

## The Past and Future of War

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This article addresses both the earliest and most recent stages in the history of war, and the fundamental questions that each raises with respect to the phenomenon of war, why it occurs, and where it is heading. Many of the ideas suggested here are traced back to my *War in Human Civilization* (Oxford University Press, 2006), with further developments and updates.

We begin with the question of since when humans fight. Has warfare always been there, is as old as our species? Or is it a relatively new phenomenon, only emerging with humankind's cultural evolution: for instance, with the advent of agriculture that occurred in the most pioneering groups of people some ten thousand years ago, or with the emergence of the state – again some five thousand years ago in some parts of the world, much later in other parts (in the now advanced societies of northern Europe and Japan, for example, only about fifteen hundred years ago).

What disciplines deal with this question? History does not deal with it at all. It only begins with literacy, that is, 5000 years ago in the most advanced societies. However, the genus *Homo* has existed for two million years, and our own species *Homo sapiens*, people who are biologically like us, exists for perhaps 150,000 years. These are 99.5 and 95 percent, respectively, of our time on this planet. Compared with these time spans, historical times are just the tip of the iceberg. And this of course only underlines the question whether fighting is a new cultural invention or has it always been around.

It was in the field of political philosophy that the question of the genesis of human fighting was first addressed systematically. Here the two conflicting answers were formulated – by Thomas Hobbes in the seventeenth century and by Jean-Jacque Rousseau in the eighteenth. For Hobbes the pre-state condition was characterized by a war of all against all, when in the absence of a peace-enforcing authority, life was 'poore, nasty, brutish, and short'. For Rousseau things were quite the opposite: the aboriginal condition of humans was fundamentally peaceful and innocent. In the absence of property before agriculture there was little to fight about. War, according to Rousseau, is a late development, one of the ills of civilization. So convincing were each of these positions that they have remained with us until today.

But who is right Hobbes or Rousseau? For political philosophers the question barely exists at all. They usually claim that Hobbes and Rousseau postulated the state of nature as hypothetical, and leave it at that. But this is not an entirely accurate description of their view, and, in any case, irrespective of Hobbes and Rousseau, the question is unquestionably historical and empirical. Living in the age of exploration and of European contact with a variety of aboriginal societies, Hobbes and Rousseau were well aware of this. And since then, our insight into the distance past of humankind has increased dramatically, and with it also the realization how recent in human history the development of agriculture and the state was.

Which brings us to archaeology. What light can it shed on our question? Unfortunately, not that much. And the main reason for this is that weapons for fighting before the introduction of metals are practically undistinguishable from

hunting implements: stone axes, spears, and arrows. Were they used for hunting only, or were they dual-purposed and used also for fighting? As to specialized fighting equipment such as shields, it is made of perishable material – wood and leather – and does not survive. Also, people did not live in sedentary dwellings, and therefore evidence of fortifications and destruction that we find in later periods does not exist. The same applies to evidence from cemeteries – which also appear only when people settled down in sedentary settlements.

Biology has gone through an intriguing development which serves as a sobering lesson regarding the evolution of ideas. During the 1960s, the founder of ethology, the science of animal behavior, Noble laureate Konrad Lorenz, popularized a set of controversial ideas regarding violence in nature. Lorenz claimed that fighting between animals of the same species is mostly ‘ritualistic’ and mainly involves display. The loser retreats or submits, while the victor refrains from pressing its advantage to the finish. According to Lorenz, the reason for this pattern of behavior was the need to preserve the species.

It thus appeared that humans, who fight to kill their own kind, are a deviation from the normal pattern in nature. This notion of a murderous human perversion – a killer ape – sat well with the Rousseauite doctrines of the 1960s regarding nature’s purity, the corruption of civilization, and man as a blank slate, wholly molded by culture. Hollywood's *Planet of the Apes* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (both released in 1968) gave expression to that view regarding mankind's unique association with violence.

Since then, however, evolutionary theory has undergone a sweeping change. It has become clear that natural selection mostly takes place within rather than between species. As Darwin himself argued, the struggle among individuals from the same species is the most intense, because they compete for the same sorts of food and for the same mates, in the very same ecological niches.

