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IS A VULNERABLE WORLD TEETERING ON THE EDGE OF A NEW DARK AGE?

Joseph Camilleri

Is a vulnerable world teetering on the edge of a new Dark Age?

We appear to have reached one of those extraordinary moments in history when people everywhere, communities and even entire nations, feel increasingly stressed and vulnerable. The same may be said of the planet as a whole.

Whether intellectually or intuitively, many are asking the same question: Where are we heading? How do we explain the long list of financial, environmental and humanitarian emergencies, epidemics, small and larger conflicts, genocides, war crimes, terrorist attacks and military interventions? Why does the international community seem powerless to prevent any of this?

There is no simple or single answer to this conundrum, but two factors can shed much light.

The first involves a global power shift and the prospect of a new Cold War. The second relates to globalisation and the crises generated by the sheer scale of cross-border flows.

Is a new Cold War in the making?

The geopolitical shift has resulted in a dangerous souring of America's relations with Russia and China.

The dispute over Ukraine is the latest chapter in the rapidly deteriorating relationship between Washington and Moscow. In what is essentially a civil war in which over 3,000 people have been killed, the two great powers have chosen to support opposing sides in

the conflict by all means short of outright intervention.

The incorporation of Crimea into Russia, Moscow's decision to use force in Georgia in 2008 and its support for the independence of the two break-away regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are part of the same dynamic.

The conduct of Russian governments in the Putin era has been at times coercive and often clumsy at home and abroad. But the United States has also much to answer for. For the last 25 years its foreign policy has been unashamedly triumphalist.

In his 1992 State of the Union address, President George Bush senior declared: *By the grace of God, America won the Cold War.*

Since then we have seen the bombing of Serbia without UN Security Council approval, US withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, the US invasion of Iraq in defiance of UN opposition, overt support for the colour revolutions on Russia's doorstep (Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan), and the Magnitsky Act singling out Russia for human rights violations. Western military intervention in Libya, which contrary to assurances brought about regime change, dealt a further blow to the relationship.

And now the Ukraine crisis has led to steadily expanding US and European sanctions against Russia and renewed efforts to ramp up NATO deployments and joint exercises in Eastern Europe.

Are we seeing the emergence of a new

Cold War? Though ideology is now less conspicuous, the underlying structure of the conflict is remarkably similar. The trans-Atlantic alliance is once again seeking to contain and erode Russian power and influence, this time round by reaching ever closer to her borders.

Mishandling China's rise

Simultaneously, through President Barack Obama's "strategic pivot to Asia," the US is committed to redeploying 60% of US air and sea power to Asia by 2020. It has supported the Philippines in its maritime dispute with China, strengthened the security commitment to Japan, allocated troops to the Philippines, Australia and Singapore, and agreed to supply Taiwan with advanced weapon systems.

These and other measures are part of a wider strategy designed to thwart China's rise as a major centre of power and so maintain US supremacy in the Asia Pacific.

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DISARMING TIMES

A quarterly journal of Pax Christi Australia. It aims to provide members and interested peacemakers with peace news and views both local and international. We endeavour in each edition to reflect the three-fold emphasis of Pax Christi which engages members in study, Non-violent action and prayer for peace, justice, human rights, development and inter-faith and inter-civilisation dialogue.

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Human rights, justice and integrity of creation are central to its work.

We take a stand against militarism, nuclear weapons and the arms race.

As an ecumenical Christian movement

Pax Christi fosters the spiritual and scriptural dimensions of peace-making.

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In response China has vigorously asserted its position in maritime disputes with the Philippines and Japan, pursued an economic charm offensive in Central Asia and Southeast Asia, proposed the establishment of two new “silk roads” and expanded relations with Russia, the most dramatic development to date being the \$400 billion gas deal signed in Shanghai in May this year.

We face rising risks and uncertainties

Put simply, a new Cold War is in the making; perhaps the Cold War never ended. Both the United States and Russia are modernising their nuclear forces, making them more lethal than ever. Of their combined arsenal of over 15,000 nuclear weapons, about 1,800 warheads are on high alert, ready for use at short notice. Should even a tiny fraction of these weapons be used, the humanitarian impact would be catastrophic.

The nuclear risk is compounded by US efforts to retain global supremacy just as Russia is reasserting itself after two decades of humiliating decline. China’s virtually irreversible rise, the Sino-Russian marriage of convenience and the emergence of new centres of influence, notably Brazil, India and Iran, add to the high levels of risk and uncertainty.

All of this is happening against a backdrop of failed and costly Western military interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Africa and proxy wars, notably in Syria. These have unleashed demons that may take decades to tame.

Given these fault-lines and their religious and cultural overlays, it is no surprise that the UN Security Council has been unable to function effectively in discharging its security mandate.

Cross-border flows prove overwhelming

There is another element to our predicament. That is our inability to manage effectively the unremitting application of science and technology to war, industry, com-

merce, finance, education and the media. The sheer volume, speed and intensity of cross-border flows has transformed the way we trade, produce, consume, travel and communicate.

A great transition is under way. What is less clear is whether we can develop in timely fashion the political institutions and agreements we need for a relatively soft landing.

As the following examples show, the record to date is not encouraging.

Financial flows: Over the last 25 years a string of financial crises, often triggered by large and sudden flows of speculative capital, have brought many economies, including seemingly robust ones, to their knees. Despite much talk, an effective system of global financial regulation remains elusive.

Arms flows: Authorised international transfers of small arms, light weapons, parts, accessories and ammunition are estimated at about \$8.5 billion annually. The illicit trade probably comes to \$1.5 billion. Taken together these transfers account for 60-70% of annual casualties in today’s conflicts.

Population flows: By the end of 2013, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees calculated that the number of refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons, stateless people and others of concern had reached an unprecedented 42.9 million. Permanently resettling the displaced, let alone preventing such displacement, does not appear within reach.



