

A Buddhist Perspective on Peace in the Twenty-first Century

'Nothing is more barbarous than war, nothing more miserable.' When Richard Causton first read these opening words of *The Human Revolution*,¹ a novel by Daisaku Ikeda, he felt, he said, 'as if an electric shock went up my spine.' Having experienced the evils of war at first hand, in Burma, he certainly agreed with the statement.

The most terrible thing he'd witnessed, he once said, was the sight of a British 'tommy' trying to kick the gold teeth from out of the mouth of a dead Japanese soldier. Causton had threatened to shoot him if he didn't stop. What had sickened him, he explained, was the depths to which this man had sunk. British soldiers were not supposed to be like this; they were on the side of right, after all. And yet the experience of war had brought the 'tommy' to this level of depravity.

But the shock Causton felt at reading the opening to *The Human Revolution* was more than simply the shock of recognition. Rather, it was the fact that the author of those words was Japanese.

Like many servicemen who'd fought in the Far East, Causton had formed a pretty low opinion of the Japanese. Even though it was now almost twenty-five years after the war, and he was regularly in Tokyo on business, and falling in love with a Japanese woman - it was she who gave him the book - in his heart Causton still thought of the Japanese with some contempt, as cruel and fanatical; in many ways, in fact, as rather inhuman.

So to read a Japanese author whose feelings so exactly matched his own shook him to the core. And then to learn that Ikeda had lost a much-loved brother in the war, conscripted into the Japanese Imperial Army and sent to his death - in Burma... Well, at that point divisions of race and nationality began to dissolve in Causton's mind and, as he read on, an awareness of a common humanity, a common human fate, began to grow.

And soon after finishing *The Human Revolution* Causton began to practise Buddhism - specifically, the teachings of the thirteen century Japanese sage, Nichiren, which the book explains in some detail. He was already fifty years old, and was to spend the final third of his life - twenty-five years - dedicated to teaching others about the greatness of the life-philosophy he had found.

I've told you this story not just because it's about Richard Causton, the first General Director of SGI-UK, and the man from whom I personally learnt much about Buddhism - and life - over the several years I worked with him; I've told it but because it demonstrates the central theme of Buddhism - transformation; or, as the book's title would have it, 'human revolution'.

Causton's life is the story of a man who consciously turned his back on 'the war habit', as I've called it. He was a professional soldier, an officer, who joined up at the age of 19 before the war started in Europe, and in Burma was awarded the Military Cross for bravery in action.

Yet he became a tireless champion for peace, working alongside the very people he had once fought; indeed, on one occasion, he even found himself in conversation with a fellow Buddhist, a Japanese, and realised, as they talked, that their units had once faced each other on opposite sides of a jungle valley. So complete was Causton's transformation that he even threw away his MC, and never told anyone about it: despite knowing him for twelve years, I learnt of it only when I started to prepare this lecture.

But Causton's 'human revolution' is by no means unique. Buddhism teaches that anyone, without exception, can effect such a transformation, even the most ruthless and warlike.

For example, the ancient Indian king, Ashoka, who lived some three hundred years before Christ, is often held up by historians as the model of enlightened, compassionate rule. But Ashoka was originally a bloody tyrant - the Saddam Hussein of his day - who conquered most of the Indian subcontinent at the cost of tremendous death and suffering.

But then, realising the agony he'd caused, he was overcome with remorse and turned to Buddhism. He renounced violence and declared that henceforth he would conquer peacefully, through Buddhist teachings - the dharma - alone. Which he did, instituting laws and policies based on Buddhist principles, and ushering in an era of peace, prosperity and tolerance, especially towards other religions, for which he is still celebrated.

Buddhism is full of such stories. Another famous example involves the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni - you might know him as Siddhartha Gautama, or, from the many statues and pictures that have been made of him, simply as 'the Buddha'. Shakyamuni was persecuted by the evil king Ajatashatru, who tried to kill him on several occasions and, indeed, did kill many of his followers.

But then the king fell seriously ill. Huge, leprous sores broke out over his entire body, and his death seemed imminent. At which point Shakyamuni took pity on Ajatashatru and, despite the objections of his followers, went to visit him. Moved by

Shakyamuni's compassion, the king repented of his past misdeeds, converted to Buddhism - and recovered to live for many more years.

Moreover, when Shakyamuni himself eventually died, it was Ajatashatru who convened the First Buddhist Council to ensure that his teachings would not be lost. In other words, it's thanks to this once evil king, the Buddha's sworn enemy, that Buddhism was preserved for posterity.

It's because of this fundamental belief in the inherent capacity of individuals - even evil individuals - to transform their lives, that Buddhism has such abiding faith in the possibility of a world without war.

I suspect that many people in this room today will think that this is a pipe-dream. And, given the fact that, of the past three thousand years of human history, only some three hundred have not witnessed armed conflict, I can understand your scepticism. Until I started practising Buddhism sixteen years ago, I shared it.