At the same time, there have been major new empirical finds regarding animal fighting in nature. It has been revealed that perpetual violent and lethal competition take place within species in nature. This also includes our closest cousins, the chimpanzees, studied in their natural habitats and documented to engage in murder, as well as in group fighting and killing. It is true that adult animal males usually avoid a fight to the finish among themselves for reasons of self-preservation – any serious injury might render an animal incapable of getting food and result in starvation. There is no social security in nature. Yet when deterrence by the display and demonstration of force fails, serious fighting, injuries and death often follow. Furthermore, most killing within species in nature is carried out against the young and the weak, including eggs, chicks, and cubs, when the killing is performed with relative safety for the killer – in asymmetrical killing. No benevolence towards one's kind exists. As such scenes now extensively appear in nature documentaries on television, I am sure that all of you are quite familiar with the evidence: lions killing the cubs of the former monarch of the pride; chicks in a nest pecking their siblings to death when there is a food shortage; birds throwing eggs of other birds of their kind from nests; and so on.

So as biology has made a complete about turn since the 1960s, it turns out that humans are no longer unique in nature in extensively killing their kind, and do not call

for some special explanation. Widespread killing within the species is actually the norm in nature. This still leaves the empirical question: what are the actual finds regarding humans in the state of nature? Is there concrete evidence that people fought before agriculture and the state?

Furthermore, in contrast to the chimpanzee, pygmy chimpanzees or bonobos exhibit a semi-idyllic life of free sex and far less violence. Notably, chimpanzees, with their dominant aggressive male coalitions, resemble the known patterns of aboriginal human social life far more than bonobos, who are dominated by female alliances. Nonetheless, the bonobo has at least partly kept alive the question of what our human ancestors were like.

The discipline that is the richest in relevant information for answering this question is anthropology, which studies extant and recently extinct pre-state and pre-agricultural societies. Not that access to, and the interpretation of, that information are easy. The main problem is the so-called ‘contact paradox’. These societies have no written records of their own, and documentation therefore requires contact with literate societies that necessarily affect the former. As in quantum mechanics, the very activity of observation changes the object under observation. Literate societies have goods – such as agricultural products, livestock, and manufactured tools – which hunter-gatherers might want to steal, for example. How can it be determined that a warlike behavior on their part did not originate only with contact, and had not existed before? How can one observe pure hunter-gatherer societies that are free from contact with agriculturalists and states? This is like the light in a refrigerator: does it really turn off when the door is closed?

Because of this built-in ambiguity, anthropologists to this day continue to debate who was right – Hobbes or Rousseau – with their answers changing with the *Zeitgeist*, the twentieth century having been predominantly Rousseauite.

The challenge, then, is how to observe pure hunter-gatherer societies to determine whether they fought or not. And the most significant test case in this regard is Australia, an entire continent of Aboriginal hunter-gatherers, with no agriculturalists and pastoralists at all, whose isolation came to an end only two hundred years ago, in 1788. This is the closest to a pure laboratory on a continental scale that we are ever going to get, incorporating about 300 regional groups or tribes when the Europeans arrived. The evidence shows that the Aboriginals frequently fought among themselves, including the material evidence of shields, which were not of course used for hunting kangaroos. Much the same applies to the vast microcosms of hunter-gatherers and horticulturalists that survived almost isolated into modernity in the American Northwest, from Oregon to Alaska, in Amazonia, and Highland New Guinea. In all of these areas the natives fought ferociously among themselves. Even the Kalahari Bushmen who were the focus of study in the 1960s, and were celebrated as peaceful, in the end turned out to have had four times the 1990 US homicide rate, which is itself by far the highest in the developed world. The thinly dispersed Inuit of Central Canada had 10 times the 1990 US homicide rate.

Let me briefly summarize the finds with respect to the many pre-agricultural and pre-state societies studied around the globe, finds which might be vague in any particular case but which consistently repeat themselves in one separate anthropological case

study after the other, thereby becoming an unmistakable pattern. About 25 percent of adult males in such societies found a violent death, while all the rest were covered with scars. Contrary to prevailing views, this is a much higher violent death rate than that incurred in modern societies, with only the world wars coming close. These are the finds to which Steven Pinker has recently drawn wide public attention. An endemic state of insecurity and fear prevailed in pre-agricultural and pre-state societies which shaped all aspects of their lives. Hobbes was much closer to the truth than Rousseau in describing the human state of nature.