The world has more displaced people, about 43 million of them, than ever before. **EPA/Sedat Suna Atmospheric flows:** In its fifth Assessment Report the International Panel on Climate Change concluded that the earth’s surface in each of the last three decades

been warmer than any preceding decade since 1850. It is "extremely likely that human influence has been the dominant cause". Global greenhouse gas emissions during 2000-2010 have grown more quickly than in each of the three previous decades. Many doubt that next year's world climate change summit in Paris will yield the requisite agreement.

Pathogenic flows: The current Ebola scare is just one of many infectious diseases (e.g. tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, influenza) ravaging the world. In 2012, 8.6 million people contracted tuberculosis and 1.3 million died from it. Though HIV/AIDS deaths have been declining, an estimated 1.6 million died from the disease in 2012 and the AIDS epidemic has cost nearly 30 million lives since its inception.

Information flows: The Snowden revelations and other leaks tell us that states and corporations, working independently or in tandem, have developed sophisticated surveillance programs. These target not just would-be terrorists but presidents, prime ministers, corporate managers and the millions of computer and social media users.

In all of this the problem is governance failure. National institutions are struggling in advanced industrial states as well as in failed states.

.Parliaments, governments and political parties, buffeted by volatile

national markets and rapid technological change, lack the competence, resources and legitimacy to manage complex cross-border flows. To hide their irrelevance, they resort to short-term fixes, political spin and security hysteria.

Multilateral institutions have limited room for manoeuvre, UN reform barely rates a mention and civil society organisations are often lacking in direction or organisational capacity.

Yet not all is bleak. High-intensity conflicts between states have become less frequent since 1989. A contributing factor is the UN's steadily expanding peacekeeping effort – 17 current peace operations involve over 117,000 military and civilian personnel and contributions from 122 countries.

In other policy arenas, including health, environment, development and human rights, the United Nations and its various agencies, despite limited resources, are performing equally useful functions. The G20 now offers a more meaningful framework than the G7/8 for reviewing the complex challenges facing the world economy.

Civil society remains active. The scientific community has provided an authoritative account of the dangers posed by climate change and of the actions needed to arrest it. A growing body of informed opinion is questioning the intrusiveness of the surveillance state.

We nevertheless still lack the appropriate institutions and forums that can mobilise human energies and resources and convert them into effective political agency.

A few steps readily suggest themselves. Small and middle powers that aspire to good international citizenship can do more to encourage collective action. The successful coalitions that led to the Cluster Munitions Convention (2010), the establishment of the International Criminal Court (2002) and the Land Mines Convention (1999) involved constructive collaboration between governments, multilateral institutions and civil society organisations. This model can be applied to the resolution of other pressing problems.

Inter-civilisational dialogue involving intellectuals, business, professional, political, community and religious leaders can facilitate the transition from unilateralist impulses and interventions to acceptance of a truly multi-centric world.

Those in leadership positions in multilateral institutions can call great powers to account and help create new spaces where the energies of civil society can combine with the resources of philanthropy to address the challenges of the Great Transition.

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SIGNS OF THE END?

A Theological Reflection on "Teetering on the Edge".

Joe Camilleri asks: *Is a vulnerable world teetering on the edge of a new Dark Age?* He describes a world under threat from shifting alliances, new deployments of power, new potential confrontations and new economic and natural forces. Our world is threatened with destructive conflict on many fronts. However there are signs of hope. How should people of faith respond? What account can we give of a threatened world? What hope can we offer? There is nothing new about these

scenarios. Ominous comparisons are being drawn with 1914. They recur throughout history often with disastrous outcomes.

In chapter 13 of Mark's gospel we read: *Jesus said: When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.* These words refer to what

was happening at the time Mark was writing when a similar grim scenario unfolded. The Jews had launched a revolt which could never succeed. The Romans struck back, sacked Jerusalem, scattered the people and destroyed the temple. This was the ultimate worst case scenario. It struck at the very heart of the Jewish faith. The temple was the focus of the Jewish faith, the place where God dwelt. If there was no temple, where was God? It would seem like the end of the world as they knew it.

Christians too were deeply affected. Many were Jews and would have been in Jerusalem at the time. They asked: *Is this the end?* More particularly they would expect the imminent return of Christ. Throughout the New Testament we find the question being asked: *When would Christ return? How will we know? How can we be ready? What will happen to the world?* Early Christians expected that this would happen sooner rather than later.

The expectation of Christ's return became part of orthodox Christian belief. The Nicene Creed says: *He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.* Many Christians make the Proclamation of Faith: *Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.*

The early Christians, like us, lived in a violent and sometimes brutal world. They believed that God had already dealt with this world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. These events had introduced a new age which was unfolding through the life of the church and its mission to the world. They looked forward to the final coming of Christ when justice and peace would be vindicated and violence and oppression would be judged and dealt with. This enabled them to live with confidence in a world in which they faced imprisonment, torture and often death. The world was heading for a final crisis. God was in that crisis. They would be vindicated, what whole, creation would be restored and evil finally overcome.

Later it became clear that Jesus was not about to return but the urgency remained. God was in the crisis whenever it occurred. The message was clear. *Be ready. Be alert. Keep awake.* We don't know the day or the hour but we live as if it is about

to happen. God is doing something new and we are called to be part of it.

People of faith to-day are often a embarrassed by all this. We do not know what to do with it.

Some Christians are very clear what it is about. They take the signs of end literally. They foresee a time when the world will face a final, probably nuclear conflict in which the world as we know it will go up in flames. Christ will return in glory and gather the faithful up in 'the rapture' to live with him forever. Their reaction to the scenarios described in "Teetering on the Edge" is *bring it on. The world will go up in flames but we will live with Christ forever. Hallelujah.* This perspective is widespread in the United States but it is here in Australia too. We see bumper stickers which announce: *When the rapture comes, this car will be empty.* This perspective provides support for the more militant international policies of governments.

Moderate and liberal Christians recoil from such views. However it is possible to go to the other extreme and tune out the Second Coming altogether. This can leave us in the position of reacting to events, of struggling on as best we can with no expectation as to where things are going. This can undermine our ability to sustain the struggle over the long term. In practice, the belief that the struggle is going somewhere does sustain us. We are not so good at articulating it. Does the belief in the Second Coming help us to deal with "Teetering on the Edge?"

