



AP file

HOW TO THINK ABOUT WAR AND PEACE

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[Part 2 of 3]

HOW PEACE IS MADE

The cause of peace is government. The effective operations of government make peace, and keep it.

Without government no community could long endure, if it could ever exist at all. Since peace is equivalent to the life of a community, since peace obtains only among the members of a community, whatever is needed to establish and sustain a community is needed for the establishment and preservation of peace.

Under the term government I mean to include every aspect of a community's structure and organization. I mean not only the acts of commanding and obeying by which government most obviously manifests itself. I mean as well the disposition of status and function to every member of the community, the arrangement of public offices, and the distribution of rights and privileges.

Ordinarily when we speak of "the government" we mean the group of officials who occupy public office by election or appointment. Sometimes, we have an even more restricted meaning, referring to the executive branch of the government, in contrast to the legislature and the judiciary. But obviously the citizens who vote, who elect officials and can effect the amendment of the constitution, take part in the government of the country to which they belong.

The chief function of government is to settle differences among men who engage to live together. That is the reason why government is needed to keep the peace.

The two ultimate principles of government are the principle of decision by a majority and the principle of decision by a leader. Both are methods of reaching a decision which will be acceptable to the group, despite the individual differences of opinion about what should be done.

Fundamental disagreements cannot be avoided, but recourse to violence can be. About difficult practical matters, even the most rational men, prudent men and men with the common interest at heart, are as likely to disagree as to agree. This unalterable fact requires any community, small or large, to adopt some rules of procedure for reaching a decision in which the dissident parties will occur.

Either the rule that all will abide by a majority vote or the rule that all will accept the judgment of some one given the authority to decide can effectively settle disputes when they arise.

Neither rule determines which side of a practical dispute is in truth the right side. In fact, the minority may be right, or a majority of the group, dissenting from their leader's judgment, may hold the sounder opinion. The rule of procedure is not a way of always finding the right answer to the question; it is only a way of always finding some answer without recourse to violence. That is the essential minimum condition which a principle of government must satisfy. In addition, one hopes that a rule of procedure will more frequently tend to produce a sound decision. Under different circumstances one may place one's faith in the wisdom of the majority, or in the prudence of those to whom authority has been given.

These simple facts help us to understand the distinction between authority and force, or power; and also to see that any principle of government must involve both in order to operate effectively for the end it was intended to serve.

The authority of a rule, or of any person upon whom a rule confers authority, consists in its voluntary acceptance by those who will be subject to decisions rendered according to the rule. They accept the rule voluntarily because they recognize its operation to be for their good.

Unless a monopoly of authorized force exists on the side of government, and unless the officers of government, exercising the only authorized force in the community, also exert a substantial predominance of real power, government will fail in its work. The peace of the community will be torn by factions in civil strife. The community may be destroyed. This group of men may no longer be able to live together peacefully.

Effective government must combine authority with force. Naked authority will not keep the peace because men are men, not angels. When Alexander Hamilton wisely said that "if men were angels, no government would be necessary," he had in mind the need for coercive force to support the authority of rules. "It is essential to the idea of law," he wrote, "that it be attended with a sanction; or, in other words, a penalty or punishment for disobedience."

But why will not naked force do the work of government? Why must government have authority as well as power? If one man or a few have enough power to compel all the rest to obey their commands, will not the community be maintained and the peace be kept?

History gives us the answer. The tyrant maintains the community only for the sake of exploiting it. Tyranny always consists in the exercise of power for the private gain of the man possessing it, rather than in the interests of the community.

Whoever feels the oppression of the tyrant, whoever recognizes the injustice of the exploitation he suffers, will obey only under the threat of force. The tyrant's commands will have no authority, and his unauthorized use of force can have only one result, in the long run or less. When the people are finally driven to prefer the risk of death to further oppression, they will employ the only expedient available to them—the use of naked force against naked force.

