

A.F. C. Wallace. Psychological Preparations for War.  
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The principal psychological preparation for war is the training of all members of the society to participate efficiently in a social process that I shall call mobilization. I do not refer here simply to military mobilization in the modern sense of calling up reservists and drafting hitherto uncommitted men and resources to a war, although that is one instance of the larger phenomenon. Rather, I refer to the fact that all human societies, and the societies of many of the higher primates below man, are observed to exist alternately in two states. In one of these, lone individuals and a variety of subgroups occupy themselves in resting and in diversified and complexly co-ordinated economic, sexual, educational, and other activities. In the other state, the population arranges itself precisely into three well-defined groups - the policymakers, the young males, and the

females and children - and the entire society coordinates its activities under the leadership of recognized authority toward the achievement of a single task. The former state I shall call the relaxed state; the latter, the mobilized state; and mobilization is the process of transformation from the relaxed to the mobilized state.

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It is also obviously desirable, although not necessary, that the releasing stimulus not merely elicit a disciplined response but evoke a motivational system appropriate to the action to be taken. Here the society enters into a kind of conspiracy with itself to combine the alerting signal with symbolic content that, given a certain distribution of modal personality variables, will arouse maximum desirable emotion. The releasing stimulus is therefore apt to be - particularly in the case of mobilization for war - a report that a certain kind of event has occurred to which people with that character type will respond with anger, determination, fear, or whatever affective state is desired by the communicating group. For Iroquois Indians, this symbolically arousing stimulus was always a report that a kinsman had been killed and that a survivor demanded revenge.

For twentieth-century Americans, the symbolically arousing stimulus is apt to be the report that helples: Americans or their allies are being held prisoner or are under attack, and must be rescued.



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So far, we have discussed the phenomenon of mobilization as the central theme in psychological preparation for war. But what of the fear, suspicion, and hatred of "the enemy", traditionally believed to be prerequisites for war, that are often invoked by the releasing signal? It is my contention that far from being necessary, these attitudes are almost irrelevant to war except as rationalizations. Human beings generally reserve their settled fears, suspicions, and hatreds for those closest to them: kinsmen, neighbors, and colleagues. Today's enemy in war is yesterday's stranger and tomorrow's ally. The psychological target of lethal weapons in war is an abstraction rather than a person (as the saying goes, "I have nothing against you personally"); hence any member of a society that at the moment happens to be classified as an enemy is apt, in one way or

another, to be fair game (with "no hard feelings," of course). Few soldiers ever personally kill anybody; those who kill often do not actually see what they hit; and most never push a button, pull a trigger, or throw a grenade in combat.

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One critically necessary feature of this learning is the development of a readiness to move from a situation characterized by considerable personal freedom and democratic, consensual decision making to a hierarchical and authoritarian structural pose. In many band and tribal cultures there is little in the way of coercive authority exercised in the making of decisions during the relaxed state but a very high degree of it in states of mobilization. Thus, among the Iroquois daily life in the village was largely managed by tradition, supplemented by consensual decision when alternative policies had to be chosen, and children were generally given a great deal of freedom. The Iroquois were famous, at least among European observers, for their intolerance of personal constraint. But when a war party mobilized, the

participants suddenly assumed a posture of rigorous discipline under the command of a captain who had unquestioned and absolute authority during the military mission. At the end of the expedition, however, this authority terminated, and the captain's influence after that depended entirely on the willingness of other citizens to take his advice in council.



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We have, so far, discussed the psychological preparations required for a people as a whole to conduct war effectively and have argued that little more is required than a population trained to respond affirmatively to the mobilization signal and to carry out orders from recognized authority. But what determines the communication of this signal?

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Such examples could, of course, be multiplied ad nauseam. The point they illustrate is that unwanted wars - and most wars are now unwanted - occur as a result of a perversion of administrative process rather than as a result of popular folly. The types and sources of such perversions are complex. In some cases, the psychopathology of administrative personnel is evidently responsible (the case of Nazi Germany is the best example of this type). In other cases, responsible and intelligent administrators attempting to act in the best long-term interests of their society are precipitated by misinformation, communication failures, and a rigid, poorly designed system of decision making into unnecessarily mobilizing the society for war.

From this point of view, it would appear that the administrative structure of any society - and every

society has an administrative structure at least latent during the relaxation phase and active during its mobilization phases - is extraordinarily vulnerable to perversion in regard to war decisions.



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In conclusion, my argument may be summarized briefly as the assertion that the main process of preparing a people for war is simply training them to participate obediently in mobilization for concerted action in emergencies. War does not require training a people to hate an external enemy. Since training for mobilization is unavoidable, and the elimination of intergroup hostility would be irrelevant, it is clear that the prevention of war will not be accomplished either by eliminating its basis in psychological preparation or by improving human nature. Rather, the problem of ensuring peace must be approached by the innovation of political and administrative safeguards that guarantee that alternative processes of conflict resolution are not interrupted by war-by-mistake.



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