The passage from Mark 13 quoted earlier ends with the words: *This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.* The Book of Revelation places us in a cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil

but ends with the promise of a "New Heaven and a New Earth" when God's reign of peace, justice and healing will be realised. This could be seen as "Pie in the Sky When you Die." A closer examination of the New Testament reveals that the coming reign of God is both a future hope and an emerging reality in the present. The "New Jerusalem" is already taking shape in the lives of those who follow the way of Jesus, and their fellow travellers in other faith communities, and who are committed to the way of peace justice and love between people, communities and nations and to the renewal of the earth. The New Creation which begins with the resurrection of Christ from the dead is already taking shape and provides the context for our peace-making work. However we also have the assurance that the struggle for peace and justice is going somewhere. Creation is pointing towards a gracious end. We do not know nor can we speculate on the nature or timing of this but it gives us the hope and strength to keep going. Hebrews, Chapter 11 describes the heroes of the faith, particularly those of have gone out on a limb for God's reign: *All of these died in faith without having received the promises, but from a distance they saw and greeted them. They confessed that they were strangers and foreigners on the earth, for people who speak in this way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; indeed, he has prepared a city for them.*

Harry Kerr is a retired Anglican Priest and Convenor of Pax Christi Victoria

Pax Christi World Assembly 2015 Pilgrims on the Path to Peace Bethlehem, Wednesday, 13 Sunday, 17 May

2015. Pax Christi International will be celebrating its 70th anniversary in 2015!

We invite you to attend the celebrations, taking place in Bethlehem, a symbol of Pax Christi's commitment to peace and reconciliation.: The programme includes dialogue sessions and round tables where members and local peacemakers can reflect and strategize on Pax Christi themes Pricing: *Includes lodging, full board and participation*

906 AUD - Single room, 719 AUD - Double room, 544 AUD - Triple room,

Pax Christi International offers a 1800AUD subsidy for Australian delegates, to be divided among all.

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A IS FOR AGRICULTURE; B IS FOR BATTLEFIELDS; C IS FOR CROSSROADS, PART 2

Bill Clements

Wayside shrines never made it to Australian towns or roads. The civic committees in our towns and rural localities, some 4000 of them, would, over the next decades, devote themselves to the work of commemoration and the erection of appropriate war memorials (only one town, Peachester, in Queensland, would 'miss out,' as all its men returned.) The Australian shrines are devoid of any religious imagery. The one exception is Berridale in southern New South Wales where the tourist buses always stop to allow everyone to take a photo of a shrine with a crucifix. (Inglis)

In Australia, as in England, and even, strangely, in France, those who made the decisions about the nature of the memorials that would be erected, the cultural elites which had not hesitated to enlist the churches in their prosecution of the terrible war, now eschewed altogether Christian imagery.

By 1916, France had become a land of widows and orphans. The cost to French agriculture was enormous. By war's end, 25 per cent of the male population between the ages of 18 and 40 had been killed and, of this number, over half belonged to the peasantry. As to the land:

It is indeed a battlefield. Broken, burnt trees, torn down hedges, shell holes everywhere. The whole earth is tumbled up and grey and broken. Not a bit of solid surface. What strikes me even more is that not one single blade of grass is left anywhere. Either the ground has been flung open, or the grass whipped off by the storm of shrapnel pellets... We are going up the line, digging... (Glen 'George' Warnecke in Matthews and Wilson)

Since nothing much in the way of stories from French sources finds its way onto the bibliographies of Australian / British war histories, the only way we have of entering into that place and time is through soldiers' letters and there's a good reason for that as a French combatant wrote after the war: hmmm I'm not sure about this. Aren't we quoting Australian soldiers here?

And aren't they quoted aplenty in chronicles?

The field of vision of a soldier at the front is limited but precisely because it is limited he is able to observe very precisely. The soldier at the front does not see much but what he sees, he sees very clearly. Because he sees through his own eyes and not through those of another, he sees what is there. (Kimpflin)

The Australians compared the Somme with that of Gallipoli, and wondered if it were possible to communicate the atrocious reality to their friends and family in Australia. So we read this:

... the troops dragged their way along deep mud, which especially when drying, tugged like glue at the boot soles, so the mere journey to the front left the men and even pack-animals utterly exhausted; many pack animals became stuck in the mud and had to be shot and men were pulled out often losing their boots and sometimes their trousers... Stretcher bearers who worked in groups of six to eight to each stretcher, in these conditions were quickly worn out. Often the wounded had to be left lying in forward aid posts for twelve hours in the open without blankets, for want of men to carry them. (Charles Bean, war correspondent, in Matthews and Wilson.) And this:

Members of the Fifth Brigade remember this valley [Martinpuitch] as a place of intense fire. Later when they returned (after the evacuation from the Somme), they found the desolate looking country already green and the poppies coming into bloom. The French people were returning to find their beautiful village entirely destroyed. (Norman Lloyd in Matthews and Wilson)

As a result of the war, France became part of our national story. The writer, Charles Péguy, who supported Captain Alfred Dreyfus and who died at the Battle of the Marne in September 1914 in defence of his country, should have a say. In 1912, 100 years ago, he wrote:

Je suis, dit Dieu, Seigneur des Trois

Vertus. La foi est un grand arbre, c'est un chêne enraciné Au coeur de France.

Et sous les ailes de cet arbre la Charité, ma fille la Charité abrite toutes les détresses du monde.

Et ma petite espérance n'est rien que cette petite promesse de bourgeon au fin commencement d'avril.

(I am, said God, Lord of three Virtues. Faith is a great tree, an oak deep rooted in the heart of France. And under the wings of this tree, Charity, my daughter, Charity, shelters all the world's grief. My small hope is nothing but this little promise of a bud at last at the beginning of April.)