Tyranny breeds civil strife, just as powerless justice permits it. From the point of view of peace, it makes no difference whether men must resort to violence in order to obtain justice or are able to employ violence in order to do injustice. Neither force without authority nor authority without force can protect the community from civil strife. Neither can perpetuate.

Government must, therefore, provide three institutions for the peaceful settlement of quarrels between members of a community.

1. There must be laws of two sorts:

General rules which determine the procedure to be followed in the adjudication of disputes; and

General rules which determine the standards of right and wrong according to which specific instances of conduct can be judged faultless or blameworthy. It makes no difference whether these general rules express the long-prevalent customs of the community or whether they are expressly formulated and enacted by one or more persons who are given legislative authority by the community.

2. There must be courts which are designed to render an impartial verdict on the disputed issues and which, according to the laws of the realm, give judgment, commanding certain penalties to be imposed or certain compensations to be made.

3. There must be sheriffs or police with authorized force and sufficient power to execute the judgment against the party adversely affected by the court's decision.

There are minimum, not maximum, requirements.

In addition to these elements, there is obvious need for police power competent to bring offenders to trial or to compel disputants, under certain circumstances, to submit their differences to a court. One might also add the deterrent and preventative efficacy of an adequately constituted and efficiently operated police power. But the main point for us to consider here is that nothing less than these three governmental institutions can discharge the task of keeping the peace.

THE ONLY CAUSE OF WAR

The *only* cause of war is anarchy. Anarchy occurs whenever men or nations try to live together without each surrendering their sovereignty.

Each of the following elements is supposed to operate as a cause of war between nations, yet each occurs in the life of a single society.

1. ECONOMIC RIVALRY

Competition, even cutthroat competition, exists among the corporations and the individuals of most modern societies.

2. CULTURAL ANTIPATHIES

These create friction among the members of a community. The clash of nationalists or races is present in the communities which have assimilated men from different historic backgrounds and of different biological stocks.

3. RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES

The rift of deep religious differences has been present in historic communities. In modern times, a single society has embraced infidels and believers, atheists and God-fearing men, every mode of life which men of other persuasions call "paganism" or "heresy."

4. INDIVIDUAL ACTS OF INJUSTICE

No society is ever free from the injuries which men do to men. When men live together, some will always injure others or take ad-

vantage of others, just as there will always be fundamental disagreements and disputes.

Individual differences in talent and power always tend toward inequitable distributions of privilege, and privileged classes always tend to perpetuate themselves. Even in a community having the most just political constitution, there will be class distinctions.

The so-called “class war”—the conflict between the haves and have-nots—has always been present regardless of the particular form it takes, whether the haves have blue blood or tainted gold or unmerited gifts of mind and energy.

5. HATE AND FEAR

All the emotions supposed to underlie the antagonisms of nations will be found motivating the actions of individuals in a single community. Men hate and fear some of neighbors, distrust them, wish them ill, for a wide variety of reasons or rationalizations.

6. FACTIONS AND IDEOLOGIES

Within any political society, and due to some combination of the causes already mentioned, men ally themselves into opposing groups, form political parties, foment factionalism of all sorts, and adopt the slogans and shibboleths of conflicting ideologies.

If the unity which is the heart of a community had to be dead uniformity or complete unanimity, no political society would or could ever exist.

To say that anarchy is the only cause of war is, therefore, to say that it is the *sine qua non* condition, the one indispensable factor without which every other we can think of would be an insufficient cause.

Anarchy—the absence of government—is a negative factor. The various forces or tendencies which lead to war, unless restrained by government, are positive factors.

How, then, can it be said that anarchy is the only cause of war?

The question is fair. It can be answered by distinguishing between causes we can control and those we cannot. Only the former are significant for practical purposes.

We know now that only world government can prevent international wars. We know now the minimum amount of government which is needed, less than which could not effectively check the ever-present causes of war.