I shall now pass on very briefly to the question of why people fight. People, like all organisms, fight for the attainment or defence of the very same objects of desire that underlie their lives, only by violent means. They can cooperate, compete, or use violence, depending on what they believe can serve them best. Violence is not a primary drive which requires release, like the desire for food or sex. Think about the Swedes or the Swiss, who have not fought for centuries, and yet exhibit no particular distress on that account. But try to deprive them of food or sex for any substantial period and their response would be quite predictable. Thus, if violence is 'hardwired' in us, so to speak, it is not as a primary drive, but as a *means*, a tactics for achieving desired aims. And it is a very dangerous means, which is therefore mostly activated if other, more peaceful means fail, or are too costly, and if the chances of success are judged good. Violence is the hammer in our evolution-shaped behavioral tool kit, which also contains a variety of more delicate instruments, to be selected according to the circumstances at hand.

So what did people in the state of nature fight about? Resources such as hunting territories were fiercely competed and fought over – because scarcity often meant the difference between life and death; the stakes were very high. *Women* were hotly fought over, again because reproduction is a tremendous selection force, and is therefore central to our system of motivation. Polygamy for the more successful men was the rule, as was fighting caused by women abduction, rape, and extra-marital relations. Ancient sagas like the *Iliad* still testify eloquently to the prevalence and significance of this motivation for fighting.

Status in society has always been a means for getting one's way and ripping benefits, and has been hotly pursued and fought over as such. People staunchly defend their honor, for if they do not they may be trampled over and encourage further encroachments, that is, create a process of victimization. To paraphrase Winston Churchill: those who prefer shame to war, may beget shame and then war. People retaliate to deter injuries inflicted by others, because as a famous computer game has demonstrated, tit for tat is the most effective mechanism in human relations: response with good will to acts of good will, but pay back on injures. However, tit for tat often results in a vicious cycle of retribution, when people find themselves locked into conflict irrespective of the original reasons that generated that conflict in the first place.

Indeed, under conditions of competition and potential conflict the other's very existence constitutes a threat, which requires vigilance, increase in strength, and even preemption, all of which, in turn, only intensify the sense of mutual insecurity. The result is yet more vicious circles. Arms races, for example, exist all over nature; they

are the reason why trees have trunks: they take the enormous expenditure involved in growing trunks only in order to outdo one another in getting to the sun. But arms races often result in a 'red queen effect', called after one of the paradoxes in Alice's *Through the Mirror Glass*, where the sides run as fast as they can, spending energy and resources, only to remain in the same place relative to one another.

Thus, there are real enough reasons for conflict and war, which, however, may then get inflated because of the mutual hostility, fear and suspicion that exist among the protagonists, with conflict seemingly assuming a life of its own – escalating and perpetuating itself – causing heavy losses to all sides almost irrespective of their original motives.

Finally, people prefer kin to non-kin – which is the root cause of ethnocentrism and nationalism – and may support kin even by force. Also, they have cultures and comprehensive outlooks – religious and secular ideologies – which they regard to be of crucial importance for ordering life in this world, and sometimes the afterlife, and which again they may defend and promote by force. Of course, I cannot do justice here to this complex subject.

We now move from prehistory to the present and future. Most people are surprised to learn that the occurrence of war and overall mortality rate in war sharply *decreased* after 1815, especially in the developed world. The so-called Long Peace among the great powers after 1945 is more recognized, and is widely attributed to the nuclear factor, a decisive factor to be sure, which concentrated the minds of all the protagonists wonderfully, as they say about the hanging rope. The (inter-)democratic

peace has been equally recognized. However, the decrease in war had been very marked even before the nuclear era, and has encompassed nondemocracies as well as democracies. In the century after 1815, wars among industrializing countries declined in their frequency to about a *third* of what they had been in the previous centuries, an unprecedented change. In fact, the Long Peace after 1945, 70 years to date, was preceded by the *second* longest peace ever among the modern great powers, between 1871 and 1914, 43 years in all; and by the *third* longest peace, between 1815 and 1854, 39 years. Thus, the three longest periods of peace by far in the modern great powers system have all occurred after 1815, with the first two taking place *before* the nuclear age. This striking phenomenon cannot be accidental. Clearly, one needs to explain the *entire* period of reduced belligerency since 1815, while also accounting for the glaring divergence from the trend: the two world wars.

There is a tendency to assume that wars have declined in frequency during the past two centuries because they have become too lethal, destructive and expensive. This hypothesis barely holds, however, because *relative to population and wealth* wars have *not* become more lethal and costly than earlier in history. The wars of the nineteenth century – the most peaceful century in European history – were in fact particularly light, in comparative terms. True, the world wars, especially World War II, were certainly on the upper scale of the range in terms of casualties. Yet, contrary to widespread assumptions, they were far from being exceptional in history. We need to look at *relative* casualties, general mortality rates in wars, rather than at the aggregate created by the fact that many states participated in the world wars.

