War and Peace

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At the Halifax meeting of the Canadian Anthropology Society in 2003, the *Anthropologica* Editorial Board decided to respond to continuing and immediate problems of war with a special issue.[1] In opening its pages to engaged anthropological research on war, this issue seeks to respond to critical demands in a way that is both timely and cognizant of the long-term, intransigent conditions of war in our time. The articles that follow examine war and peace substantively in work located in diverse places—in Iraq, Mexico, Kosovo, UNESCO, Sierra Leone, Peru, Guatemala and Haiti. Many are the product of engagement in war zones during periods of open conflict or its immediate aftermath; all are the result of sustained fieldwork and anthropological reflection.

We will be reading these articles in unavoidable intertextuality with the accounts of war that pervade public discourse in the present. It is nearly impossible to escape such accounts, often marked by vivid images instantaneously transmitted from the front lines. But each of the following articles represents a dramatically different picture. The anthropology of war and of violence—in common with much other scholarship, literature and personal accounts—provides a sharp contrast with prevailing cultural frameworks. Those frameworks are diverse and complex tissues of misrecognition, including such transparent fictions as the idea that wars are predominantly military matters, fought on defined battlegrounds by more or less willing combatants, and the more subtle and compelling myth of the just war. Beyond debating matters of evidence or interpretation, this work questions the implicit concepts within which the prevailing frameworks trap much of even the critical thought on war and peace. The anthropology of war and of violence, as represented powerfully in the articles here, conveys the practical, embodied reality of living in war zones. This does not simply add to what we know of war and peace; it offers a mirror through which the culture of militarism in our comparatively safe worlds can be discerned more clearly.

One of the recurring themes in this endeavour is a questioning of the cultures of war and of peace, exploring how these are created, acquire meaning and are challenged. A major issue here is the way in which war leaks into what is or appears to be peace, and the ways in which peace is deployed in war. The murkiness of the boundary and the ways in which war is nurtured and promoted in apparent peacetime is underlined in the studies presented in this special issue. Much can be understood about war if we understand better the permeability of the frame of peace that provides its margins.

Here, too, lies much of the discourse that generates the legitimacy for state or quasi-state violence. The articles in this collection are not inhabited by the usual fetishized entities of states and quasi-state bodies that populate conventional language on war. Those fetishized entities are real in their ability to mobilize people and resources and shape the discourse of war and peace, especially at a distance, but their fictive organic substance dissolves in the light of examined practices closer to the front lines. The ethnography of war (and peace) zones documents and analyzes people and collectivities crossing boundaries, creating and deploying new or renewed cultural repertoires and exercising agency under extreme conditions.

The articles are sensitive to the relation between the violence of war and the structural violence of both war and peace. As each traces in its particular analytic context, these are interconnected and the cessation of gunfire is not the end of violence. The theme of war *and peace* problematizes this relationship. The thematic foci as developed here (other foci are regrettably possible in this large area) are those of the *legitimation* of state and quasi-state violence and the implications of *intentional killing* with the intensity of loss, trauma and suffering that makes the wounds of war so intractable.

The articles that follow are not, for the most part, harrowing in their depictions of war and violence. Neither do they focus primarily on the political economy or geopolitics of war. Rather, the authors share an analytical stepping backward into the ideational and practical terrains that enable these wars to be waged and to be challenged. The articles fall broadly into two overlapping clusters. The first consists of those that primarily critique ideas and practices of war and peace (McCutcheon, Hébert, Pandolfi, Ilcan and Phillips and Kovats-Bernat). The second consists of those that present and explore popular—spontaneous or organized—responses to war and strategies for working toward substantive peace (Ilcan and Phillips, Denov and Maclure, Theidon, Vanthuyne and Kovats-Bernat).

In the opening paper of this collection, Richard McCutcheon draws attention to the persistence and intensity of the bombing and missile responses in Iraq in the period *between* the Gulf War and the Iraq War. Neither the bombing nor the human toll of the sanctions was secret, but the prevailing characterization of this period was one of peace or, at least, not war. McCutcheon's argument departs from renaming this entire period as constituting one war against Iraq, and proceeds through an examination of the literatures on the anthropology of war and of violence to arrive at a vision of war seen through an expanded concept of violence. He presents a comprehensive set of three conceptual constellations centred on direct/physical violence, economic/structural violence, and cultural/symbolic violence, which he demonstrates through application to this larger war against Iraq.

Martin Hébert's article focusses sustained attention on structural violence and on the continuum of violence from direct to more subtle and shadowy forms where it can elude recognition. His is a study of a primarily structural violence directed against the indigenous Tlapaneques in Mexico that he tells us is not narrowly war but, in that very statement, simultaneously questions the understanding of peace. Hébert traces the pervasive structural violence of market integration as well as the more internalized violence of alcoholism and prostitution. In this context, state structures of violent pacification raise questions about what constitutes peace beyond a cessation of immediate conflict.

Mariella Pandolfi's article moves into the terrain of military-humanitarian intervention, tracing how Kosovo has been rendered into a semblance of Afghanistan, East Timor or Iraq in the course of the world's first humanitarian war. Here is a new innovation in the political imaginary of a just war, emerging from what Pandolfi terms the "grey zone" of the last six years, along a continuum from humanitarian intervention through militarized humanitarianisn to humanitarian war. This is a nuanced mobile anthropology that explores conflict in the post-communist Balkans and also the post-modern discourse of time-space contraction that leaves the Balkans stripped of local specificity (but not of stereotypes) and lost in abstracted universalized models. Pandolfi calls for examining global discursive regimes that legitimize the "quick fix" of a military solution—very selectively (consider Rwanda) and in accordance with political calculations hidden in the apparently apolitical discourse of humanitarian necessity.