But in those fifteen years not only have I seen many instances of individuals transforming their lives, I've also become convinced that Buddhist philosophy can be applied in a practical and effective way to such a large and seemingly insoluble problem as war. In particular, I'd like to talk about two concepts - namely, karma and a principle called the Three Truths - which I believe offer a means to understand war more deeply and thereby suggest ways in which we might avoid future catastrophes.

Because catastrophe is what war undoubtedly is. Even if you question whether a warless world is possible, what cannot be at issue, I hope, is a recognition of the utter waste and devastation that's been wreaked by war during the twentieth century. Although precision in these matters is virtually impossible, it's been estimated that upwards of 120 million men, women and children have died in wars in this century - a century of slaughter - more than in all previous centuries put together. Tens of millions more have been made homeless or displaced, and the physical destruction has been literally beyond counting. And, tragically, the toll continues to grow, right now, in conflicts around the world.

By any account, this a shameful record. It characterises the twentieth century as a century of slaughter. But the question is whether it's a record that we're going to break in the twenty-first century, with even more death and destruction. The potential is certainly there. Human conflict will never go away, and human ingenuity continues to devise ever more sophisticated and powerful weapons, even discounting nuclear ones.

But is that potential going to be turned into destructive reality? Does the past three thousand years of history prove that war is inevitable - such an integral part of what it is to be human that we are condemned to fight between ourselves for ever more, even to the point of extinction?

Buddhism says not. And, interestingly, it's one major religion that does not foretell the end of the world in the conflagration of some final Armageddon.

Rather, it teaches that war is what might today be called 'a conditioned response', a habit that we've acquired and that's now deeply ingrained, but a habit from which we can free ourselves, given the time, effort and commitment.

In teaching this, Buddhism recognises that conflict and violence are intrinsic to the human condition. But these two things in themselves do not equate to war, which is of an altogether different dimension. The noted pioneer of peace studies, Johan Galtung, makes the point with great clarity:

Some nations and some epochs are much more belligerent than others. If, like the drives for food and sex, belligerence were instinctive, we should expect it to be much more uniformly distributed in time and space. With some minor variations, human beings everywhere and in all times eat and drink and engage in sexual activity. The same universality does not apply to war.

In fact, looking at history, one would be forced to conclude that the natural human instinct is to avoid war, if at all possible. Military training and usually harsh military discipline have been formulated over the centuries precisely to overcome man's natural reluctance to put himself into a situation where he might be killed; especially if he has no personal argument with those he'll be fighting, as is usually the case in war.

History also teaches that - paradoxically - war is a product of civilisation. This most brutal and uncivilised form of behaviour depends upon a degree of planning and co-ordination that is possible only in already highly-organised societies. Thus, we find that the first standing armies appeared as early as the year 3200 BC, in one of the earliest-known civilisations, Mesopotamia. This civilisation grew in the region that corresponds to what is now eastern Syria and...Iraq. Clearly, in some places, the war habit's very deeply ingrained indeed. But more of that in a moment.

It's in the co-operative and structured aspect of civilisation, then, that war is distinguished from mere fighting. Any two people can fight, but war is a group activity, usually conducted on a large scale and - at least initially - according to some pre-planned strategy. In short, war is not instinctive human behaviour. Rather, it's the result of conscious, even rational, human judgement; judgement that is influenced by a variety of human impulses - notably aggression, fear and greed - and that then directs those impulses towards a particular, defined end; the enemy and his territory.

It's this powerful mix of the conscious and the instinctive that gives us one reason why the war habit's so difficult to break; - each particular war can almost always be justified by one side or the other, often with strong and plausible arguments that appeal both to our reason and to our basic emotions.

Thus, the war must be fought to prevent an enemy attack; to uphold national honour; to protect the national interest; to defend the motherland, or the empire or the faith, or the revolution - in short, for whatever it is that the society facing war holds most dear. In a liberal democracy such as ours, for example, nowadays we fight only in the name of freedom and - ironically - peace; a hundred years ago, we fought for glory and the empire. Whatever the ostensible reason, the emotional response triggered by these arguments can often cloud a more measured investigation of the need to fight, and the alternatives.

Buddhism suggests another, more fundamental reason why the war habit's so intractable - karma, the first of the two concepts I mentioned just now.

The word derives from the Sanskrit for 'action', and refers to the fact that karma is created by our thoughts, our words and our deeds. These produce similar thoughts, words and deeds in the future, according - Buddhism says - to a strict and inescapable law of cause and effect. In brief, the concept of karma teaches that we are at once the products of our past actions, and the authors of our future reality. To quote a Buddhist text:

If you want to understand the causes you have made in the past, look at the effects as they are manifested in the present. And if you wish to know what results will appear in the future, look at the causes you are making now.

The problem is that, since we're all products of our past experience, we tend to find it very difficult even to imagine a future that is radically different from our past or present reality, let alone actually create it. So our tendency is to carry on with what we know, even if we also know that it's unsatisfactory.