For example, in the first three years of the Second Punic War (218-216 BC), Rome lost some 50,000 male citizens of the ages of 17-46, out of a total of about 200,000 in these ages. This was roughly 25 percent of the military age cohorts in only three years, the same range as the Russian military casualties and higher than the German rates in World War II. Similarly, in the thirteen century the Mongol conquests inflicted on the societies of China and Russia casualties and destruction that were among the highest ever suffered during historical times. Even by the *lowest* estimates casualties were at least as high as, and in China almost definitely far higher than, the Soviet Union's horrific rate in World War II of about 15 percent of its population. A final example: during the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) population loss in Germany is estimated at between a fifth and a third – either way higher than the German casualties in the First and Second World Wars *combined*.

People often assume that more developed military technology during modernity must mean greater lethality and destructiveness, but in fact it also means greater *protective* power, as with mechanized armour, mechanized speed and agility, and defensive electronic measures. Offensive and defensive advances generally rise in tandem and tend to offset each other. In addition, it is all too often forgotten that the vast majority of the many millions of non-combatants killed by Germany during World War II – Jews, Soviet prisoners of war, Soviet civilians – fell victim to intentional starvation, exposure to the elements, and mass executions rather than to any sophisticated military technology. Instances of genocide in general during the twentieth century, much as earlier in history, were carried out with the simplest of technologies, as the Rwanda genocide horrifically reminded us.

Nor is it true that wars during the past two centuries have become economically more costly than they were earlier in history, again relative to overall wealth. War always involved massive economic exertion and was the single most expensive item of state spending. Both sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Spain and eighteenth century France, for example, were economically ruined by war and staggering war debts, which in the French case brought about the Revolution. Furthermore, death by starvation in premodern wars was widespread.

Another strand of interpretation has attributed the decline of warfare during recent times to a social 'attitude change'. Why this attitude change should have occurred at this point in history rather than any time earlier is not explained. After all, most powerful moral doctrines such as Buddhism and Christianity decried war for millennia without this having any noticeable effect. It is suggested that people have suddenly become aware that war is senseless if not crazy, devoid of any rationale. Such a view of war is widespread in today's modern and affluent world. But try this idea on Chinggis Khan, whose descendants constitute, according to genetic studies, 8 percent of all males in Eastern and Central Asia, evidence of staggering sexual opportunities enjoyed by his sons and grandsons whose houses ruled over that part of the world for centuries. Lest it be thought that only autocrats and military aristocracies profited from war, while the people were its unwilling victims, it ought to be remembered that the two most successful war-making states of classical antiquity were democratic Athens and republican Rome. And they were so successful precisely because the people of these polities benefited from war and imperial expansion, championed them, and enlisted in their cause.

We said before that in pursuit of their aims people may resort to cooperation, peaceful competition, or violent conflict. Each of these behavioral strategies is a well-designed tool interchangeably employed, depending on the particular circumstances and prospects of success. Thus, to understand the gravitation of human choices – and norms – from violent conflict towards the non-violent options of cooperation and peaceful competition one needs to understand the changing circumstances and calculus of cost-effectiveness during the past two centuries and in recent decades.

Even before the middle of the nineteenth century, thinkers such as Saint-Simon, Auguste Comte, and John Stuart Mill, who were quick to note the change, realized that it was caused by the advent of the industrial-commercial revolution, the most profound transformation of human society since the Neolithic adoption of agriculture. In the first place, given explosive growth in per capita wealth, about 30 to 50-fold from the onset of the revolution to the present, the Malthusian trap has been broken. Wealth no longer constitutes a fundamentally finite quantity, when the only question is how it is divided, so wealth acquisition progressively shifted away from a zero-sum game. Secondly, economies are no longer overwhelmingly autarkic, having become increasingly interconnected by specialization, scale and exchange. Consequently, foreign devastation potentially depressed the entire system and is thus detrimental to a state's own wellbeing. What Mill discerned in the abstract in the 1840s, was repeated by Norman Angel during the first global age before World War I, and formed the cornerstone of John Maynard Keynes' criticism of the harsh reparations imposed on Germany after that war. Thirdly, greater economic openness has decreased the likelihood of war by disassociating economic access from the confines of political borders and sovereignty. It is no longer necessary to politically *possess* a territory in

order to benefit from it. Of all these factors, commercial interdependence has attracted most of the attention in the scholarly literature. But the other two factors have been no less significant.

