a war against war'.⁷² Secondly, to portray the Germans as the bad guys, they exaggerated stories about atrocities committed by German soldiers against Belgian civilians, and they embellished the fiendishness of chemical warfare which had been introduced into combat by the Germans in 1915 – for example, for

⁷⁰ David Lloyd George, *The Truth About the Peace Treaties* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), Vol. 1, p. 22. See also Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War*, pp. 46–7; Sondra R. Herman, *Eleven Against War: Studies in American International Thought, 1898–1921* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), p. 195.

⁷¹ Russell Weigley, 'Military and Civilian Leadership', in Klaus Knorr, ed., *Historical Dimensions of National Security Problems* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1976), p. 62; Mayer, *Political Origins of the New Diplomacy, 1917–1918*, p. 347; Alexander and Juliette L. George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study* (New York: John Day, 1956), p. 173. Wilson had long been an enthusiastic supporter of such devices promoted by the anti-war movement as arbitration and free trade; he had joined the American Peace Society in 1908, had addressed the Universal Peace Union in 1912 and had appointed a man strongly hostile to war, William Jennings Bryan, as his first Secretary of State. He was no tool of the anti-war movement, but much of his idealistic thinking about foreign affairs was consonant with its point of view (David S. Patterson, *Toward a Warless World: The Travail of the American Peace Movement, 1887–1914* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976), pp. 205–9; see also Herman, *Eleven Against War*, chap. 7). A desire to make his mark in world history was also not entirely absent from his motives: as one of his principal advisers, Colonel Edward M. House, wrote strokingly to him in 1918, 'The sentiment is growing rapidly everywhere in favor of some organized opposition to war and I think it essential that you should guide the movement ... It is one of the things with which your name should be linked during the ages' (Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War*, p. 33; see also George and George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House*, chaps 9–11). Wilson's famous desire to 'make the world safe for democracy' was in large part a pacifist motivation. He and many others in Britain, France and the United States had become convinced that, as Lloyd George put it later, 'Freedom is the only warranty of Peace' (Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War*, pp. 42–4).

⁷² Rappard, *The Quest for Peace Since the World War*, p. 46.

dramatic effect they quintupled their gas casualty figures from the first German attack.⁷³ As part of this creative act of international libel, they condemned the Germans from the start for their addiction to ‘militarism’. A result of this was to further associate militarism with badness.⁷⁴

Gradually, Wilson and the American people came around. There were many reasons for the American entry into the war, but high among them, as Arthur Link stresses, was Wilson’s desire that the ‘United States fulfill its mission to insure a just and lasting peace of reconciliation’.⁷⁵

Was Wilson Necessary?

At the end of the war in 1918 Wilson was quite probably the most famous, the most influential and the most revered man in the world. Although this aura dissipated in the acrimony of the peace talks and as the US Senate refused to ratify his cherished League of Nations treaty, Wilson, more than anyone else, had established perpetual peace as a primary goal for the international system.

But it does not seem that the idea that war ought to be abolished in the ‘civilized’ world required Wilson to be its entrepreneur. It was already common currency by 1914 and had plenty of supporters in Britain and France – and, for that matter, in Germany and Austria.⁷⁶ And, as noted earlier, the idea was quickly embraced and promulgated by prominent British decision makers and intellectuals as soon as the war broke out.

In the United States peace societies had, as Charles Chatfield observes, ‘acquired unprecedented strength and reputation’ in the decade before the

⁷³ Frederic J. Brown, *Chemical Warfare: A Study in Restraints* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 14.

⁷⁴ See Richard Hofstadter, *Social Darwinism in American Thought* (New York: Braziller, 1959), pp. 196–8. For an official American depiction of the connection, see Wallace Notestein and Elmer E. Stoll, eds, *Conquest and Kultur: Aims of the Germans in Their Own Words* (Washington, DC: US Government, Committee on Public Information, 1917). For a discussion of the destruction of Prussian militarism as an important British war aim, see John Gooch, *The Prospect of War: Studies in British Defence Policy, 1847–1942* (London: Frank Cass, 1981), chap. 7. On the effectiveness of British propaganda, see James Duane Squires, *British Propaganda at Home and in the United States From 1914 to 1917* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935).

⁷⁵ Arthur S. Link, *Wilson, the Diplomatist: A Look at his Major Foreign Policies* (Baltimore, Md: Johns Hopkins Press, 1957), pp. 88–9.