To understand this better, we have to look a little more closely at how karma works, by breaking it down into three elements - karmic tendency, karmic relation and karmic effect, as shown here.

Say I have the desire to smoke - because I like the taste, it calms my nerves, it stops me eating so much, whatever. This is my karmic tendency. This tendency is brought to the surface of my life by some external cause - seeing or smelling a cigarette, say. This external cause is the karmic relation. The karmic effect is that I smoke a cigarette and experience pleasure, or feel less stressed or less hungry. This effect is simultaneously added to my karmic tendency and so becomes a cause to smoke again at some point in the future.

In short, karma has an inbuilt tendency to repeat itself; and for this reason, over time our karmic tendencies grow stronger and more deeply ingrained, even if we know they're bad for us. To put it another way, the longer a habit goes unchecked, the harder it is to change it.

This pattern can also be applied to war, thus.

As Galtung noted earlier, some countries are more belligerent than others. This is their karmic tendency. The external cause that brings this to the surface is some serious conflict - with a second country, say. The karmic effect is war, especially if that second country also has a strong tendency towards belligerence. This war further strengthens the belligerence in both countries, whatever the immediate outcome. The winner will tend to congratulate itself for its military prowess, and more readily turn to force in future conflicts; while the loser will tend to bear a grudge and vow one day to get even, though it may take generations to do so.

If a number of countries within a particular region share this karmic tendency towards war, the region will be inherently unstable and characterised by bloody conflict - sometimes for hundreds of years, as in the Balkans and Northern Europe; or even for thousands, as in the Middle East.

Viewed from this long-term perspective, the question of 'Who started it?' - that is, exactly who is to blame for the latest outbreak of fighting - becomes less important than the question of 'How do we stop it? How can we change this karma of war?'

Because, make no mistake, it can be changed, as Richard Causton explains in his book, *The Buddha in Daily Life*:

...the inescapable nature of cause and effect does not mean that we cannot change and alleviate the latent effects of past actions before they become manifest. For example, the peace that the Allies concluded with Germany in 1945 was very different from the one imposed in 1919 and has so far proved extremely durable; this shows that war need not necessarily lead to more war, provided that the inherent causes of any conflict...are addressed and remedied with magnanimity. In other words, if we use our innate wisdom to make the right causes for peace in the future, peace will be achieved, no matter how many bad causes have been made in the war which preceded it.

Buddhism therefore teaches the direct opposite of the famous dictum, 'If you desire peace, prepare for war.' Rather, it says, 'If you desire peace, prepare for peace', because, due to the nature of cause and effect, if you prepare for war, inevitably, in time, that is precisely what you will get.

But how, exactly, do we 'prepare for peace'? And don't the lessons of history teach us that well-meaning, peaceful intentions have always failed before the might of evil aggressors? 'What would you have done about Hitler?' I expect some of you are thinking. And 'What answer does Buddhism have to someone like Saddam Hussein or Slobodan Milosevic?'

Well, the answer would have to begin with another question - 'Where do you want to start?' Because leaders like Hitler, Saddam and Milosevic do not appear from out of nowhere. Rather, all came to power as a result of a whole series of events - of causes and effects - that culminated in their hostile actions.

It's often been said, for example, that Hitler's rise would not have been possible but for the Treaty of Versailles, which created the resentments in Germany that he so skilfully exploited. Similarly, Saddam would not have been able to invade Kuwait had his army and air force not been built up through arms exports from other countries, which were anxious to see him win in his war with Iran. And Milosevic's rise to power can only be understood as a reaction to anti-Serbian policies implemented by Tito, and in the context of a long history of Balkan atrocities.

The Buddhist approach to aggression is illustrated in the following story. An old Buddhist monk is trying to convince his friend of the folly of violence. But his friend is having none of it. 'So what would you do, then,' he asks, 'if you walked round a corner and found yourself trapped by a bunch of thugs who threatened to kill you, and you realised that the only way out was to fight?' The monk thought for a moment, then replied, 'I wouldn't walk round that corner.'

In other words, the Buddhist approach asks what is preferable - to activate our innate wisdom and compassion to prevent dangerous situations developing? Or to wait until a crisis erupts - or worse still, actually help to cause it - and then find ourselves having to confront grim and extremely limited options.

To understand the Buddhist attitude more fully, we have to recognise what Buddhism holds most dear - the supreme dignity of human life. Buddhism asserts that nothing is of higher value than life itself; no god, or state, religion or ideology. In the words of Nichiren:

Life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life.

Consequently, life should never be thought of as disposable, as a means to an end. Rather, it is the supreme end in itself. For this reason, Buddhism places an absolute ban on the taking of human life. In addition, it teaches that to kill another is to make an extremely bad cause for one's own life; a cause that will, in due course, bring oneself immense suffering. Buddhism is therefore well-known for being a religion of absolute pacifism.