Thus, the greater the yield of competitive economic cooperation, the more counterproductive and less attractive conflict becomes. Rather than war becoming more costly, as is widely believed, it is in fact *peace* that has been growing more profitable.

If so, why have wars continued to occur during the past two centuries, albeit at a much lower frequency? In the first place, ethnic and nationalist tensions often overrode the logic of the new economic realities, accounting for most wars in Europe between 1815 and 1945. They continue to do so today, especially in the less developed parts of the globe. Moreover, the logic of the new economic realities receded during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the great powers resumed protectionist policies and expanded them to the undeveloped parts of the world with the New Imperialism. This development signalled that the emergent global economy might become partitioned rather than open, with each imperial domain becoming closed to everybody else, as, indeed, they eventually did in the 1930s. A snowball effect ensued, generating a runaway grab for imperial territories. For the territorially confined Germany and Japan the need to break away into imperial *Lebensraum* or 'co-prosperity sphere' seemed particularly pressing. Here lay the seeds of the two world wars. Furthermore, the retreat from economic liberalism in the first decades of the twentieth century spurred, and was spurred by, the rise to power of

anti-liberal and anti-democratic political ideologies and regimes, incorporating a creed of violence: communism and fascism.

Since 1945 the decline of major war has deepened further. Nuclear weapons have been a crucial factor in this process, but no less significant have been the institutionalization of free trade and the closely related process of rapid and sustained economic growth. The spread of liberal democracy has been equally potent. Indeed, although nonliberal and nondemocratic states also became much less belligerent during the industrial age, it is the liberal democracies that have been the most attuned to its pacifying aspects.

Relying on arbitrary coercive force at home, nondemocratic countries have found it more natural to use force abroad. By contrast, liberal democratic societies are socialized to peaceful, law-mediated relations at home, and their citizens have grown to expect that the same norms be applied internationally. Living in increasingly tolerant societies, they have grown more receptive to the Other's point of view. Promoting freedom, legal equality, and political participation domestically, liberal democratic powers – though initially in possession of vast empires – have found it increasingly difficult to justify ruling over foreign peoples without their consent. And sanctifying life, liberty and human rights, they have proven to be failures in forceful repression. Furthermore, with the individual's life and pursuit of happiness elevated above group values, sacrifice of life in war has increasingly lost legitimacy in liberal democratic societies. War retains legitimacy only under narrow and narrowing formal and practical conditions, and is generally viewed as extremely abhorrent and undesirable.

Thus, modernization, most notably its liberal path, has sharply reduced the prevalence of war, as the violent option for fulfilling human desires has become much less rewarding than the peaceful option of competitive cooperation. For instance, with the much increased sexual opportunity within society, young men now are more reluctant to leave behind the pleasures of life for the rigors and chastity of the field. 'Make love, not war' was the slogan of the powerful anti-war youth campaign of the 1960s, which not accidentally coincided with a far-reaching liberalization of sexual norms.

The fruits of these deepening trends and sensibilities have been nothing short of miraculous. The probability of war between affluent democracies has declined to a vanishing point, where they no longer even see the need to prepare for the *possibility* of a militarized dispute with one another. The security dilemma between neighbours – that seemingly intrinsic feature of international anarchy – no longer exists among them, most notably in North America and Western Europe, the world's most modernized and liberal-democratic regions.

War's geopolitical centre of gravity has shifted radically. The modernized, economically developed parts of the world have become a 'zone of peace'. War now appears to be confined to the less developed parts of the globe, the world's 'zone of war', where countries that have lagged behind in modernization and its pacifying spin-off effects occasionally still fight among themselves, as well as with developed countries.

Much the same applies to civil wars. Modernized, economically developed and liberal democratic countries have become practically free of civil wars – on account of their stronger consensual nature, plurality, tolerance, and indeed, a greater legitimacy for peaceful secession. By contrast, undeveloped and developing countries remain very susceptible to civil wars, and all the more so as many of them are ethnically fragmented and possessing a weak central government.

At this happy junction, it is time to turn our attention to some major countervailing forces, and stress that the dramatic spread of peace is far from being full-proof and free from shadows and challenges. The euphoric post-Cold War moment may have turned out to be a fleeting one, with the New World Order threatened by new Disorders.