The landscapes and the lives of men and women in them before the First World War had often been the subject matter and source of inspiration for writers, painters and classical composers. The latter collected the songs people sang and incorporated the melodies and rhythms into their compositions, so the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a creative synthesis and many songs preserved. It was as though the imagination discerned that these worlds were dying and that we might need food for the soul in the days and years that lay ahead.

So too the need for food for physical nourishment as the war against agriculture has continued throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty first century. The weaponry is sophisticated and diverse and has ranged from the millions of tonnes of shells and the poison gases of World War One to landmines and Agent Orange in Cambodia and Vietnam, and radiation poisoning caused by nuclear tests and accidents; through to relentless urbanisation as people, forced to move from the countryside to find work, leave behind empty towns and villages, ageing populations and lands that fall out of production. This is currently a phenomenon in China. There go the next generation of farmers to make Tablet PCs and Smartphones. Little wonder that there are concerns about food security in China, which is no stranger to famine.

In Australia, as a result of government indifference and drought, many communities have lost people, especially the young; schools are closed, and football teams must merge or fold. We need contract workers from the Pacific nations as seasonal fruit pickers and from China, men and women to work in abattoirs. And who wants to do the backbreaking work of shearing?

Agriculture, in all its diversity, and farming communities should be high among our priorities in the twenty first century. Since those beginnings in 1788, Australia has become one of the world's major granaries and food producers, despite thin soils, water problems, urban bureaucracies and unpredictable nature. In a world with a growing population, we need some quite different reflection, a different take to counter pessimism, to provide signs of hope.

"The number and proportion of Australians living outside the major capitals has increased enormously since the early 70s, but the aspiration of those moving from the cities to the country is not to live and work on the land but rather to get a little further north each year." (Waterhouse) Clearly we lack a vision of cultivation and agriculture, yet culture has its roots in the rhythms of the seasons, in silence, in night skies ablaze with stars. Meantime, back where it all began, in Turkey, agricul-

ture is in good shape, farmers are encouraged. The end result means self-sufficiency in food and significant agricultural exports.

In our kitchen there is a photograph of the wonderfully innocent face of a member of our family in the uniform of the AIF, taken just after he enlisted in Melbourne. He survived Gallipoli and Anzac Cove in 1915 and died at St. Quentin in 1918. The mourning for Jim O'Shea, the oldest son in his family, never ended. In 1952 I spent time in the company of veterans in a Repatriation Hospital in Adelaide. Across from my bed in our L-shaped ward was a World War 1 veteran, an old man who didn't, as I remember, get many visitors and needed someone to play cribbage with him, so that's what we did every day over two months. We were in a ward full of men for whom the wars never ended, a ward where men wounded in the mind underwent pre-frontal lobotomies.

The casualties were still being counted during the 1930s. By then another 60,000 had died from wounds or illnesses caused by the war. At least one generation of women and children, and maybe a second, suffered terribly from all this, and it is impossible to count casualty figures here. Many men returned broken and bitter; others turned drunk and violent. (Carlyon)

Don't go looking for the service records of women who served as nurses in France and elsewhere. The British (and we were all British back then) didn't keep any records, so our nurses got left out of the story; their names come up when typed into a computer at the Australian War Memorial but that's all. Four women in our family were nursing in that terrible world of stricken and afflicted men. They never married.

To return to the 2015 centenary, leaving aside the Gallipoli parallels with classical antiquity, Sid Nolan's paintings of soldiers swimming in the Aegean, and mythmaking by the state – "C'mon Aussie, c'mon, c'mon" – would our feelings for those who served be diminished if we were to start rethinking the Australian narrative of the First World War?

There used to be, and I hope it's still there, a famous piece of graffiti in Manhattan, down on the lower East Side in East First Street, which sums it all up. Mohandas K. Gandhi is being interviewed and the conversation goes like this:

Reporter: Mr Gandhi, what do you think of Western civilisation?

Mr Gandhi: I think it would be a good idea!

Bill Clements is an artist and member of Pax Christi, New South Wales. This is the second part of his article. The first part is in the September Disarming Times.

LEST WE FORGET, A SERMON FOR ALL SAINTS' DAY 2014

Rev. Dr. Wes Campbell at Christchurch Castlemaine, Vic.

We are here to remember the dead.

On the day called 'All Saints', all Souls, Halloween (Holy Evening), also called Sunday of the Dead, we remember those who have died.

We are warned: If we forget the dead, we will soon forget the living. A forgetful heart will empty us, and take away our feeling for both the joys and sorrows of our companions. So we are to *remember*. Much to our surprise, as we remember them – they give us *a memory*'. As we look back to them, they turn us around to give us a glimpse of the future they lived for; they arm us with *hope* for the future! With them, as a living mem-

ory, a lively presence, we can walk boldly and confidently into the days that come. So, do not forget.

I am reminded of that moment of remembrance taken by those who recall the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the eleventh month. An expression of hope that this would be the war to end all wars. Our experience, however, is to observe one scene of warfare cascading onto another!

ANZAC commemoration has been reported this weekend, with the gathering of crowds in Albany. TV shows recall the young men (and women) enrolling in the military forces. In the local paper this week was a photo of

locals dressed in old military dress marking those early days. I am puzzled by this. Though we are assured that these are not celebrations, it has a celebratory feel. Only time will tell whether we are being invited into *commemorations* or celebrations of that rush to enrol. Though these are not said to be celebrations, we seem to be asked to remember the high hopes of those new soldiers – as if we did not know of the deaths and carnage that was to follow.

Will we remember too those who returned shattered, maimed, shell shocked.; and those silenced by the horror. Only time will tell if we are

able to remember the whole picture including Australians who resisted the war effort and refused to join it. This All Saints day is a day to help us remember. A therapeutic act of honesty – especially because the church largely supported the call to arms. Why would we not be suspicious of those who call for prayer as they also bless weapons; whose God blesses nationalism. The young dead call us to remember them. As we remember, will they offer any hope of a future? As we approach that question we will hear voices that speak of war as necessary. Awful but necessary. Tragic as it is, war drives human culture into new heights of achievement. So human imagination generates new technology, together with weapons of war.