It follows from this that there is no concept in Buddhism of a just war. War arises as a result of the karma created by all parties to it, the victim as much as the aggressor. In terms of the immediate cause, one side or the other might very well bear the greater responsibility. But in terms of the underlying cause - the karmic tendencies of the opposing sides - all are equally responsible.

I fully accept that most people would not subscribe to this view. In any conflict it's a natural human tendency to put ourselves in the right, and our opponent in the wrong. It's very uncomfortable to have to admit that we might share some responsibility for a situation that is breaking down, perhaps with disastrous consequences.

But Buddhism teaches that everything occurs through the workings of cause and effect:

If you want to understand the causes you have made in the past, look at the effects as they are manifested in the present. And if you wish to know what results will appear in the future, look at the causes you are making now.

But what if there is a mismatch? If we can think of nothing we have done that merits what we are suffering now? Well, Buddhism also teaches that karma, this chain of cause and effect, operates within our lives eternally. Thus, the 'undeserved' suffering that we may now be experiencing has its roots in causes we made in previous existences. To quote another Buddhist text:

A person writing at night may put out the lamp, but the words he has written will still remain. It's the same with the destiny we create for ourselves in the threefold world.

Interestingly, the same text says that those who make particularly bad causes in one life will suffer this particular fate:

Even if he should be reborn a human being, he will be destined to become a slave in the army. Retribution will follow as an echo follows a sound or a shadow follows a form.

Strong stuff; and, if you're not much inclined to metaphysics, easily dismissed, perhaps. But even without the metaphysics, Buddhism teaches that to make any progress towards peace, we have to accept that we ourselves are part of the problem, and be prepared to change.

But what about Buddhism's avowal of pacifism? This, surely, is simply impractical and naive in the face of real and present dangers.

I think that this is a perfectly reasonable viewpoint - if one thinks of pacifism only in terms of an intellectual or moral opposition to war. This type of 'passive pacifism' is ineffective because it's unpersuasive. Merely saying that killing is evil, or that war is wrong, or even that war leads to more war, has rarely been known to deter those who are set on fighting one.

To be persuasive, pacifism must be active, not passive. Its adherents must not simply hold an ethical position, but work constantly to minimise the causes for war, and to maximise the causes for peace. In this, they must also address the real fears of those who believe that, 'Yes, war may indeed be evil, but it's a necessary evil; the last resort of those who wish to oppose the even greater evil threatened by men like Saddam and Milosevic.'

So, as a Buddhist and an active pacifist, I'd like to suggest three broad areas of action. Taken together, they would, I believe, gradually diminish and eventually even eradicate war in the future. These areas are based on the second Buddhist principle I mentioned earlier, the Three Truths.

This principle states that all phenomena can be viewed from three clearly distinct, though inseparable, perspectives - the physical or material; the mental or spiritual; and the essential.

For example, each one of us here has a physical aspect - our bodies. The mental aspect is our thoughts, emotions and beliefs: those things that comprise our character or nature. And the essential aspect is our unique, individual lives, which are continuously expressed in our bodies and minds.

This essential aspect is perhaps more difficult to grasp than the other two. It can be understood as that factor which remains constant and immutable in our lives, even though we change from moment to moment. Thus, while my physical form has changed radically since I was a baby, I am still essentially the same person. And though my mind and emotions may change many times in the course of a day, they are always expressed in a way that is both consistent with my nature, and unique to me.

War, too, can be viewed from the perspective of the Three Truths.

The physical aspect of war relates, not only to the material capacity necessary to engage in armed conflict - military personnel, guns, tanks, aircraft, and so on - but also to the destructive potential of that capacity, and the physical suffering that results from its use.

The mental aspect of war obviously includes military strategy and tactics, but also embraces the totality of attitudes, which determine the willingness to fight - or not. Thus, the mental aspect of war includes the influence of past conflicts, tradition, perceived or real injustices, religious and philosophical teachings, political systems, and so forth. It also includes the mental and spiritual trauma that war causes.

These two aspects of war - the physical and the mental - are inextricably linked. A belligerent nation, for example, will have - or want to have - powerful armed forces. It will have a history of warfare - or a proud military tradition, depending on your viewpoint. And a political structure, underpinned by a dominant religion or philosophy, that readily justifies, or even encourages, war.

By contrast, a nation with small or non-existent armed forces is, by definition, less belligerent. Warfare will feature much less in its history, and it may even have constitutional safeguards against becoming involved in future wars.

In short, what you see is what you get. A warlike nature cannot produce a peaceful appearance; while a warlike appearance cannot testify to a peaceful nature. Each nature always finds its equivalent physical expression.

This might seem uncontroversial - common sense, even - until we start applying it to specific instances. For example, I doubt that many people in the UK think of ourselves as warlike; we are peaceable and decent - British, in other words. But our history - even our recent history - tells us that while we may be decent, we are certainly not peaceable.

