

# On War and Peace



War is sweet to those who have no experience in it.

—*Pindar*, 446 BC

[War] is always an evil, never a good. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children.

—*Jimmy Carter*, 2002

War is a kind of superstition; the pageantry of arms and badges corrupts the imagination of Man.

—*Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 1819

The higher animals engage in individual fights, but never in organized masses. Man is the only animal that deals with this atrocity of atrocities, War.

—*Mark Twain*, 1896

War is not an adventure. It is a disease. It is like typhus.

—*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*, 1942

A hospital alone shows what war is, because its collection of bodies carries the true meaning of war.

—*Erich Maria Remarque*, 1929

War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it.

—*William Tecumseh Sherman*, 1864

When the sword is once drawn, the passions of men observe no bounds of moderation.

—*Alexander Hamilton*, 1788

Once lead this people into war and they will forget there ever was such a thing as tolerance.

—*Woodrow Wilson*, 1917

It is forbidden to kill; therefore all murderers are punished unless they kill in large numbers and to the sound of trumpets.

—*Voltaire*, 1771

By whatever name men may call murder - murder always remains murder.

—*Leo Tolstoy*, 1909

Never think that war [...] is not a crime.

—*Ernest Hemingway*, 1946

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War does not determine who is right - only who is left.

—*Anonymous*<sup>1</sup>

Truth is the first casualty of war.

—*Mrs. Philip Snowden*, 1915<sup>2</sup>

You need two dogs for a fight,  
You need two wrongs for a war.

—*Anonymous*<sup>3</sup>

War settles nothing; [...] to win a war is as disastrous as to lose one.

—*Agatha Christie*, 1977

We hear war called murder. It is not: it is suicide.

—*Ramsey MacDonald*, 1930

You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.

—*Jeannette Rankin*, 1974

The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.

—*Winston Churchill*, 1930

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War is an instrument entirely inefficient toward redressing wrong; and multiplies, instead of indemnifying losses.

—*Thomas Jefferson*, 1798

The direct use of physical force is so poor a solution to the problem of limited resources that it is commonly employed only by small children and great nations.

—*David Friedman*, 1973

Violence is the last refuge of the incompetent.

—*Isaac Asimov*, 1951

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<sup>1</sup>Frequently misattributed to Bertrand Russell.

<sup>2</sup>Samuel Johnson expressed a similar idea, but in a much longer form, as early as in 1758. Variants of this maxim are frequently misattributed to Aeschylus (525-456 BC), and Hiram Johnson (1866-1945). It was paraphrased in 1928 by Arthur Ponsonby, without a reference.

<sup>3</sup>Perhaps rooted in a Dutch proverb, "When two quarrel, both are in the wrong".

War is only a cowardly escape from the problems of peace.

—*Thomas Mann*, 1954

I cease not to advocate peace. It may be on unjust terms, but even so it is more expedient than the justest of civil wars.

—*Cicero*, ~44 BC

The most disadvantaged peace is better than the most just war.

—*Erasmus*, 1508

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[Many] go to war because they don't want to be a hero.

—*Tom Stoppard*, 1972

Unhappy is the land that needs heroes.

—*Bertold Brecht*, 1939

As a rule, heroism is due to a lack of reflection, and thus it is necessary to maintain a mass of imbeciles. If they once understand themselves the ruling men will be lost.

—*Ernest Renan*, 1878

If my soldiers were to begin to think, not one would remain in the ranks.

—*Frederick the Great*<sup>4</sup>

War will never cease until babies begin to come into the world with larger cerebrums and smaller adrenal glands.

—*H. L. Mencken*, 1956

I'm glad I didn't have to fight in any war.  
I'm glad I didn't have to pick up a gun.  
I'm glad I didn't get killed or kill somebody.  
I hope my kids enjoy the same lack of manhood.

—*Tom Hanks*, 1998

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You can't say that civilization don't advance, however, for in every war they kill you in a new way.

—*Will Rogers*, 1929

Who desires peace, should prepare for war.

—*Vegetius*, fourth century AD<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>As quoted, without a date, by J. A. Houlding in 1981.

<sup>5</sup>This infamous advice (sometimes seconded by scientists—see the next quote) was followed by governments of all countries for almost two millennia. Now we know the disastrous results of the resulting arms race all too well.

If we stay strong, then I believe we can stabilize the world and have peace based on force.

—*Edward Teller*, 1958

The greatest evil that can oppress civilized people derives from [...] the never-ending arming for future war.

—*Immanuel Kant*, 1795

Great armaments lead inevitably to war.

—*Edward Grey*, 1925

Why does the Air Force need expensive new bombers? Have the people we've been bombing over the years been complaining?

—*George Wallace*<sup>6</sup>

Why I oppose the nuclear-arms race: I prefer the human race.

—*Edward Abbey*, 1990

War is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to the military.

—*Georges Clemenceau*, 1919<sup>7</sup>

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Wars teach us not to love our enemies, but to hate our allies.

—*W. L. George*<sup>8</sup>

The enemy is anybody who's going to get you killed, no matter which side he's on.

—*Joseph Heller*, 1961

All men are brothers. [...] All wars are civil wars.

—*François Fénelon*, 1699

Our true nationality is mankind.

—*H. G. Wells*, 1920

I am first a man and only then a Frenchman.

—*Montesquieu*, 1721

Love for your fatherland is a wonderful thing, but there is something even more beautiful – this is love for the truth.

—*Pyotr Chaadaev*, 1837

Love for one's country which is not part of one's love for humanity is not love, but idolatrous worship.

—*Erich Fromm*, 1955

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<sup>6</sup>As quoted, without a date, by Hakeem Shittu and Callie Query in 2006.