⁷⁶ On the German and Austrian prewar peace movement, see Solomon Wank, ‘The Austrian Peace Movement and the Habsburg Ruling Elite, 1906–1914’, in Charles Chatfield and Peter van den Dungen eds, *Peace Movements and Political Cultures* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), pp. 40–63; Roger Chickering, ‘War, Peace, and Social Mobilization in Imperial Germany: Patriotic Societies, the Peace Movement, and Socialist Labor’, in Chatfield and van den Dungen, *Peace Movements and Political Cultures*, pp. 3–22; and Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World Without War*.

war.⁷⁷ When war erupted, the American groups grew enormously in number and activity, and their ranks soon included not only prominent members of Wilson's own Democratic party, but also hard-nosed leading Republicans, like Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft – the two men who had split their party's vote in 1912, allowing Wilson to win the presidency.⁷⁸ Even if someone else had been President, the idea that this ought to be the last war would in all probability have been American policy – as it was British policy.

Wilson may deserve credit for some of the special characteristics of the League of Nations and of the peace settlement, and the impact (however short-lived) of his eloquence and international stature should not be underestimated. But the basic idea of constructing an international organization to enhance the prospects for peace had been around for centuries and had been actively promoted (especially in the United States) for decades.⁷⁹ After the war began, the idea was urged in the United States by many prominent politicians and intellectuals well before Wilson got on board.⁸⁰

Furthermore, almost any American president would have enjoyed an especially influential place at the peace table. In fact it could be argued that a more pragmatic and less Messianic politician might have been more effective than Wilson, whose unwillingness to compromise with the Senate substantially caused the failure of the League treaty in the United States.⁸¹

Was the First World War Necessary?

It is tempting to push this line of reasoning one step farther. If Wilson was not clearly necessary to bring about the idea that war ought to be abolished as a way of doing business in the developed world, was the Great War itself necessary?

A strong case could be made that the idea was rapidly gaining ground before the war and that it would soon have caught on generally anyway. As noted, the peace idea had begun to take off late in the nineteenth century, and it gained considerable ground after 1900. Peace societies were proliferating,

⁷⁷ Charles Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice* (Knoxville, Tenn.: University of Tennessee Press, 1971), p. 8; see also Patterson, *Toward a Warless World*, chap. 7; Warren F. Kuehl, *Seeking World Order: The United States and International Organization to 1920* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), p. 172.

⁷⁸ See Chatfield, *For Peace and Justice*, pp. 15–87.

⁷⁹ See Patterson, *Toward a Warless World*, chap. 6.

⁸⁰ In 1915 Norman Angell observed that any talk of five minutes with an American pacifist would find his drawing 'from his pocket a complete scheme for the federation of the world' (Kuehl, *Seeking World Order*, p. 239). Ray Stannard Baker concludes that 'practically nothing – not a single idea – in the Covenant of the League was original with the President' (George and George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House*, p. 210).

⁸¹ On this point, see George and George, *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House*, chap. 15. For discussion, see Kuehl, *Seeking World Order*, chap. 14.

famous businessmen like Alfred Nobel and Andrew Carnegie were joining in, various international peace congresses were being held and governments were beginning to take notice and to participate, political liberals and feminist leaders were accepting war opposition as part of their intellectual baggage, and many socialists were making it central to their ideology and had agitated impressively and effectively against the Italo-Turkish war of 1911–12 and the Balkan wars of 1912–13, helping to prevent escalation of those conflicts.⁸²

Because of developments like these, peace advocates were beginning to sense progress and to feel a not entirely unjustified sense of optimism. As the distinguished British historian, G. P. Gooch, concluded in 1911, ‘We can now look forward with something like confidence to the time when war between civilized nations will be considered as antiquated as the duel’.⁸³

The First World War, of course, shattered the optimism of the peace advocates even as it gave them new credibility and caused them to redouble their efforts. But even in retrospect some of its members remember the prewar era with satisfaction and one of them, Norman Angell, whose famous anti-war book, *The Great Illusion*, became a colossal international bestseller after 1909, argues in his memoirs that if the war could have been delayed a few years, ‘Western Europe might have acquired a mood’ which would have enabled it to ‘avoid the war’.⁸⁴

Angell might be right: the anti-war movement may have been in the process of gathering an unstoppable momentum like the anti-slavery movement during the previous century.⁸⁵ Ultimately, however, it seems likely that for their idea to carry the day it was necessary first for war to discredit itself: the Great War, or something like it, may have been required for the anti-war impetus to emerge as an idea whose time had come.