Since 1945, UK forces have seen action in Korea, Palestine, Malaysia, Kenya, Cyprus, Aden, Suez, the Falklands, the Gulf and now the Balkans. And not forgetting Northern Ireland, of course. By contrast, the armed forces of two of our nearest neighbours, Sweden and the Irish Republic, haven't fought in any conflict at all, and even managed to stay neutral during the Second World War.

Most of this UK conflict has arisen as a hangover from the empire, itself built up through centuries of war - once again, we can see the strictness of cause and effect. And each conflict has appeared justified at the time, even if, with hindsight, it might seem more questionable - Suez, for example. But whatever the rights and the wrongs in each instance, this history nevertheless demonstrates our belligerent nature. And, of course, we are still one of the handful of nations that possesses nuclear weapons.

How, then does this inextricable relationship between the physical and the mental aspects of war relate to its essential aspect, which Buddhism says is Anger?

First, one has to understand that this is not the anger of simply losing one's temper. As we've already seen, war is usually planned with cold, methodical calculation. Rather, this is a state of being that Buddhism teaches is intrinsic to life itself, and which we therefore all possess. In the words, again, of Richard Causton:

Anger is identified with the workings of the ego, that part of the consciousness in which the self is aware of its own uniqueness and its apparent separation from the rest of the universe... [Nichiren] describes the chief characteristic of Anger as 'perversity', alluding to the fundamental distortion of perspective that occurs when the ego places itself at the centre of the universe... Anger is the state of supreme self-centredness in which we believe we are fundamentally better than other people and in which we delight in showing this supposed superiority to the world.

According to Buddhism, then, Anger is the root of what sets us apart from others - our sense of self, our identity. This includes not just our personal identity, but also our social identity - as man or woman, black or white, Serb or Albanian; whatever. And whenever we feel this sense of identity is threatened, our tendency as human beings is to rush to defend it - mentally, verbally, or even physically, with violence. Anger is thus also characterised by conflict, in varying degrees.

We can see this clearly in those regions mentioned earlier that have had such a long history of strife - the Balkans, Northern Europe and the Middle East. One of the features they share is the concentration, in a fairly limited area, of a wide variety of different nationalities, cultures and religions. This mix of identities naturally produces tensions. Some are creative, as different groups borrow ideas from one another. Others are destructive, as they seek to impose their superiority on their neighbours, leading ultimately to violence and war. As Dr Bryan Wilson, one of the world's leading authorities on the social effects of religion has noted: 'intense group loyalty is almost always associated with disparagement of other groups.'¹⁰ It's therefore Anger that fuels extreme nationalism, for example.

Anger does have its positive aspects - our feelings of self-worth are rooted in this condition, for example, as is our sense of fairness and justice; and the desire to excel has driven individuals to great achievements.

But all too often the self ruled by Anger finds it hard, in its arrogance, to identify with or respect others; difficult to acknowledge they might have a point worthy of true consideration; and virtually impossible to concede that they might actually be right, for that would be to admit inferiority.

Anger - in the Buddhist sense - is thus the fundamental cause for war, because to kill other human beings, for whatever reason - even with a sigh of regret at 20,000 feet at the possibility of 'collateral damage' below - is to show them supreme disrespect. It's the ultimate expression of the 'I am right, you are wrong' mentality, even if you are right and they are wrong.

Moreover, Anger produces Anger - cause and effect, again. For example, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was an act of extreme arrogance - Anger - ordered by a man who, by all accounts, brooks very little opposition; in other words, who is himself dominated by Anger. In due course, therefore, the response also arose from Anger - Operation Desert Storm. And while the actions of the Allied forces liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation, they also left a legacy of bitterness within Iraq - Anger again - that has contributed to the continuing hostility towards the West. I expect the same pattern to be repeated in Serbia.

So while it's true that war can be a highly effective means of resolving issues - in the short-term - Buddhism teaches that we can never build true or lasting happiness on the suffering of others. Cause and effect will not allow it.

In short, the karma of war is fuelled, ultimately, by the perpetuation of Anger in one form or another, and will continue until this essential aspect of any conflict is challenged and transformed.

In fact, all three aspects of war - the physical, the mental and the essential - need to be transformed for a lasting peace to be established. They are like a three-legged stool - omit any one and the whole thing falls down.

First, the capacity to wage war must be gradually reduced, and then eliminated altogether. Of course, this is much easier said than done. Past attempts at total disarmament have always foundered on the nation's right to self-defence - and, it has to be said, on the economic self-interest of the arms-producing states. It's interesting to note, for instance, that the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council are also currently responsible for some eighty per cent of global arms exports.

Nevertheless, rather than dismissing the idea as utopian, step-by-step measures can be taken - indeed, are being taken - towards this goal.

For example, great strides have been made in recent years to reduce the threat of nuclear war; many nuclear weapons have been destroyed. But we can never feel totally safe while any still exist. Josei Toda, second president of the Soka Gakkai, denounced nuclear weapons in 1957 as the expression of ultimate evil, and called for their total elimination. Now that the Cold War has passed, there really is no excuse for their continued existence, and steady progress should be made towards their complete destruction.