THE RIGHT AND WRONG OF SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty belongs to no individual man. No man shall be above the positive law or exempt from its coercive force—not even the chief magistrate of the land, certainly not its legislators, judges, or minor officials. The personal will of no man shall enact or set aside a law. The constitution itself, and all the laws which are made by due process under it, are formulated and instituted by a whole community, or by their chosen representatives.

According to the theory of popular sovereignty, the sovereignty which resides in the offices of constitutional government is derived from the authority and force of the community itself. A sovereign people confer sovereignty upon the government it constitutes. Being the source of all other sovereignties, popular sovereignty is unalterable.

The word “sovereign” can no longer be used to designate a man. It now designates the government of a community which has framed and adopted its own constitution.

Without might, men are not governed. They are merely admonished.

Without right, men are not governed. They are merely overpowered.

Government combines might and right, and in consequence has sovereignty over those who acknowledge the right and recognize the might.

If and when world government exists, it will have to possess sovereignty in this sense. Lacking it, would not be government. Anyone who conceives world government as exercising only moral authority uses the word “government” but does not understand the fact.

THE DEGREES OF PEACE

Peace on earth is not paradise. No human community will ever be free from crime and violence, the injustice of man to man, deceit and treachery. No amount of social progress will ever provide man with a life unburdened by pain and sorrow, devoid of moral struggle, or unrivaled by spiritual discords. Peace in the world will never, to the end of time, relieve man of the search for peace in his own heart.

The conditions of human life can be improved, but at their best they will reflect all the imperfections of man's imperfect nature.

Utopian fantasies set a false standard of perfection, one which does not fit human nature. They bring discredit upon the word "ideal." Rightly impatient with utopian thinking, the practical man tends to dismiss any discussion of ideal conditions as irrelevant to the real course of affairs. The false and extravagant idealism which sets standards of unattainable perfection is irrelevant, but a sober idealism should not be made to suffer for such utopian folly.

Universal and perpetual peace represents an ideal in the sense that it is a better condition than the world has yet experienced. It may even be the best condition of social life than men can hope to know on earth. But it is not utopian.

Universal and perpetual peace is a practicable ideal because it is possible for men as they are. Men do not have to become angels, or even saints, to achieve a better world than the one in which we live.

All the elements of the primitive legal system will be found in the international situation. Each sovereign state is its own judge as to whether it has suffered an injury, by reference to the customary standards of international conduct which are called "general international law." And, having judged itself offended against, it exerts what power it can in self-help to punish the offender or remedy the injury, soliciting additional force from whatever nations it can inveigle into the struggle.

In the light of these facts, it is certain that there can be no degree of international peace so long as the international community remains anarchic; it will also cease to be international in the sense of being a community of independent sovereign states. When the condition of world peace supplants the present situation, men will

no longer speak either of international law or of international society.

A community of the world's peoples, living together under government, will not be a society of nations, but a society of men, divided into subgroups only according to the divisions of local government.

We have found the minimum conditions for some degree of peace, in either the limited communities which have so far existed or in the future community of the world's peoples. They are, briefly: impartial law, impartial judgment, impartial execution, as apposed to making the law to suit one's self—being judge in one's own case, and resorting to private might be self-help.

Two things should be obvious at once:

(1) The peace of a political community is impaired by civil strife of all sorts. Whether or not we choose to call such civil violence "war," the fact remains that civil peace cannot be regarded as perfect until governmental machinery is able to cope with every form of dissension or dispute.

The perfection of peace does not depend of the removal of all causes for dispute or strife; nor even the avoidance of force in the settlement of differences. It depends on ways of keeping quarrels on the conversational level, and on a monopoly of the legitimate force needed to execute decisions.

(2) Since peace, in any degree, depends upon government, the several degrees of peace will be correlated with the various forms of government. Forms of government vary in two ways. Some are intrinsically more just than others. Among governments which are equal in justice, one may be more efficient than another, that is, better able to do the work for which government is intended.