The central problem was that before 1914 the institution of war still carried with it much of the glamour and the sense of inevitability it had acquired over the millennia. Despite the remarkable and unprecedented century of semi-peace in Europe, war still appealed not only to woolly militarists, but also to popular opinion and to romantic intellectuals as something that was sometimes desirable and ennobling, often useful and progressive, and always thrill-

⁸² See Wank, ‘The Austrian Peace Movement and the Habsburg Ruling Elite’, pp. 48–52. The National Arbitration and Peace Conference which packed Carnegie Hall in New York in 1907 was supported by eight cabinet officers, two former presidential candidates, ten Senators, four Supreme Court justices, nine governors, ten mayors, twenty-seven millionaires, eighteen college presidents, thirty labour leaders, forty bishops, sixty newspaper editors and representatives of 166 businesses (Patterson, *Toward a Warless World*, p. 129).

⁸³ G. P. Gooch, *History of Our Time, 1885–1911* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1911), pp. 248–9.

⁸⁴ Norman Angell, *After All: An Autobiography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 178.

⁸⁵ On this comparison, see Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, pp. 11–13; and James Lee Ray, ‘The Abolition of Slavery and the End of International War’, *International Organization*, 43 (1989), 405–39.

ing.⁸⁶ The anti-war movement was assiduously seeking to undermine those perceptions and was making real progress at doing so. But before 1914 the movement was still being discredited as a flaky fringe: Angell recalls that friends advised him to 'avoid that stuff or you will be classed with cranks and faddists, with devotees of Higher Thought who go about in sandals and long beards [and] live on nuts' and that men who advocated peace were apt to be suspected of lacking 'manliness, virility'.⁸⁷ 'War continues to exist', wrote Bertha von Suttner, another famous and bestselling peace advocate, in 1912, 'not because there is evil in the world, but because people still hold war to be a good thing'.⁸⁸ Or as William James, the author of the famous tract, 'The Moral Equivalent of War', pointed out in 1904, 'The plain truth is that people *want* war'.⁸⁹

In summary, the process by which attitudes towards war changed at the time of the First World War seems to have been as follows. In the decades before 1914 anti-war advocates were preparing international thought to be receptive to their notions, and they were assiduously developing the blueprints for institutions that might be viable substitutes for war should the desire for such plans become general. And in the century before 1914 Europeans gradually became, perhaps without quite noticing it, accustomed to the benefits of peace. Nevertheless, the traditional appeals of war persisted. For the abolition of war to emerge as an idea whose time had come, it was probably necessary for there to be one more vivid example of how appalling the hoary, time-honoured institution really was. The First World War may not have been all that much worse than some earlier wars, but it destroyed the comforting notion that wars in Europe would necessarily be long on dashing derring-do and short on bloodshed, and it reminded Europeans of how bad wars on their continent could become. Thanks to the prewar fulminations of the peace movement and thanks to the experience with an unprecedented century of comparative warlessness, people in the developed world were at last ready to get the message.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE HISTORICAL MOVEMENT OF IDEAS

At any given time there are always a huge array of ideas around, and only a few of these catch on. Some may be of lengthy pedigree (like the idea that war is a bad thing and ought to be abolished), while others may be quite new and original (like the appeals of the hula hoop). People sort through

⁸⁶ On this issue see Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1984), p. 9; Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*, chap. 2; Stromberg, *Redemption by War*. The war, of course, substantially disillusioned the nineteenth-century meliorists who held that Europe was becoming progressively more civilized; but that was nothing compared to what it did to those who held that *war* was progressive. On the shattering of the meliorist myth, see Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, p. 8. Fussell also argues that the war 'reversed the Idea of Progress'. In his classic, *The Idea of Progress* (London: Macmillan, 1920), J. B. Bury suggests that the idea continued to develop after the war.

⁸⁷ Angell, *After All*, pp. 146–7, 159–60.

⁸⁸ Chickering, *Imperial Germany and a World Without War*, p. 91.

⁸⁹ James, *Memories and Studies*, p. 304.

this huge market of ideas and prove receptive to some while remaining immune to others. Their receptivity may not be very predictable, but it is surely not random. A few speculations and ruminations about this phenomenon follow.⁹⁰

The Role of Events

The discussion about the impact of the First World War on ideas about the value and desirability of war has supplied a case study of the relation between an event and an idea whose time has come. In that instance the event proved to be *catalytic* – that is, the event worked upon ideas that had been around for quite a while and it accelerated their progress in a major way.

An event can be *creative* if it both invents the idea and makes it popular: aeroplane hijacking was an idea that was abruptly invented, became beloved by many and then was irregularly imitated.

And an event can *crystallize* an idea that was previously in existence – in the air – but only in an inchoate or less than fully coherent form. Thus, upon publication, books like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* or Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* did not supply the world with ideas as much as they assembled ideas in an appealing way that people were ready to accept.

Events can be essentially progressive, but also overstimulating, causing a temporary counterreaction. Some analysts, for example, have argued that attitudes on abortion were gradually becoming more permissive in the United States before the Supreme Court decision of 1973 that suddenly vastly expanded the practice. A backlash in the 1980s seems to have produced a correction, putting the acceptance back to where it might 'naturally' have advanced to by then anyway.