Perhaps the most significant challenge is the return of capitalist nondemocratic great powers, a regime type that has been absent from the international system since the defeat of Germany and Japan in 1945. The massive growth of formerly communist and fast industrializing authoritarian-capitalist China represents the greatest change in the global balance of power. Russia, too, has retreated from its post-communist liberalism and has assumed an increasingly authoritarian and nationalist character, coupled with a more aggressive stance along its borders. Will these powers eventually democratize with development is perhaps the most crucial question of the twenty-first century. The lessons of history are not as clear about the inevitability of the process as some progressivists tend to believe. Furthermore, since the outbreak of the economic crisis the authoritarian great powers have gained much in confidence, while the hegemony and prestige of democratic capitalism have suffered a massive blow

unparalleled since the 1930s and the rise of fascist and communist totalitarianism. One hopes that the current economic and political malaise will not be nearly as catastrophic. And yet the global allure of state-driven and nationalist capitalist authoritarianism may grow substantially. At the same time, American might, the main reason – not sufficiently appreciated – for the triumph of democracy in the twentieth century, is undergoing relative decline, though probably not as steep as it is sometimes imagined.

Deeply integrated into the world economy, the new capitalist authoritarian powers – particularly China – partake of the development-open-trade-capitalist peace, but not of the liberal-democratic one. The democratic and nondemocratic powers may coexist more or less peacefully, armed because of mutual fear and suspicion. But there is also the prospect of more antagonistic relations, accentuated ideological rivalry, potential and actual conflict, intensified arms races, and new cold wars. All this was written well before the recent crisis in the Ukraine and the return of the kind of fears of war long believed to have disappeared in Europe. Furthermore, Russia's and China's support for oppressive regimes around the world – most notably today, Syria and Iran – may be a foretaste of things to come.

The September 11, 2001, mega-terror attacks in the United States have turned attention to yet another shadow hanging over the decline of belligerency – unconventional terror, employing weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, biological, and chemical. Of these, chemical weapons are the least dangerous, while biological weapons have the greatest potential in an age of revolutionary advances in biotechnology. A virulent laboratory-cultivated strain of bacteria or virus, let alone a

specially engineered 'superbug' against which no immunization exist, might bring the lethality of biological weapons within the range of nuclear attacks, while being far more easily accessible to terrorists than nuclear weapons. Fortunately, in contrast to chemical and biological agents, terrorists cannot produce nuclear weapons. Yet they might obtain them from those who can.

At the root of the problem is the trickling down to below the state level of the technologies and materials of mass killing. The greatest threat of nuclear proliferation into countries with low security standards and high levels of corruption is the far-increased danger of leakage. Furthermore, states in the less developed and unstable parts of the world are ever in danger of disintegration and anarchy. When state authority collapses and anarchy takes hold, who is to guarantee the country's nuclear arsenal? Pakistan, with its past sales of nuclear knowhow and potential instability, is a much discussed case. Indeed, failed states like the collapsed Soviet Union, rather than the former nuclear superpower, may be the model for future threats. The new Caliphate of Iraq and Syria, with its virulent anti-modernist ideology and hideous practices is another recent example.

Scenarios of world-threatening individuals and organizations, previously reserved to fiction of the James Bond genre, suddenly become real. Because deterrence based on mutual assured destruction scarcely applies to terrorists, the use of ultimate weapons is *more* likely to come from them than it is from states. Unconventional capability acquired by terrorists is *useable*. Indeed, once the potential exists it is difficult to see what will stop it from materializing, somewhere, sometime.

This is a baffling problem, which does not lend itself to easy or clear solutions. Defensive measures are almost as problematic as the pre-emptive, especially in the democracies, because of their infringement on civil rights. Regarding both the offensive and defensive elements of the 'war on terror' the debate in the democracies assumes a bitterly ideological and righteous character. And yet the threat of unconventional terrorism is real, is here to stay, and it offers no easy solutions.

We are clearly experiencing the most peaceful times in history by far, a strikingly blissful and deeply grounded trend. Yet it is also true that this is also the most dangerous world ever, with people for the first time possessing the ability to destroy themselves completely and even individuals and small groups gaining the ability to cause mass death.

Proverbially, predictions are just fine as long as they are not applied to the *future*. Past trends may change direction or interact differently over time. We can only hope that, despite ups and downs, the general trends will endure.