It would be reasonable to expect that the most just government and the most efficient will maintain the highest degree of peace. Neither justice without efficiency nor efficiency without justice will keep the peace perfectly. Defects in justice will occasion civil strife. Defects in efficiency will fail to provide pacific means for remedying injustice, or will fail to support them by public force.

The most fundamental distinction among the forms of government is that between constitutional government and despotism, the

absolute rule of one man who regards himself as a personal sovereign. Since the sovereign man is above the law, those subject to his rule can take no lawful stand against him. They lack juridical rights. They have no power to protect themselves against oppression, no legal means by which to seek remedies for injustice.

Constitutional government is intrinsically more just than the most benevolent despotism. It abolishes personal sovereignty. The basic political status under constitutional government is that of citizenship. The rights and privileges of citizenship can be legally safeguarded against the encroachments of public officials. Those who are admitted to the status of citizenship have the political equality and the political freedom which is the just due of every man.

But constitutional government can be defective in two fundamental ways—in justice and in efficiency.

If the constitution does not admit all the members of a population to the rights of citizenship, it is unjust. If the franchise is narrowly restricted, if some remain in chattel slavery, if others are kept politically immature as wards of the community, political freedom and equality have been unjustly distributed.

The marks of the just constitution are universal suffrage and the abolition of all politically privileged classes. By these marks political democracy is defined, and so far as political justice is concerned, it is clearly the best form of government.

But political justice can be combined with economic injustice. Politically free men can be economically exploited, which means that they are enslaved, for slavery consists in being used by another as an instrument of that other's private profit. The perfectly just constitution must, therefore, remove all obstacles to economic reforms which progressively ameliorate the conditions of labor and which progressively approach an equitable distribution of economic opportunities and rewards.

Economic freedom is indispensable to the unfettered exercise of political freedom. Like political liberty, economic freedom is established by justice and by government, not in spite of justice and apart from government. Economic freedom cannot be defined in terms of free enterprise, ownership of private property, or being in business for one's self, though it is true that free enterprise and private property are essential safeguards against the sort of collec-

tivism which substitutes one economic master, the state, for many. John Adams was right in thinking that no man who is dependent for his subsistence upon the will of another can fully exercise political freedom; but Adams, like most of the Founding Fathers, was an oligarch who advocated a suffrage limited to those fortunate enough to be born to, or to have achieved, economic freedom.

Economic democracy involves economic justice for all men, as well as economic freedom for all. The theory of free enterprise fails to solve the problem precisely because it insists only on the necessary autonomy of the economic life, and neglects the just regulation of the economic order to prevent exploitation. The ultimate natural right to be protected is not the right to private property, but rather freedom from exploitation, based on the equal right of every man to work for his own happiness and the common good.

The measure of efficiency in the practice of constitutional government is the extent to which due process of law, supported by legitimate public force, can settle every controversy involving real grievances.

We speak of universal and perpetual peace. The universality of peace can be achieved only by world government. That universal peace must be perfected to become perpetual. World government can achieve this by satisfying all the conditions we have just considered. Obviously, the world may enjoy universal peace long before that peace is itself perfected by the justice and efficiency of world government.

World government must not only be constitutional, but it must also be democratic, with all the implications this has for the political status of men everywhere. It must not only become politically democratic, but it should also look to the realization of economic democracy. It should not only be just politically and economically, but it must also safeguard whatever justice is attained by adequate sanctions. More than that, it should provide efficient machinery for altering any compromise status quo, for improving justice continually by due process of law. No form of imperialism can be allowed to remain.

A legitimate use of force and every implement of education must be directed towards achieving equality of conditions throughout the world and in reducing local deviations from the spirit of laws, especially reactionary or intransigent subversion.

When these things are done, universal peace will become perpetual. Clearly nothing less than the perfect peace which is universal and perpetual can be our ultimate goal. Nothing less need be, for this goal, is practical, not utopian.

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