POLITICAL PACIFISM

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War is so obviously a bad thing that pacifism, which is defined by its hostility to war, would seem, on the face of it, to be a morally attractive position. Recent philosophical discussions of pacifism, however, have tended to be unsympathetic, if not downright dismissive. Jan Narveson, for example, in his influential paper on pacifism, finds the doctrine of pacifism to be at the same time ‘incoherent’, ‘self-contradictory’ and ‘logically untenable’1. Tom Regan describes it as ‘bizarre and vaguely ludicrous’, adding that that is ‘perhaps to put it mildly’2. Elizabeth Anscombe says of pacifism that ‘it is an illusion, which would be fantastic if it were not so familiar’, and claims further that it ‘has corrupted enormous numbers of people’3. Of course, these philosophers do not dismiss pacifism because they think that the abolition of war would be a bad thing. They dismiss pacifism because they think the abolition of war impossible. Pacifism should be rejected because it is impractical. Argument between the pacifist and the non-pacifist about the relative merits of their position cannot get started.

My fundamental aim in this paper is to demonstrate that pacifism is not impractical. The first two sections are dedicated to that task. Such a demonstration does not show that pacifism is right, or even that it should be taken seriously. In the third section of the paper I present some considerations in favour of the proposition that it should be taken seriously.

What is pacifism?

The word ‘pacifism’ derives from the Latin word ‘pax’, meaning peace between states. It is a relatively recent recruit into the English language, entering common usage via French in the early twentieth century as a name for opposition to war as a means to the resolution of conflict between states4. This is still the primary sense of the word according to the Oxford English Dictionary, whose first definition of pacifism is as ‘the doctrine or belief that it is possible and desirable to settle international disputes by peaceful means’. So
understood pacifism is a specifically political doctrine, concerned only with the establishment of peaceful relationships between states, rather than within states, or between individuals in their private lives. Of course 'pacifism' now has a variety of senses, picking out principled opposition to, and refusal to participate in, war or violence. The focus of this paper, however, is on pacifism in the *O.E.D.* sense, what I will call political pacifism.

It is no accident that the word 'pacifism' became established when it did. Like many ‘ism’ words, such as 'socialism' and 'fascism', ‘pacifism’ refers not simply to an intellectual doctrine, but also to a social movement, and arose as a convenient term to refer both to this movement and to various of the commitments that motivated its members. Historians trace intellectual projects for the abolition of war as far back as the fourteenth century, and denials of the justifiability of violence in any form are deeply rooted in the Christian and other religious traditions, but an organised movement dedicated to the abolition of war as a means for resolving conflict between states began only in the late eighteenth century, finding organisational expression with the formation of the earliest peace associations in the US in 1815 (the New York Peace Society), and in England in 1816 (The Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace’, more commonly known as ‘the Peace Society’).

The pacifist movement emerged in response to the development of a system of interacting modern states. The term ‘state’ in modern usage refers both to a politically unified geographical region, and to the corporate entity which exercises political authority within that region. This corporate entity consists of a complex of institutions comprised of a structure of offices and tasks which are conceived as existing independently of the individuals who happen to occupy them, and as persisting beyond those individuals. Modern states in this sense claim exclusive authority over the inhabitants of a specific geographical region. In particular they claim a monopoly on the right to determine how violence is to be used; a monopoly that is often taken to be definitive of the state.

This kind of state is a relatively recent contrivance. There are intimations of it in twelfth century Italy, but it is not until the late fifteenth century at the earliest - the time at which modern European history is usually taken to begin - that fully fledged states come into existence. The emergence of the state from older forms of political organisation is reflected in the writings of political theorists. In *The Prince*, written in 1513, we find Machiavelli speaking of the polity as both the personal domain of the Prince, but also of the state - as a persisting structure of institutions - as the object of the art of statescraft. In Hobbes’s political writings in the middle of the sixteenth century, on the other hand, a fully modern conception of the state is enunciated. It is of course, only when there are
two or more states that there can even possibly be conflict between them, and it is only then that pacifism in the sense of rejection of war as a means to the resolution of conflict between states becomes a possible position.

Just as the modern state is historically continuous with, but organisationally and conceptually distinct from, earlier forms of political organisation so, I would claim, war, as a form of hostile engagement between states, arises out of, but is different from, earlier forms of armed hostility. (So for example, in the Middle Ages there was a recognised category of ‘private wars’ between individuals.) Interstate war has become a political institution, in something like Rawls’s sense of that term. For Rawls an institution is ‘a public system of rules which defines offices and their positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities, and the like. These rules specify certain forms of action as permissible, others as forbidden; and they provide for certain penalties and defenses, and so on, when violations occur.’ Rawls goes on to give as examples of what he calls ‘institutions . . . games and rituals, trials and parliaments, markets and systems of property.’