As an aid to this, Toda's successor, Daisaku Ikeda, has called for the expansion of nuclear-free zones around the world.¹¹ These ban the production, siting or testing of nuclear weapons within the zone by any country. Currently, there are four such zones - in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the South Pacific, in Southeast Asia and in Africa.

Ikeda has also called for these areas to take a further, bolder step and declare themselves 'war-free' zones. The idea is not as fanciful as it might sound. In effect, each nation within the zone renounces war against its fellow members, except as a means of legitimate self-defence. But with no potential aggressors within the zone, its members can 'build-down' their armed forces, and pool the remainder in a form of collective security.

Clearly, this is not an ideal solution, as each zone can still wage war against states outside its area. Neither is it any guarantee against civil wars within individual member states - an increasing feature of our post-Cold War world. But it would be a move in the right direction. And, in effect, this is similar to what has already occurred within the European Union, one of whose founding aims was to prevent another war in western Europe.

In tandem with these developments, conventional weapons should be controlled and gradually eliminated. They can be made less, not more, destructive, for example. Indeed, research has been going on for some time to produce battlefield weapons that incapacitate, rather than kill, the enemy - for instance, that render his computer systems useless, and disrupt or destroy his communications.

Some of these weapons are themselves pretty horrible, though - battlefield lasers, for example, designed to blind enemy troops - and are already the subject of moves to ban them. But, again, as a step forward in a steady march towards a world without war, further efforts should be made in this direction.

Moreover, we should also begin to reduce the absolute quantity of arms in the world. There is little point in producing less destructive weaponry if what they lack in punch they make up for in numbers. Currently, the world is awash with small arms. Personal machine guns, in particular, have become so light and easy to use that, in some parts of the world, children as young as nine or ten are being pressed into service by unscrupulous commanders, brutalised and then sent out to kill.

It is impossible to have a secure and peaceful world given the enormous amount of arms currently in circulation. Arms do not bring security, but the very opposite. We only have to look to the USA, for example, to see how the prevalence of handguns there has produced more crime, more death and a more fearful society.

For this reason, to my mind, the international arms trade should be regarded as every bit as pernicious as the international drugs trade - perhaps even more so. Many jobs are dependent on it worldwide, I know; but so are the livelihoods of opium farmers in the Golden Triangle dependent on the drugs trade. We know that to tackle the drugs trade we need to deal with both the supply and the demand - and the middlemen who link the two; and the same reasoning should be brought to bear on the arms industry.

Arms exporting countries should seek other products to make and sell, and not pander to the craving for weapons of many Third World governments - governments whose money would, in any case, be better spent on improving the infrastructure of their countries. It's been estimated, for example, that if every state in the world reduced its present military expenditure by just five per cent, enough resources would be freed up to eliminate global hunger. And think how the human talent wasted on arms research and production might be more creatively employed.

But because there are such huge profits to be made from this trade, on both sides of the counter - it's a notoriously corrupt business - any idea that arms-dealing will end voluntarily is, frankly, fantasy. So we should work towards a series of fully-binding international agreements that limit, and eventually outlaw, the manufacture and sale of conventional weapons.

Again, this might sound hopelessly idealistic, but so did calls some two hundred years ago for the abolition of the slave trade, another inhuman business that was eventually outlawed. And we can take heart from the fact that there are already moves in this direction - witness, for example, the recent treaty banning landmines.

Finally, in this area, what of the personnel? Will they all be out of a job? No, not all of them - and certainly not all at once. All of these changes would, of course, take time - as Gandhi once said, 'Good moves at a snail's pace.' But the current trend is anyway towards smaller, better-equipped, volunteer armies - France has ended conscription, for example, and many Russian military planners want to move in this direction, too.

Moreover, it's quite possible to foresee the skills and strengths of armed forces being turned exclusively to peaceful ends - for example, in civil defence and international disaster relief. The German army was deployed to great effect in combating the floods that recently inundated the Germany-Poland border; while the last earthquake in Afghanistan cried out for help that perhaps only a well-organised and well-resourced organisation such as an army could have provided.

So in a warless world there will still be plenty of interesting careers for young men and women, who want daring and challenge and the chance of foreign travel. And if the world's weather keeps changing so dramatically, they certainly won't be idle. They just won't be trained to kill, that's all.

All of these changes in the physical aspect of war depend, of course, on associated changes in the mental aspect. In the words of Dr Oscar Arias Sanchez, former president of Costa Rica and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, we need to move from a 'culture of war' to a 'culture of peace'.

This will be extremely difficult - though more so in some places than in others. Costa Rica, for example, abolished its armed forces as long ago as 1949, and has encouraged similar moves in its immediate neighbour, Panama, which recently changed its constitution to remove the legal basis for its armed forces.

In more belligerent countries such as our own, however, similar moves would be met with great resistance. Our culture, history, economy - all weigh heavily against demilitarisation and disarmament.