The ancient Egyptian empire took up the wheel and built chariots. That made them into a great superpower. The Roman Empire combined technology and warfare. Rome blended Greek culture and its military skill. Copper mixed with tin made hard bronze weapons which assisted the Romans to rule for centuries! The story of steel is similar. In the nineteenth century steel as a defence and a weapon led to preparation for the first World War. In the second half of the 20th century we lived with the fruit of physics: the atom was split and nuclear weapons were made. As you know we have lived under the nuclear cloud ever since. The technology we have created threatens to annihilate us. Yet, nations have these weapons and refuse to disarm. With the internet and the personal computer the world has suddenly grown smaller; we can communicate with ease around the globe. And drones have been produced to make war in a new way. So, they are right: war and human imagination seem to go hand in hand. But what are we to say of the destruction?

Is it possible that poetry might help? I have started to read again the poetry of the World Wars, and I am reminded of the way poetry changed. Poetry in the late nine-

teenth and early twentieth century was confident in tone, regarding military experience as honourable, shedding glory on the soldier. Those like Rupert Brooke looked to their own death quite serenely – his grave would be a little bit of England on foreign shores. Then, as you know, from the defeat of Gallipoli into the trenches of the Somme, the tone shifts. Soldiers live with mud and corpses. Some wrote poetry to survive. Some wanted us to know what they experienced. Others wrote as protest; their poetry was a rejection of the old lie that war is noble and glorious. Their writing is an act of resistance. They will not forget the sacrifice made of their life. They do not want us to forget and to go on repeating this carnage. That is the meaning of that phrase: ‘Lest we forget!’

Our language does strange things here. The only point of war is to kill. We are talking about killing human beings. Organised, planned, regimented. The young are trained to kill.. By calling it ‘war’ it seems to gain some sort of credibility. And we have that old sleeper: the ‘just war’ when nations try to excuse that killing! Replace that with *massacre*: or *slaughter*, and what happens. *The Great Slaughter!*

What happens to faith here? Many simply lost faith. Political rulers and church leaders cooperated to take these soldiers into a living death. Why would they trust them again? What are we in this? If once citizens could hide behind the defence that they did not know about war, we cannot. We have seen the brutality of war on TV and cinemas.

What do our Gallipoli soldiers offer here? Can they prize open our ears to the cries of the maimed, our hearts to the slaughtered, and not only human suffering but also the suffering other creatures of this planet at war, starting with horses? Can we deal with their suffering that is meaningful? Will their sacrifice point us to a different future? Will they remind us of the biblical instruction: do not put your trust in princes? Do not give your loyalty

and life to the rulers who will conscript you into armies and take you into the killing fields. They serve death, not life. What if those dead soldiers remain mute? Silent. What then?

I once preached on ANZAC evening and wrestled with the call of peace and our drive toward destruction. At the conclusion of the service as I greeted people at the door a teacher in New Testament who had also been a chaplain said to me: the problem is *guilt*. What did he mean?

Guilt is our attempt to cover over the terrible things, our attempt to block out feelings, to deaden the danger or the hurt. Guilt silences us. It would even turn that declaration, ‘Lest we forget’ into readiness for the next war.

How can our guilt be removed and our humanity returned to us? The key can be found in the strange vision of John, with that great crowd dressed in white robes, holding palm branches, and singing songs of victory. In the vision the apostle is given a memory. And remembering, the vision opens up a new future. The dress of this crowd recalls those earliest Christians who died as martyrs. From the perspective of the Roman Empire they were terrorists who challenged the right order. They certainly did challenge. They were prepared to die as witnesses. Yet without violence to another. They pose the question: what is worth dying for?

Christian faith holds out a vision we need to show our young people. Not the vision of a military advertisement offering training and a career – as is regularly advertised on TV and cinemas – where we see two young people, a man and a woman, walking from one environment to the next – from aircraft hangers, to a jungle setting, to a desert, to a warship, with sophisticated weapons that change for each environment. Note that the advertisement does not tell them or us that employment includes readiness to kill other human beings. As long as such ads are shown, we do a disservice to our young. And we will end

up insisting on a guilty cover-up. Or, we will blame the soldier for a lack of discipline without admitting we have sent them to war! What is the alternative? In the *Revelation* reading: at the centre of a New Jerusalem sits a slaughtered Lamb. Yes, the imagery is graphic; just as life is. In his dream the Apostle is opened up to a source of new life: in a mutilated body. The promise is that in his body Jesus addresses a world of war, uncovers its guilt, and takes us into a new future. Jesus' body: that is both the body of Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified; it is also the body, the church, where people experiment with a new life of peace. Matthew regarded the teaching of Jesus (in the Sermon on the Mount) as unavoidable for Christians. He means us to take this on as a political calling. Jesus teaches and lives a new way of blessing: for the poor, the humble and defenceless, for peace-makers and the merciful. On this path we learn what it means to love our enemy! It is this vision that makes Jesus' teaching in the Gospel so essential and practical. Either we learn to love our neighbour, or

we will destroy ourselves. Some have said that this teaching is too difficult. It *is* challenging. It may even make us look foolish. You'd have to admit a slaughtered Lamb is not as alluring as the great beasts – any four year old will tell you how fascinating dinosaurs are. But that is the point. The beasts of prey, the empires that spill blood, are dinosaurs; by contrast Jesus offers a role model for a new defenceless future. Returned soldiers who know about the blood and tears will recognise the murdered Jesus in their past; as they will seek to find a way into his future. This came into sharp focus in the first meeting of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948 – where participants, facing the destruction of the world war declared they were willing to live without the defence of weapons. This is the contribution Christian faith can make to an Australia that is trying to come to grips with its ANZAC identity. The church has profound gift to offer here: a new imagination that no longer treats war as a necessary burden and a tragic necessity. It offers a libera-

tion that shows up all violence to be a mistake, a failed experiment. Grasped by such a new imagination we will have courage and energy to point forward to a new Australia where people are no longer fearful of people arriving in boats, who dress differently, or are of another faith. Most important, we will be encouraged to engage those who are related to the original inhabitants of this land. What an alternative! Here we may join the great choir of creation to sing together at Jesus' meal, trusting that his will be the final victory. As we experiment with this new imagination, let us gather at his table, people of every culture, every colour and creed. May we be drawn onto the path of those first defenceless disciples, saints, martyrs, learning to trust their non-violent discipleship, and becoming prophets of a world made new; a world inhabited by a community of peace. And by that, you (!), become a sign of the new future offered by Christ Jesus, the slaughtered Lamb.