The Role of Entrepreneurs

Publicists, promoters and public relations specialists make careers out of trying to catalyse, create and crystallize ideas whose time, they hope, has come. Their less-than-unrelieved success suggests the difficulties of such efforts. As one of the most famous of their number, Sol Hurok, is alleged to have put it, 'If

⁹⁰ For useful efforts to deal with the phenomenon in the domestic political context, see John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown, 1984); and William H. Riker, *Liberalism Against Populism* (San Francisco: Freeman, 1982). In several respects it seems more productive to think about ideas whose time has come rather than to see the process as one of grand social learning. 'Learning' in this sense is, of course, a metaphor, and while the metaphor has some valuable resonances, it is misleading for at least three reasons. Firstly, the metaphor suggests that an idea, once ingested, cannot be undone. An idea whose time has come, on the other hand, can eventually be abandoned. Secondly (and relatedly), the learning analogy implies progress and betterment. But obviously, plenty of ideas that by most accepted standards prove to be bad ones – like state Communism, totalitarianism, trial by combat, genocide, the Spanish inquisition, aeroplane hijacking – also get 'learned'. Thirdly, the learning metaphor tends to imply that new ideas can only be acquired slowly. The notion of the idea whose time has come is burdened by no such bias. While some ideas grow slowly, others (for example, that it is time for the countries of East Europe to be democratic) can catch on almost overnight.

people don't want to come, nothing will stop them'. It is an expression of what might be called the Edsel phenomenon: no matter how well promoted an idea may be, it will not be accepted unless its time has come.

Nevertheless, entrepreneurs have often been important, and sometimes crucial, in causing an idea to take hold. The time for the idea that America had to do something about racial inequality may have come by the 1960s, but few would wish to denigrate the skilful entrepreneurship of Martin Luther King in encouraging this phenomenon and shaping its direction.

The Longevity of an Idea Whose Time has Come

Once an idea has taken hold, it may or may not hang around for a while. Some ideas seem to linger forever, or at least for a very long time, while others – fads, we might call them – enjoy only a short period of popularity.

The institution of slavery was created at the dawn of the human race, and many once felt it to be an elemental fact of existence. Yet between 1788 and 1888 this institution was substantially abolished, particularly in what was then called Christendom, and this demise seems, so far, to be permanent. Similarly, the venerable institutions of human sacrifice, infanticide and duelling seem also to have died out or been eliminated, and it could be argued that war, at least war in the developed world, is following a similar trajectory.⁹¹ The idea that there is a personal god seems to be in decline, especially in Western Europe – an area where a huge number of conflicts were once fought because there was disagreement over whose personal god was the right one. Some ideas, like aeroplane hijacking, can be policed or deterred out of existence.

The Infection of an Idea Whose Time has Come

Rather than attempting to develop a predictive formula for which ideas are likely to emerge successful, it may be comparatively easy, and therefore potentially more productive and interesting, simply to trace the geographic trajectory or infection of successful ideas. The discredit of slavery, for example, took hold in a major way in England after 1788 and then filtered to the rest of the world. A similar pattern seems to be happening for the discredit of war and, perhaps, late in the twentieth century for the rise of democracy.

Some areas of the world, it seems, can productively be considered 'advanced', and ideas tend to move from the more advanced areas to the others. This observation may be somewhat tautological since we are likely to determine which areas are 'advanced' by observing that new ideas tend to originate there. But if one arranges the areas of the world by, say, economic development, it seems that when ideas have filtered throughout the world in recent centuries, they have tended to do so in one direction, with what Europeans would a century ago have called the 'civilized world' at the lead. Without prejudging

⁹¹ See Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*.

the quality or value of the ideas so transmitted, it does seem that, for better or worse, there has been a long and fairly steady process of what is often called 'Westernization': Taiwan has become more like Canada than Canada has become like Taiwan; Gabon has become more like Belgium than Belgium has become like Gabon.

In recent centuries, major ideas that have gone from the developed world to the less developed world include Christianity, the abolition of slavery, the acceptance of democratic institutions and Western economic and social forms, and the application of the scientific method. Not all of these have been fully or readily accepted, but the point is that the process has largely been unidirectional: there has so far been far less in the way of a reverse flow of ideas.

Sometimes ideas which have had a vogue and become *passé* in the West can still be seen to be playing themselves out in the less advanced world. The romance about violent class revolution, largely a nineteenth-century Western idea, has been mostly discredited in the West, but it continues to inspire revolutionaries in less developed lands. Much the same can be said, perhaps, about notions concerning the desirability and efficacy of war.