Modern war has gradually become institutionalised in this Rawlsian sense. In the first instance, the institutionalisation of war was internal to the state, with the subordination of the providers of military force to political control, and their dedication to the realisation of political goals. The immediate, and ongoing, effect of such subjugation of military forces within the state was a massive increase in armed conflict between states. This increase was a function both of technological advances in armaments, and of the growth in the ability of a centralised state to mobilise and direct human and material resources. In early modern Europe this ability was enthusiastically exercised: as Hinsley writes

_The first effect of the state's growing monopoly of armed force within society was an increase in the frequency of interstate war. By the seventeenth century there were only seven years in the whole century . . . when interstate war was not taking place somewhere in Europe._

However, such generalised conflict threatens the very existence of any state, either through armed conquest, or through the destruction of the conditions for prosperity and stability on which the state’s claim to legitimacy in the eyes of its people rest. Recognition of the need to constrain the impact of conflict on the political viability of states contributed to the creation of an international (first European, and later global) society of states, in which sovereignty implied not simply rights, but also duties to fellow members. By the later part of the eighteenth century, wars were becoming less frequent, even though their destructiveness when they did occur continued to grow.
After the Congress of Vienna in 1815 not years, but decades, passed without serious armed conflict between European states. Martin Ceadel, the historian of pacifism, identifies a shift in this period away from what he calls ‘fatalism’ - ‘the belief that war was the normal condition of international relations’ - to ‘a similarly widespread assumption that humans could bring international relations under at least partial control’\(^{14}\). For the first time, it began to seem conceivable that just as violence within the state had been constrained, if not eliminated, by the erection of institutions dedicated to its deterrence and control, so could violence between states, by the construction of an appropriate institutional framework.

The disagreement between pacifism (which emerged in organisational form at just this time) and (what became) political orthodoxy can be understood as a disagreement about the form that this institutional framework should take, and in particular whether the institution of war should be reformed and extended, or abolished. At the level of political principle there has been general consensus between pacifist and the orthodox. Both have accepted that the state is the site and sponsor of much that is of value, and that violent disruption of the state, from within or without, is bad. Both have also accepted that, as a matter of fact, such disruption is a real danger\(^{15}\), calling for effective preventative measures. Furthermore, there has even been a good deal of agreement between the pacifist and the orthodox about the policies that should be put in place on the basis of these principles and facts in order to promote international harmony and resolve conflict. Indeed, the politically influential pacifist movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were instrumental in the promotion of international agreements limiting arms and forbidding aggressive war, and in the development of instruments for consultation, arbitration and adjudication, both on a state-to-state basis, and as part of the function of supra-national bodies such as the World Court and the League of Nations\(^{16}\).

Where pacifism has diverged from political orthodoxy is in its attitude to the institutionalisation of violence as an integral part of interstate relations. The orthodox response to problems of inter-state conflict has been to develop and further regulate the institution of war. Certain kinds of institutionalised actors - armies, and ultimately states - are recognised as legitimate holders of military force, and the conditions under which such force may be wielded, as well as the forms and limits of its use, are specified in international law and treaties. War is now defined and understood in purely political terms, and (roughly speaking) is seen as legitimate only to the extent to which it is at the service of legitimate political goals; in particular (following the gradual delegitimisation of the concept of ‘offensive wars’) as a means to the preservation or restoration of the status quo in international relations\(^{17}\). To this extent war is a conservative institution, at least in its aims, though in its effects, of course, it is often radically transformative.
Just as it would be a mistake to identify a social institution such as the market with the occasions on which people trade with each other rather than with the whole system of production, distribution, advertisement etc. of commodities which makes such trades possible, so war as a political institution consists not simply of episodes of armed conflict between states and the rules and norms governing such conflicts, but also the whole complex of activities and organisation which lead up to and make possible such episodes. It is the institution of war in this comprehensive sense to which the pacifist is opposed: it follows that the peace that the pacifist desires is not simply the absence of fighting but rather the dissolution of the institution of war.