And to that, let all say AMEN!

Wes Campbell is a retired Uniting Church Minister & committee member of Pax Christi Victoria

WOMEN'S POWER TO STOP WAR: HUBRIS OR HOPE?

Cynthia Cockburn

Today, 28 April, ninety-nine years ago, was the sixth day of Second Battle of Ypres one of the First World War's most futile and costly engagements. Chlorine gas, a new weapon of choice, was seeping over the trenches. The battle would end in stalemate, leaving 105,000 dead and wounded men.

On that day, a mere hundred miles north of the battlefield, at The Hague, in neutral Netherlands, more than a thousand women assembled to talk peace. They travelled there from twelve countries, on both sides of the conflict, drawn by a belief that women could achieve something male leaders were unwilling or unable to do: stop the carnage. When the con-

gress ended, they dispatched women envoys to heads of state in belligerent and neutral countries, urging them to initiate a peace commission. In vain. The war continued for another three years until 37 million men, women and children had died..

The organization emerging from the Hague Congress called itself the International Women's Committee for Permanent Peace. A few years on, it would be renamed the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and establish an office in Geneva. So, today, we of WILPF are mourning the victims of Ypres and simultaneously marking our 99th birthday. As we do so, and prepare for our centenary a

year hence, we are rolling out a world-wide mobilization under the bold banner-headline: *Women's Power to Stop War*

Bold... but also bald. The slogan stops people in their tracks, They pause and puzzle over it. Are WILPF making a statement of fact here, or is this mere aspiration? The story of the Hague Congress hardly inspires confidence in women's power to stop war. Besides, the very fact that we have a centenary to 'celebrate', that we have had wars to contest throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, suggests not power but impotence.

If we really mean women have the power to stop war, in what does that ability reside? Why has it been

ineffective till now? How may we believe in it? Recently I was invited to sketch out the first draft of a new Manifesto for WILPF. It will be debated in the organisation throughout this year, and a final version issued at our centenary Congress a year from now, when we shall once more assemble in The Hague. To prepare for this daunting writing job I sat down, to *read*. Setting aside for the moment women's failure in 1915 to achieve a peace initiative and end the war, I took from my shelf some books about women's activism in the preceding period, in the early 20th and late 19th century.

What they reminded me was that the concern with 'peace' of many of our fore-runners emerged from, or combined with, engagement in other social movements. They did not limit themselves to the injunction 'thou shalt not kill', but addressed injustice, inequality, exploitation and unfreedom, laying the groundwork for a women's peace movement in the 20th century that would understand these wrongs as presaging violence, and indeed as of themselves violent. Women's campaigning tended to be joined-up, *holistic*.

The rapid urbanization of Britain, the USA and other industrializing societies in the latter part of the 19th century had brought widespread, and highly visible, suffering to the poor. Exploitative conditions of labour, together with appalling housing conditions, lack of sanitation and consequent disease experienced by the growing industrial workforce and their families gave rise to socialist and social reform movements. Many women gave their energies to humanitarian philanthropic work. Others were active in the anti-slavery movement. And some joined campaigns against war - the Crimean war, the American civil war, the Franco-Prussian war, the Boer war. Middle class women's exposure to the oppression of others heightened consciousness of their own oppression as women. The more involved they became in social and charitable projects, the more they felt the injustice of their inferiorisation by the

confident public men who led these institutions. (For decades after their foundation in 1816 the Peace Societies did not allow women members to speak at meetings. It would be 73 years before the men agreed to accept a woman on the national committee.) Unlike male pacifists, then, whether secular or religious, women were liable to note the gender implications of war. Had not Mary Wollstonecraft, first and boldest of feminist writers, stated emphatically way back in 1792 that militarism threatened women by reinforcing masculine habits of authority and hierarchy? She wrote, in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* 'Every corps is a chain of despots...submitting and tyrannizing without exercising their reason'. The failure of successive Reform Acts to accord women the vote led to a surging suffrage movement, at its height just before the outbreak of World War I.

Now - look where the founders of WILPF learned their activism. Jane Addams who presided over the Hague Congress, was already a well-known figure in the USA for her pioneering social work. She founded Hull House in Chicago, one of the first settlements, a refuge for the poor. She was incipiently socialist, campaigning nation-wide for child labour laws and trade unions. She espoused women's rights, joining the suffrage movement. Then, as war threatened, she embraced peace campaigning. Addams was nothing if not holistic in her activism. Historian Catherine Foster writes of her, '*Partly because of her work with poor people [she] believed strongly that there could be no peace without social and economic justice*'.

Then consider how many of the women who founded WILPF came to it directly from the struggle for women's political representation. In Britain as war approached there were two strong suffrage organizations, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies with 50,000 members, and the smaller Women's Social and Political Union. Both split on the war issue. While most of their members supported the

government, some became the backbone of the women's peace movement. Suffrage and peace activism remained tightly linked in the International Women's Suffrage Alliance to which many anti-war pro-suffrage women shifted their allegiance.

