

NONLETHAL SECURITY – A NEW APPROACH TO WAR AND PEACE

War is stupid and damaging. Nonlethal security could help us to reduce that damage and move to a more peaceful world. The Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign is based on the concept that, in the immediate future at least, warfare – physical conflict between nations or equivalent groups of people – is likely to continue. But conflict can be managed without killing or injuring people.

Nonlethal security

What is ‘nonlethal security’? In simple terms **‘nonlethal security’ is keeping people safe and maintaining law and order without killing anyone.** Most countries across the world keep law and order inside their borders using nonlethal security. In other words, they have a police force which (usually) tries not to kill or injure anyone.

Between nations, it’s a different story. If two nations become engaged in serious conflict, it’s accepted – and indeed expected – that they will each use lethal weapons to try to defeat each other. You could call this approach ‘lethal security’. It’s otherwise known as ‘war’.

If we can use a nonlethal approach to conflict resolution within nations, couldn’t we use the same approach in conflict **between** nations? Nonlethal security doesn’t mean that you accept defeat. It means that you protect yourself from aggression and immobilise the aggressors, but without killing them.

Why?

Why should we avoid killing aggressors? In simple terms because:

- killing someone if you don’t have to is not right
- killing is irreversible – there’s no opportunity for reconciliation
- very often those killed in warfare are not directly responsible for the conflict
- killing someone usually causes huge grief among their family and friends
- when there are deaths in battle there is sorrow and anger. This may persist for generations
- once killing starts, conflict often escalates making it much harder to achieve peace.

There are other reasons for avoiding lethal warfare:

- **It does not work**
Often nowadays, lethal warfare doesn’t work. It does not resolve conflict. Leaving aside whether they were ‘just’, the wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan cost many lives and expended vast material resources. In the end the mighty firepower of the West, employing the latest military technology, was defeated by small arms and home-made bombs.
- **Lethal wars may escalate to nuclear war**
Lethal warfare has always been miserable. As military technology has progressed from stone axes, through machine guns and aerial bombing to unmanned killer drones, the efficiency of killing has increased exponentially. The ultimate killing device (to date) is the nuclear weapon. A nuclear conflict could

very efficiently wipe out the human race. Even a small nuclear war could result in many years of radioactivity, with ongoing pain and genetic damage to the survivors. Continuing on our present path of increasingly lethal warfare will give legitimacy to nuclear weapons. By rejecting lethal warfare, we remove that legitimacy.

- **Lethal warfare will add to the risks in an unstable world**

So far, compared to the last century, there has in fact been less international conflict. But as the 21st century progresses our world is beginning to look increasingly unstable. Population growth and environmental damage is putting pressure on water and food resources. Increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere from fossil fuels is causing climate change, with rising sea levels and more acid oceans. These factors are likely to cause competition for resources and major population movements, with an increasing risk of conflict. (At some stage we may be able to halt and reverse global warming by removing carbon from the atmosphere, but this may take time.) Nonlethal security in conflict zones will allow much safer and more humane protection while communities adjust to change.

How?

How does nonlethal security work? How can we protect ourselves against physical aggression without killing or injuring the aggressors? How can we immobilise the aggressors so that they won't keep trying to attack us?

Technology

At present, when at war, we use passive protection such as flak jackets, armour plate and fortifications. We also try to stop opponents from attacking us by using lethal weapons to kill and injure them. With nonlethal security, we can make good use of passive protection, but we also need active protection to immobilise our opponents and their weapons. Some devices for this purpose are already available. They are known as 'nonlethal weapons'. These employ various technologies and include stun-guns (such as Tasers). Nonlethal weapons are still very basic and the range is limited. But research and development by various agencies is producing a growing number of devices.

If we all agreed that nonlethal security had a high priority we would very soon find the money to improve the technology. Currently, hundreds of billions of dollars are spent researching and developing lethal weapons. Just a fraction of that amount would provide a huge boost to the development of nonlethal security research.