But people in such countries might be persuaded to change their minds if they were convinced that serious and deep-rooted conflicts really could always be resolved through peaceful methods, through dialogue. However, while we may all agree in theory that 'Jaw, jaw is better than war, war', we also know that talking often gets you nowhere - especially if any of the parties is willing to resort to violence, or the threat of violence, to get his way.

Recently, though, peace researchers such as Galtung have been looking more closely at exactly why 'jaw, jaw' can fail. One reason, they discovered, is that dialogue often neglects to include all those with a legitimate interest in the conflict at hand. He notes, for instance, that the 1993 peace agreement between the PLO and the Israeli Labour government was concluded without proper reference to Hamas or the then Israeli opposition parties - none of them therefore had a real stake in honouring it.

Accordingly, Galtung proposes - as a precondition for the success of dialogue - that participants be drawn from as wide a constituency as possible. In this he is himself applying a fundamental Buddhist principle called 'dependent origination'.

This teaches that all things are interdependent, and that everything exists only because of its relationship with other beings or phenomena. Dependent origination implies that there is never a single, straightforward cause to war, but rather a vast web of - usually negative - relationships that have combined to produce this outcome. War's solution is therefore most likely to be found in producing a new web, but with a positive twist.

Thus, lasting peace can be reached in Israel only when all parties with a stake in the Middle East - including Iraq - are drawn into dialogue. Given the distrust and hostility prevalent in the region, this may seem impossible. Ultimately, though, it's the only answer that stands a realistic chance of producing a permanent solution. And if such deadly enemies as the USA and the Soviet Union could achieve the impossible and finally end their naked antagonism, why not the countries of the Middle East - eventually?

Galtung's concept also calls for dialogue to be organised at all levels, from the grass-roots up, so that as many people as possible can contribute to the search for peaceful solutions. This has the added benefit that ideas for the resolution of any conflict do not have to come from 'leaders', or those with already well-defined and usually entrenched viewpoints. And it maximises those with a stake in seeing that any agreement sticks. Additionally, Galtung notes that it's vital for all such contributions to be moderated by peace workers trained and skilled in the dynamics of dialogue.

Naturally, such an approach takes time, and is not possible when emotions are still raw - encountering those who may have been responsible for the death of your loved ones is as likely to lead to renewed violence as peace. But when war fatigue sets in, or emotions have cooled - or, best of all, before a war even starts - a process such as this can stand a much better chance of leading to a lasting settlement than one in which all hopes ride on the strengths (and weaknesses) of a chosen few.

What's more, it has been said that peace lies in the continuing process of dialogue itself. As long as people are prepared to sit and talk and argue, they have a chance of reaching agreement, or at least a better understanding of each other. It's when they get up and walk away that that chance evaporates, and the spectre of violence takes its place.

And, again, we have a recent example to give us hope - South Africa. Almost without exception, commentators predicted that the transition from apartheid to an ANC government would be met with bloody revolution. And almost until the eve of the elections in May 1994, it looked as if those predictions would prove correct. The fact that they weren't speaks volumes, I believe, for the innate wisdom of the South African people, and their desire for peace.

To my mind, these are also both reflected in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Peace research has found that another reason 'jaw, jaw' fails is when it does not address - or redress - past injustices. South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has its critics, and it may not have been an ideal institution - what is? But it did at least provide a forum for ordinary people on all sides to speak, and - crucially - be heard by those with the authority to take action. In this way, the boil of much past bitterness could be lanced.

There is a lot more that can be said about changing the culture of war to the culture of peace, in particular the part education can play in this process. I look forward, for instance, to the expansion of peace studies, not only in our centres of higher education, but in our schools, too. In the next century I feel we need to produce - and value - cohorts of dedicated peace workers, in the same way that we now produce great numbers of doctors and nurses.

But, for now, I'd like dwell for a moment on the role of the media.

There is an vigorous debate currently taking place in some parts of the media about what its function should be in times of war. Should it try to report events dispassionately and objectively? Should it takes sides when it perceives that one party is in the right, and the other clearly in the wrong? Should it back Britain whenever it becomes involved in a war, in the spirit of 'my

country, right or wrong', so that 'our boys' in the field know they're supported at home, and the enemy can take no comfort from a split in the ranks? Or should it follow a new path, that of 'peace journalism'?

Those who adhere to this school argue that the media is never an objective observer to conflict. It always has an agenda, supporting - often subtly - one side or the other. Or simply following an agenda of its own, one dictated by the needs and policies of editors back home. Conflicts must be simplified and pared down to fit tv news slots; arresting, but perhaps misleading, visual images are often given preference over more considered, but visually duller, items; and coverage must be toned down to avoid antagonising the authorities, who control access to what the media can and cannot see.