Consider two women who travelled from Europe to the USA in 1914 to galvanize women's opposition to the war and support the launch of a National Woman's Peace Party in Washington. One was Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, a British woman whose activism had been formed in both socialist and suffrage movements and whose concern with peace was founded, as she wrote, on 'the idea of the solidarity of women [that] had taken a deep hold upon many of us; so deep that it could not be shaken even by the fact that men of many nations were at war'. Another was Rosika Schwimmer, a Hungarian feminist and suffragist, member of the IWSA. Often sharing a platform, these two women from enemy nations would later be present at the Hague Congress and go on to be active in the League. Aletta Jacobs an opening speaker at the Congress, was president of the Dutch suffrage movement. Thus there was in the 1915 peace initiative a deeply embedded belief that women's entry into politics bringing with them a wealth of fresh and gender-specific experience, their full acceptance on equal terms in public life, would of itself contribute to ending militarism and the taken-for-granted use of war as foreign policy. The overlapping of struggles for social reform and women's rights with the women's peace movement showed its effects in WILPF's campaign for a just peace after the 1918 Armistice. The leaders that gathered in Paris in 1919 to dictate the terms of peace to the defeated Central Powers were all men, despite women's appeal for the inclusion of women delegates. Women from seventeen countries therefore autonomously organized their own congress. It took place in Zurich just as the text of the Treaty of Versailles was issued. The women were

shocked by its savagely punitive terms which condemned the defeated populations to hunger, poverty and disease for a generation to come. And here we see clearly women's distinctive 'take' on war - a recognition of the link between the power relations of the powerful and weak nations, the ruling and ruled class, and the dominant and subordinated sex.

The Women's Charter issued by WILPF (which took its present name at the Zurich congress) was of course an appeal for universal disarmament, an international mechanism to ensure permanent peace and an end to the 'right' of any government to make war. But it also called for the social, political and economic status of women to be recognized as of supreme international importance. They demanded the franchise, freedom from dependence and full equality for women universally. They called for recognition that women's services to the world as wage earners and homemakers are essential to peace. Women should be eligible for every position in the anticipated League of Nations. In addition, they showed

concern for minority rights and racial equality; called for self-government for colonized peoples; the right of asylum for those fleeing persecution. They also had a revolutionary economic vision: fair distribution; and controls on capitalists and profiteers. They expressed sympathy for workers' (nonviolent) uprising.

In this way, in explicitly seeking, beyond the end of one war, the eradication of war itself, WILPF was obliged to identify and address war's root causes. It thus became a holistic movement for freedom and justice, against oppression and exploitation - in other words a movement against both physical violence and what would come to be termed 'structural violence'. In doing so it drew strength and experience from the campaigns from which it had originally sprung: those for social reform and women's rights.

It is this holistic, multi-faceted struggle for a nonviolent revolution in the relations of gender, class, ethnicity and nation to which we shall soon commit ourselves anew in our forthcoming centenary Manifesto. If we assert, with breath-taking opti-

mism, *Women's Power to Stop War*, it's not to suggest that women 'have power' - on most counts we have little. Rather, it's to remind ourselves that we have *agency*. Of course, not all women lack privilege and security. Nonetheless, women as a sex have seen millennia of injustice, many of us have learned how to organize, and above all we have *reach*, into every corner of life, into the heart of families, into civil society and, increasingly, into the structures of governance. Our weapons are dialogue, knowledge and insistence. Women as women are the ones who have the potential to translate the principle and practice of 'care' from the individual to collective, so that a caring society becomes the principle of politics, embraced by men and women alike. And war becomes unthinkable.

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ARE WE GOING TO LET MACHINES DECIDE OVER HUMAN LIFE OR DEATH?

Pax Christi Peace Stories

The term "killer robot" may sound like science fiction to many people but they are closer to reality than we imagine. Killer robots – a nickname for Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems or LAWS, are systems able to select and fire on targets without human intervention. Yes, they could also decide when to take a person's life. Armed drones are – unfortunately, familiar to most of us; while they are remotely controlled by a person, LAWS will not be.

If killing a human being is severely disturbing and problematic when it is done by another human being, how is it going to be if it comes from a machine? Is it morally acceptable to delegate decisions about the use of lethal force to fully autonomous weapons? Are we really willing to

leave decisions about death and life to computerized systems?

Many question the capacity of robotic systems to acquire moral reasoning and, as a consequence, do not believe in their capacity to respond to moral dilemmas.

Even if technologies continue to advance in several fields it is highly unlikely that machines could be programmed to match human judgment. Human rights law, international law and international humanitarian legal systems are all built around the capacity for moral judgment. In fact, autonomous weapons systems could never be subject to the rules and moral principles central to those juridical instruments? We simply cannot dismiss sound and clear mechanisms of accountability; these would

be significantly challenged by LAWS.

Human dignity is also at stake here. Killer robots are another step in what many see as a dehumanizing trend in warfare. Killing from a distance and engaging targets as mere objects are being presented by some as a normal evolution in the advancing technology of war, which sometimes resembles – and is becoming familiar through, the "gamification" of violence and war. Are we, as a society, willing to subordinate the value of human life and our ethical standards to the search for economic profits or to the pursuit of ever more advanced technological developments? I am convinced that this issue needs to be addressed urgently. It is true that we are worried about more than enough

bloody conflicts, but we risk reaching soon – in fact, we may already be at – a point of no return. Technology advances very rapidly, more so than legal and regulatory systems that are usually based on social consensus and are often unable to fill in the gaps quickly. We need to act quickly to prevent killer robots from taking advantage of such a gap.

Ideally, peoples and states should focus on protecting the right to life by finding increasingly effective ways to prevent conflicts and resolve them by peaceful means. The development of killer robots is disturbing because it suggests that we are comfortable with the idea of creating more sophisticated forms of killing each other. If the ethical standards of societies are measured by the way they threaten or enhance the life and dignity of the human person, we are certainly failing.

The International Secretariat of Pax Christi, on behalf of our global network, in collaboration with our Dutch colleagues from PAX – one of the co-founders of the Campaign to Ban Killer Robots – has been promoting an Interfaith Declaration in support of a ban on fully autonomous weapons. The Declaration is a statement from religious leaders, faith groups and faith-based organizations, in which they raise their collective voice to call on all governments to participate in the international debate and to work towards a ban on the development, production and use of such weapons. At the same time the Declaration is a commitment from endorsing leaders to educate their own constituencies around this sensitive issue.