A new approach to war

We'll need new nonlethal technology but we'll also need a whole new approach to maintaining international security.

This will require a radical change in our military. At present, once a conflict is under way, military forces focus on killing aggressors, as well as on destroying their weapons. The new approach will oblige defence forces to resist aggression but do everything possible to minimise killing or injuring the opposing forces (and of course, non-combatants).

It will be a major reversal of current military tradition and strategy and it will not happen overnight. Until totally effective nonlethal technology is available, lethal weapons will be retained – just in case.

Making a start

When UN peacekeepers intervene on humanitarian grounds they often take a nonlethal approach. Where the peacekeepers are armed, they make every effort to avoid using their weapons. Sometimes, unfortunately, they may have to use their weapons for protection. Effective and reliable nonlethal technology could greatly reduce such incidents. Peacekeeping would be a good place in which to start testing and developing nonlethal approaches.

Extending nonlethal security – Two scenarios

In the case of intervention where there was fierce armed resistance the safety of the intervening forces would be a high priority. Current technology and protocols would need to be greatly improved before such nonlethal intervention could take place.

Afghanistan

Assuming that these improved resources had been available, we could envisage what a nonlethal intervention in, for example, Afghanistan might have been like. In such a scenario there would have been great emphasis on passive protection (fortifications, armour etc). Active operations would have been conducted with nonlethal weapons. Aggressive insurgents would have been immobilised and arrested, but without loss of life by civilians. There would have been no wedding parties blown up by misdirected airstrikes. Because there was no death or injury, the local population would have been much more cooperative.

Syria

In the current Syrian conflict, one could imagine an overwhelming force – sanctioned and organised by the United Nations – intervening with nonlethal technology. The warring parties would be immobilised. Discussion, negotiation and ultimately reconciliation would then take place.

These scenarios may seem highly fanciful but they are not at all beyond the bounds of human ingenuity and goodwill.

Implementing Nonlethal Security

How do we persuade the world – the military, our political leaders and the community – to change from lethal warfare to nonlethal security? This is a major challenge. Like all change, it will need to take place on a number of fronts and at a number of levels. Leadership can come from the top – from the politicians and the generals. But it also needs to come from the grass roots, from individual people who want to see a reduction in the damage from war.

The Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign

The Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign is only one element in the global movement for peace. It works cooperatively and positively with the many excellent organisations and individuals who are campaigning for peace with justice for all the citizens of this planet. At this stage (November 2014) the Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign has no formal structure. It is an informal movement which encourages the involvement of the people and the organisations that support its aims.

The Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign takes account of a series of steps for achieving world peace (as outlined in the book [Taming War](#)) namely:

1. Study the origins of war
2. Study what drives humans to make war
3. Design a scientific strategy for peace
4. **Use nonlethal technology to limit the damage**
5. Control guns domestically
6. Increase United Nations peacekeeping
7. Redirect the military into community work
8. Create useful challenges to satisfy aggressive drives
9. Share satisfying employment
10. Develop a culture of peace
11. Better manage our political leadership
12. Reform the United Nations
13. Eliminate nuclear weapons
14. Reduce world poverty
15. Improve the world environment
16. Promote world citizenship

Two further steps will require careful consideration and negotiation, but will be necessary for long term world peace, namely:

17. Break up super powers into smaller states
18. Establish a World Parliament.

Action

What action should we take? We need to:

- increase awareness of the potential of nonlethal security through all sectors of society
- educate the community about nonlethal security
- motivate world leaders to adopt a nonlethal approach to resolving international conflict
- ensure that the United Nations adopt a nonlethal approach to peacekeeping
- research and develop the technology
- research and develop the art of nonlethal conflict resolution
- train the military
- implement a nonlethal security approach worldwide.

Further Information

For further information about the Nonlethal Security for Peace Campaign go to www.nonlethalsecurityforpeace.com .

Contact

Email: info@tamingwar.com

Post: Box 724, Avalon Beach, NSW 2107 Australia

Phone: Please email info@tamingwar.com for a phone contact number.

This version January 2015