Suzan Ilcan and Lynne Phillips further pursue the role of the international community through a form of "studying up" directed toward UNESCO's program of promoting "cultures of peace." UNESCO has interestingly proposed and begun to implement an approach to peace that

attempts to bypass the state structures previously targeted in peace movements or negotiations, and instead mobilize people somewhat more directly. The three aspects Ilcan and Philips examine in this article are building institutions for formal democracy, the training of children and the integration of women. Programs such as these began in the early 1990s in frontline countries such as El Salvador, Mozambique and Burundi. Ilcan and Phillips note the potential such work on the margins of state structures might have for preventing or reducing civil war. But the burden of their analysis is a critical identification of the implicit and explicit implications and limits of conceptualizing peace as security and peace/security as an object of governance. In moving outside conventions of statist discourse, the "cultures of peace" initiative draws upon the cultural resources of neo-liberalism—investing in oneself to create security and managing peace as security through processes of governing. Drawing upon the critical literature on neo-liberalism and on governmentality, Ilcan and Phillips question a concept of peace as security that omits attention to inequality, oppression and suffering. They call for a much more robust concept of peace and point to the more inclusive positions of activist peace groups whose voices and organizations are marginalized in the discourse of peace as security.

Myriam Denov and Richard Maclure report on an international (CIDA) project working with girl soldiers in Sierra Leone, a country devastated by structural violence and by a brutal ten-year civil war in which the combatants were largely young people and children. Thirty percent of the child soldiers were girls. Denov and Maclure start with a critique of the limitations of widespread images portraying child soldiers as either victims or crazed perpetrators, and proceed to paint a complex picture of girl soldiers as both. They show the girl soldiers as active agents located in an environment rife with extremes of coercion, physical and sexual violence and fear, in which they sought power, as is intrinsic to childhood, and in which some also sought the power of cruelty or domination. Possibilities were severely constrained but, within these limits, girls are unflinchingly shown as active killers, and also as devising means of escape, establishing fragile ties of support with other girls, subverting or avoiding the orders given, and occasionally fighting back. The authors argue for an approach to child soldiers that comprehends the reality of their experience and recognizes their agency. Their project applies this approach in incorporating adolescent girl soldiers in the research team.

Kimberly Theidon's paper addresses the aftermath of fratricidal conflict within small communities in Peru between 1980 and 1992. She examines the work people engage in both to induce themselves to kill and then to stop killing, and certain of the mechanisms they use to do this, specifically masking and public secrets. She pushes the study to the almost impossible point of interviewing the killed, in an extensive account from a healer/shopkeeper who had been brought to popular trial in his community by *Senderistas*. He had emerged from this experience, which normally resulted in summary execution, able to recount how his masked neighbours had tried him, how his comadre had spoken up for his life, and how he had been sentenced to days of symbolic labour caring for the Senderista flag. Theidon explores the trauma such experiences leave for individuals and communities and how they can and do move forward amid unresolved structural violence and the unrightable wrongs of intentional killing, injury and betrayal. Sensitive to the precarious and fraught process, she phrases her conclusion in the precisely illuminating terms of coexistence.

In a closely related article, Karine Vanthuyne's addresses the issue of reconciliation as the project of three non-governmental organizations in early 21st-century Guatemala, each pursuing a distinct path and all working—on human rights, on psychosocial effects of violence, and on recovering memory of the conflict—in a context in which memory of the past is part of a dangerously contested present and future. Vanthuyne introduces the remembered substance of 36 years of war and proceeds to explore these organizations' search for a language in which to express truth and memory. The intrinsic difficulty of doing so is heightened by the vulnerability of the channels available and the complicated and explosive potential of the testimony. Where Theidon finds not only memory, but forgetting and remembering to forget to be critical elements in the provisional accommodation that allows co-existence within fratricidal communities, Vanthuyne emphasizes memory and a duty to remember as necessary for the reconstitution of lives and communities in the face of overwhelming resources mobilized against popular memory. As official (or unofficial) histories seek to erase or deny the violence of the past, memory can serve to clarify the choices made and to make possible different choices in a present still immanent with the threat of political violence.

Christopher Kovats-Bernat writes from years spent working with street children in the war zone of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and offers a penetrating ethnographic account of persisting structural violence in one of the most devastatingly poor countries in the world. His article traces the history of Haiti's profound economic and human crisis in which the civil war emerged. Initial hopes for improvement through the election of Jean-Bertrand

Aristide or the subsequent intervention by international forces have been derailed by pervasive violence in which the actors continually shift sides in a flux of factional fighting, personal opportunism and economic need. As if to belie the possibility of simple solution, it was the Aristide government's attempt in 2002 to reduce the violence of a fiercely *pro*-Aristide street clan that toppled the country again into open civil war. Kovats-Bernat not only evokes the devastation of this decade of war, but emphasizes the creativity he witnessed in rebuilding social worlds and cultural meaning. A strikingly powerful instance has been the creation of the category of *zenglendo*, a compound of *zenglen* (shards of broken glass) and *do* (back). It is derived from a tale of the *djab*, a Vodou demon that would appear as an elder asking a young boy to massage his tired back, and whose back would then turn into a mass of broken glass, horribly cutting the boy's hands. This has become a powerful critical expression of the popular imagination, applied first to the former army and then to perpetrators of violence against the people much more generally.

This special issue has two linked themes: a critique of concepts of war and an exploration of popular responses and strategies. The creative image of the *zenglendo* highlights the provocative critique offered in voices from the war zones. Anthropologists and others can serve well by listening attentively to these voices and by exploring what they tell us about the tentacles of war.

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Notes

1 The specific contents of this issue remain the responsibility of the guest editor and of each individual contributor. Winnie Lem and Marie France Labrecque have been tireless in expediting the review process.