This is not to say that for pacifists the task to which that institution is supposed to be devoted - the protection of the political realm from violent external usurpation - will become redundant. Rather, an alternative institution - the institution of peace - needs to be constructed. And of course, as indicated above, pacifists have done a lot of work in outlining and putting in place such an institution. As well as their efforts in promoting arrangements that will lessen the likelihood of inter-state conflicts and provide avenues for negotiated resolution when they do occur, pacifists, particularly in the latter part of the Twentieth Century, have developed techniques for the active peaceful resistance to armed aggression, whereby a populace would resist armed occupation and coercion by widespread passive resistance, non-cooperation, non-fraternisation and the like.

Pacifism, then, as a socio-political movement, is marked by the rejection of the institution of war and by the commitment to the creation of an alternative institution of peace. Agreement on these points is compatible with radical disagreement about the appropriate responses to the fighting of particular wars. It does not follow simply from the belief that the institution of war can and should be abolished that, prior to such abolition and the erection of the alternative institution, all of the operations of that institution are to be condemned. As a matter of fact, many pacifists have held that even as efforts are made to do away with the institution of war, the use of military force may be the most appropriate response to unjust external threats. On the other hand, many pacifists have thought that the fighting of war can never be justified (a view that has come to be taken by many as definitive of pacifism). The pacifist movement, virtually since its inception, has been riven by disagreement over this issue. That disagreement tends to stem from differences in more fundamental matters of principle. Many pacifists have been motivated by their acceptance of religious prohibitions on killing or the use of force. The refusal to endorse so-called 'just wars' is direct consequence of such acceptance. Other pacifists have been motivated by more pragmatic considerations, simply believing that the institution of
peace can do the work the institution of war is supposed to do in a more effective and less costly manner\textsuperscript{21}. For such pacifists, 'just war' is at least a morally conceivable category. In any case, the difference between political pacifism and political orthodoxy, as here interpreted, comes down to a difference in the answer that is given to the question: what institutional arrangements should be preferred in the face of the danger of violent external disruption of the political realm?

II

In the previous section I have tried to show that that in a significant, if not primary, sense, pacifism is a doctrine concerning political morality, and in particular political institutions. In the light of this, it is striking how many recent philosophical discussions of pacifism - mainly, but certainly not only, those which are hostile to it - characterise it predominantly if not exclusively as what might be called a doctrine of personal refusal. In some cases, for example in Jan Narveson's well known paper, the doctrine of pacifism is not even represented as necessarily directed at war. Narveson claims that the pacifist is distinguished by believing 'not only that violence is evil but also that it is morally wrong to use force to resist, punish or prevent violence'\textsuperscript{22}. Cheyney C. Ryan, in his critical discussion of pacifism, claims that the characterisation of pacifism as "the view that all violence or coercion is wrong . . . seems to be too broad"\textsuperscript{23}. What he (apparently) sees as definitive of pacifism is the impermissibility of killing. Thomas Nagel describes pacifism as 'an absolutist position . . . the view that one may not kill another person under any circumstances'\textsuperscript{24}. On these sorts of characterisations of pacifism, though opposition to war is entailed by the pacifist commitment, that commitment is not actually defined in terms of opposition to war; there could be pacifists even in a world in which war had been abolished, or one in which there were no states. Other commentators, such as Elizabeth Anscombe, do characterise pacifism in terms of an attitude to war, but again, see it as primarily a doctrine of personal refusal\textsuperscript{25}. So for Anscombe, pacifism is "the doctrine that it is \textit{eo ipso} wrong to fight in wars"\textsuperscript{26}.

The critics of pacifism make use of these sorts of definitions in arguments that purport to establish that there is no practical alternative to accepting the institution of war. Before giving further details of such arguments it might seem that the definitions of pacifism that these critics give expose such arguments to one or both of two simple objections. The first is that such arguments commit the fallacy of equivocation. The term 'pacifism' is used in one of its senses to identify a position and an argument is constructed to show that that position is impractical. Then that conclusion is (implicitly) extended to other positions identified by the same term. Narveson's usage, for example, arguably identifies
the principle motivating the refusal of members of groups such as the Mennonites to participate in war. Narveson then tries to show that acceptance of that principle leads to unacceptable consequences. Even if he has shown this, he has hardly established, as he apparently believes that he has, that anything that can be legitimately called pacifism - in particular political pacifism - is similarly unacceptable.