The Declaration has been signed so far by more than 70 faith leaders of various religious denominations from over 30 countries. From the Christian community, signatories include Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Peace laureate; the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, His Beatitude Fouad Twal; and the Chaldean Patriarch of Iraq, His Beatitude Louis Raphael Sako. Several archbishops and bishops, including former and present presidents of Pax Christi na-

tional organizations, and women and men Religious Superiors, who represent large numbers of active communities around the world also signed the Declaration, as have faith leaders from Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish communities. This is an ongoing initiative and the number of signatories keeps growing. After similar statements from Nobel laureates and scientists, the responses to this initiative show how ethical concerns over killer robots are widely shared within society.

For religious leaders the ethical concerns arise from core values and principles of their faith traditions regarding human life. For Christians, human life is sacred and the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision for society. Devotion to being harmless is a core principle of Buddhist religious life and the principle of non-harming is absolute. Islam considers all life forms as sacred; however, the sanctity of human life is accorded a special place.

The discussion about LAWS is by no means a simple issue and no simple answers are expected. But the message of religious leaders underlines the need of urgent actions within ethical frameworks shared by millions of people on our planet. We can promote further dialogue to approach the more complex aspects of this issue and we can also promote policies that will pave the way for a pre-emptive ban on killer robots.

It is important to acknowledge that ethical aspects in this process are not limited to the questions regarding the autonomous weapons themselves. Taking action or failing to take action around the development, production and use of lethal autonomous weapons systems has also ethical implications. A number of religious leaders, civil society organizations and states are already taking action, but we hope many more will do the same.

José Henríquez

Secretary general, Pax Christi International

INTERFAITH DECLARATION IN SUPPORT OF A BAN ON FULLY AUTONOMOUS WEAPONS

The issue

Throughout history, people have been killed by gunfire, maimed by mines and have experienced the devastating effects of bombs. The nature of war continues to change. Now, technology is changing not only how war is fought, but the very identity of who fights it. States are developing machines into fully autonomous weapons (so called killer robots) with the ability to select and engage targets without human intervention, allowing life and death decisions to be made by machines. A decision with such grave consequences should never be made by a machine. Robotic warfare is an affront to human dignity and to the sacredness of life. Although fully autonomous weapons do not yet exist, military and policy documents indicate a clear trend towards autonomously functioning weapon systems. This development poses a grave threat to civilians in conflict areas and raises serious moral, ethical and legal concerns.

Our objections

Contemporary warfare is no longer fought on conventional battlefields and often takes place in populated areas. Fully autonomous weapons will be unable to distinguish properly between combatants and civilians, neither will they understand human motives and intentions. In the complex and dynamic circumstances of a battlefield fully autonomous weapons will not be able to make sound judgments. Therefore, fully autonomous weapons will pose a serious threat to civilians in conflict and will pose a fundamental challenge to international humanitarian law, particularly regarding the rules of distinction and proportionality.

Given the nature of fully autonomous weapons, it is inevitable that they will at some point kill or injure civilians. When that happens, it seems that no one can be held accountable. The weapon itself has no moral agency and, as a result, cannot

NOTICE BOARD

Interfaith Declaration Continued

be held responsible if they take an innocent life. A robot does not feel guilt or regret, you cannot put it in prison or hold it accountable for its actions. But also the programmer, the manufacturer or the military commander cannot be held legally responsible for crimes committed by an autonomously functioning weapon. This accountability gap should be considered immoral and abhorrent.

Autonomous weapons will make it easier for leaders to go to war, because they will shift risks away from a nation's own soldiers. However, due to the nature of fully autonomous weapons the risk of civilian casualties will increase.

Our commitment

On 28 April 2013, an international coalition of non-governmental organizations launched the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots to raise awareness about the implications of fully autonomous weapons and to call for a comprehensive, pre-emptive ban on fully autonomous weapons. Whereas other weapons were only banned after their use showed to have grave humanitarian consequences, we now have a chance to stop these atrocious weapons before they enter the battlefield. Similar to the development of the nuclear weapon, fully autonomous weapons will be a weapon we will wish we had prevented. In the past, religious leaders showed their commitment to take action against other heinous weapons such as cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines. Now, it is time to take a stand against fully autonomous weapons. Therefore, we, as religious leaders, faith groups and faith-based organizations, raise our collective voice to call on all governments to participate in the international debate on the issue, and to work towards a ban on the development, production and use of fully autonomous weapons.

This is a chance for all involved to take a stand, to uphold human dignity, and to promote peace.

QUEENSLAND Pax Christi Meetings Pax Christi Queensland

Branch meets monthly.
Contact:

Pancras Jordan OP
0415 461 620
panjordan@yahoo.com

Clare Cooke SSpS
mcc1@holy.spirit.com.au

NEW SOUTH WALES Pax Christi Meetings

We normally meet on the First Monday of each month at 6.00pm for shared meal that members bring and the meeting follows at 6.30 pm.

Contact: Claude Mostowik
(02) 9550 3845 or 0411 450 953
The venue: MSC Justice and Peace Centre, 15A Swanson Street, Erskineville. 2 minutes walk from Erskineville Station

VICTORIA Agapes and Public Forums

FEBRUARY AGAPE

SUNDAY FEBRUARY 15
Pak Agus Salim will speak on the Wahabi movement in Indonesia
Pak Hude, a scholar will speak on Jemaah Islamia in Indonesia.

at Kildara, rear 39 Stanhope Street, East Malvern.

Bring food to share

ANZAC Centenary Peace Coalition Public Forum

Tuesday 10 March 7.30 p.m.
**From Federation to the
Aftermath of WWI:**

Unitarian Church,
Grey Street. East Melbourne

7

I/We wish to apply for or renew membership of the International Christian Peace Movement - Pax Christi Australia. (Membership is from January to December)

(Please tick box if you wish to receive your copy of Disarming Times by e-mail)

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