Peace journalists reason that the honest thing to do is to acknowledge all the agendas operating in a conflict, and take an active role in seeking solutions that harmonise and transcend them. To quote from a recent publication, *The Peace Journalism Option*:

Peace journalism consciously adopts an agenda for peace, believing it to be the only alternative to an - unacknowledged or otherwise - agenda for war. It maps the pre-violence conflict, identifying many parties and more causes, thereby opening up unexpected paths towards dialogue and peace-making. Peace journalism humanises all sides of the conflict and is prepared to document both deceit and suffering, as well as peace initiatives, from all parties.

Clearly, this is a new approach, and one that I expect will cause much controversy. But it will be very interesting to see if it gains support, and what effect it will have on attitudes towards new conflicts as they arise. It's certainly an initiative that I applaud.

Ultimately, though, changing the physical and mental aspects of war depends on challenging and transforming its essential aspect - Anger; Anger that manifests in us, at one extreme, as hatred and bigotry, and at the other as simple indifference to, or separation from, others.

How to do this is, in many ways, the most difficult question of all, since Buddhism teaches that Anger is intrinsic to life itself and can never be eradicated.

It can, however, be transcended. Buddhism equates Anger with what might be called the 'lesser self', the self of the ego, of selfish desires, of narrow, sectarian identity. But every individual also possesses a 'greater self', the self that desires the good of others, and that can be encouraged to grow and develop, given the right stimulus.

This 'greater self' is what Ashoka and Ajatashatru - and Richard Causton - discovered through their contact with Buddhism. Other people have discovered it through different religions and philosophies, or even through great works of art. But however one unearths it, it's characterised by a sense of unity and oneness, so that the superficial differences between people become much less significant than our shared humanity.

Our primary task as we go into the twenty-first century is therefore, I feel, to consciously seek out and continually strengthen this 'greater self' within ourselves and others, and make it the basis of all our actions.

How we do this is for each individual to decide. I battle daily with my 'lesser self' in my Buddhist practice - and not always successfully, as I'm sure those who know me will readily agree. But whatever the religion, philosophy or discipline we choose, this process has to be a matter of conscious will. We have to determine to transcend our 'lesser self' - every day, if necessary - because, left to its own devices, it will nearly always win out: in selfishness, indifference, apathy or worse.

When our 'greater self' wins, however, we are making a positive contribution, however small, to world peace. When we can feel the pain and suffering even of an unknown Serbian soldier as if it were our own, for example, or that of our father or brother or uncle, we will no longer be at the mercy of those siren voices of war - internal and external - that seek to dehumanise him simply as 'the enemy', and thus make him fair game for killing.

This, then, is a Buddhist perspective on war and peace as we stand on the threshold of the next century, the new millennium.

It's a time of rapid change, and great confusion; to paraphrase Dickens - it is the best of times and the worst of times. Humankind has never in its history enjoyed such material plenty or experienced such technological progress. But neither has it suffered so much death, destruction and poverty. Never has the gap between the haves and the have-nots been so wide, and the contrasts so stark. And never before have we witnessed such massive - but contradictory - trends towards unity and disunity.

Improved communications, for example, mean that the world is smaller than it ever was. We can know more about each other, and more quickly, than ever before. Increasingly, we can see that ordinary people everywhere are basically pretty much the same, with the same hopes and desires, worries and problems. And increasingly, we can see that we are all in the same boat, and that unless we all row together we will assuredly sink - climate change, for example, does not recognise national borders.

At the same time, there are powerful forces working in the opposite direction. The end of the Cold War has liberated both positive and negative energies around the world, as the bleak certainty of the superpower stand-off has given way to a vacuum of competing interests.

The break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, for instance, has seen ancient animosities being re-ignited; serious crime in Russia has soared and is already being exported; and global capitalism is rampant, bringing its own instabilities.

In short, we stand at a point of balance. Which way that balance will tip as we go forward into the next century depends crucially on whether we can - whether we want to - activate the wisdom that resides within the greater self of each and every one of us. In the words of Nichiren:

If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?

I believe we should - because, together, I believe we can change the karma of war. Together, we can break the habit - if we choose to.

I would like to conclude with these words of Daisaku Ikeda, whose novel set Richard Causton on the path of peace nearly thirty years ago, and who, therefore, is indirectly responsible for us all being together here today. He says:

Making intimate appeals to each person with whom one comes in contact seems like modest, slow work; but all great tasks take time to accomplish. Establishing the contacts that enable individual human beings to cultivate and refine the [greater] life within them cannot be accomplished overnight. But the result of such an undertaking is the diamond of life, which cannot be destroyed by surrounding circumstances, no matter how severe. The only path left for mankind is the one leading through slow, modest work of the kind I have mentioned. And to anyone who would scoff at my proposal, I can only ask, 'What solution do you suggest?'

It's been a great honour to have been invited to give this inaugural Richard Causton Lecture. And I feel immensely privileged to have been able, in this way, to repay, at least in part, my debt of gratitude to Dick Causton.

Thank you all very much for listening so patiently.

Edward Canfor-Dumas