<sup>7</sup>This maxim, attributed by some to Charles de Talleyrand and by others to Aristide Briand, was later repeated by Charles De Gaulle about politics and politicians, by Iain Macleod about history and historians, and by John Archibald Wheeler about philosophy and philosophers. (I believe that in sciences, similarly, theory is much too serious a matter to be entrusted to dedicated theorists).

<sup>8</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several reputable sources, starting not later than 1970.

Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.

—*Samuel Johnson*, 1775

Patriotism is, fundamentally, a conviction that a particular country is the best in the world because you were born in it.

—*George Bernard Shaw*, 1893

Patriotism, as I see it, is often an arbitrary veneration of real estate above principles.

—*George Jean Nathan*, 1931

Patriotism is an unnatural, irrational, and harmful feeling.

—*Leo Tolstoy*, 1900

Patriotism varies, from a noble devotion to a moral lunacy.

—*Dean Inge*, 1919

Patriots always talk of dying for their country but never of killing for their country.

—*Bertrand Russell*, 1962

There is only one faith for which large masses of us are prepared to die and kill, and this faith is nationalism.

—*Aldous Huxley*, 1958

Born in iniquity and conceived in sin, the spirit of nationalism has never ceased to bend human institutions to the service of dissention and distress.

—*Thorstein Veblen*, 1923

Nationalism is an infantile disease. It is the measles of mankind.

—*Albert Einstein*, 1918

Nationalism is power hunger tempered by self-deception.

—*George Orwell*, 1945

Nationalism is our form of incest, is our idolatry, is our insanity.

—*Erich Fromm*, 1955

Nationalism [...] is like cheap alcohol. First, it makes you drunk, then it makes you blind, and then it kills you.

—*Dan Fried*, 2007

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I confess that I cannot understand how we can plot, lie, cheat and commit murder abroad and remain humane, honorable, trustworthy and trusted at home.

—*Archibald Cox*<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several generally reliable sources, starting not later than 1977, i.e. during the author's lifetime.

I have ever deemed it fundamental for the United States, never to take active part in the quarrels of Europe.

—*Thomas Jefferson*, 1823

I have always given it as my decided opinion, that no nation has a right to intermeddle into the internal concerns of another; that every one had a right to form and adopt whatever government they liked best to live under themselves.

—*George Washington*, 1796

Every nation gets the government it deserves.

—*Joseph de Maistre*, 1811

No nation is fit to sit in judgment upon any other nation.

—*Woodrow Wilson*, 1915

A nation is a historic group of men of recognizable cohesion, held together by a common enemy.

—*Theodore Herzl*, 1896

A nation is a society united by delusions about its ancestry and by common hatred of its neighbors.

—*Dean Inge*, 1948

Every nation ridicules other nations, and all are right.

—*Arthur Schopenhauer*, 1851

Every nation is selfish, and every nation considers its selfishness sacred.

—*Antoine de Saint-Exupéry*, 1944

The great nations have always acted like gangsters, and the small nations like prostitutes.

—*Stanley Kubrick*, 1963

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It is easier to make war than to make peace.

—*Georges Clemenceau*, 1919<sup>10</sup>

Nobody can have peace longer than his neighbor pleases.

—*Danish proverb*

Peace, *n.* In international affairs, a period of cheating between two periods of fighting.

—*Ambrose Bierce*, 1911

If any question why we died,  
Tell them, because our fathers lied.

—*Rudyard Kipling*, 1918

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<sup>10</sup>I believe this is a very poor excuse for the disastrous Versailles Peace he had authored and enforced—almost single-handedly.

All governments lie, but disaster lies in wait for countries whose officials smoke the same hashish they give out.

—*I. F. Stone*, 1967

How is the world ruled and led to war? Diplomats tell lies to journalists and then believe these lies when they see them in print.

—*Karl Kraus*, 1976

Lying increases the creative faculties, expands the ego, lessens the frictions of social contacts, and cultivates memory.

—*Clare Booth Luce*, 1970<sup>11</sup>

Diplomacy, *n.* The patriotic art of lying for one's country.

—*Ambrose Bierce*, 1906

Diplomacy: lying in state.

—*Oliver Herford*, 1906<sup>12</sup>

Diplomacy without arms is like music without instruments.

—*Frederick the Great*<sup>13</sup>

Diplomacy frequently consists in soothingly saying 'Nice doggie' until you have a chance to pick up a rock.

—*Walter S. Trumbull*, 1925<sup>14</sup>

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The only sane policy for the world is that of abolishing war.

—*Linus Pauling*, 1962

If everyone demanded peace instead of another television set, then there'd be peace.

—*John Lennon*, 1984

Let's not have any more wars to end all war.<sup>15</sup>

—*William Feather*, 2008

Hobbes: 'How come we play war and not peace?'

Calvin: 'Too few role models.'

—*Bill Watterson*, 1987

<sup>11</sup>She was a politician *and* a diplomat, so we should believe her (in this :-).

<sup>12</sup>Note that in many citations, the author's last name is misspelled as "Hereford".

<sup>13</sup>As quoted, without a date, in several authoritative history books.

<sup>14</sup>Sometimes misattributed to others, most frequently to Will Rogers.

<sup>15</sup>This is in reference to an initially popular name of WWI, *War That Will End War*, which had been in particular used by H. G. Wells for the title of his 1914 book—for that he later (in 1934) apologized.

If man does find the solution for world peace it will be the most revolutionary reversal of his record we have ever known.

—*George Marshall*, 1945

I can picture in my mind a world without war, a world without hate. And I can picture us attacking that world, because they'd never expect it.

—*Jack Handey*, 1992