The second objection is that these arguments simply do not engage with political pacifism, so cannot demonstrate its impracticality. The definitions of pacifism on which they are based confusedly identify the beliefs that (partially) motivate political pacifists to hold the doctrine of political pacifism with the beliefs that constitute that doctrine - that the institution of war can and should be replaced by the institution of peace. Inevitably, given the contingent and historically localised nature of the institution of war, these constitutive beliefs are themselves going to be based on other moral, political and factual beliefs. In fact, as indicated above the constitutive beliefs are compatible with a range of motivating beliefs. Even if some of these beliefs entail (in conjunction with other beliefs) the constitutive beliefs and can be shown to be false, or policies based on them to be impractical, it would not follow that the constitutive beliefs themselves have been shown to be false, or policies based on them impractical.

On the face of it, it seems that the arguments made by writers such as these about the impracticality of pacifism cannot be extended to political pacifism. However, even if personal refusal is not definitive of pacifism, it plays a central role in the practice of pacifism. Given Anscombe’s characterisation of pacifism in political terms her criticisms, at least, do throw up a real challenge to the institutional pacifist. They also perhaps explain why institutional pacifism has not been treated seriously (indeed not treated at all) in much recent philosophical discussion.

The structure of Anscombe’s attack on pacifism can be broken into two steps. The first is to point out that the pacifist - or at least the kind of pacifist that she is interested in, and certainly the kind I am focussing on - ought to be, claims to be, and wants to be, operating in the political sphere. She is, she says, ‘not concerned with the pacifism of some peculiar sect which in any case draws apart form the world to a certain extent27, but with a pacifism of people in the world, who do not want to be withdrawn from it.’ In effect, the political pacifist is committed to the principle that there are valuable forms of life which necessarily involve large scale cooperative enterprises: in particular, in the world as it exists at the moment they are committed to the principle that the state as the site and sponsor of such enterprises is valuable and worthy of protection. It follows from their acceptance of this principle that they are committed to supporting a policy which is actually likely to contribute to such protection. In as much as their position is a political
position they are necessarily concerned with its effectiveness, and hence (given some
obvious empirical facts about the limits of individuals’ powers) with coordinated actions.
So it is not open to the pacifist to claim that the value of their commitment cannot depend
on what other people do (as, arguably, it might legitimately be in the realm of personal
morality). And, says Anscombe, it is simply a matter of fact that there are evil and
mistaken people who are apt to band together to use violence to get their way. Provided
that the non-pacifist does not hold that the existence of armies and conflict between them
is good in itself - provided that is that they do not hold that these things are good as a
matter of principle - then the difference between the pacifist and the non-pacifist at this
point becomes one of policy. That is they disagree about how such people are to be
deterred and resisted.

The second step of Anscombe’s attack is to attempt to show pacifism is impotent as
policy, that it cannot achieve the overcoming of war, not just that it may be relatively less
effective or in some other way less desirable than the present system, in the way, say, that
some claim that a mercenary army is less effective than a citizen army. External violent
threats to the political realm can only effectively be deterred and resisted by a
demonstrated willingness and capacity for reciprocal use of violent force.

Anscombe’s implicit claim is that pacifism is in a certain sense impractical. There are at
least two criteria for the practicality of some possible policy. The first of these is that it is
productive of value, that is, that it can be relied on to issue in action that will make the
world a better (by our lights) place. (This does not mean that every action issuing from
such a policy will make the world better, just that on the whole actions so based are likely
to do so.) Some seemingly desirable policies become much less attractive if subjected to
this test. For instance, it may seem that a policy of always being totally honest is morally
admirable. But consider what would happen if we tried to follow through on this
commitment in practice. Much of what we think of as tactful behaviour involves telling
‘little white lies’ or at least being less than fully frank. Following the policy of always
being fully honest would prevent us from being tactful, leading to offence and distress for
others, and damage to intimate relations. It seems very doubtful that the world would be a
better place if we accepted the commitment to be always honest, so that commitment can
be criticised on the grounds of (counter)-productivity.

Similarly, so it is claimed, a commitment to pacifism - though on the face of it appearing
to be morally commendable - is likewise to be condemned as counterproductive, since it
will not issue in actions that are likely to make the world a better place, but is rather
likely to lead to the world becoming worse than it already is. Pacifism would be laudable
if we lived in a world where no-one was prepared to resort to violence to get what they
want. But that is clearly not our world. In our world, people will use violence and wars will occur. No doubt wars are bad in all sorts of ways. But sometimes, it seems, there are worse things than going to war. Imagine what would have happened if Hitler had not been resisted by military force, for example. We can generalise from this example. If pacifism were widely accepted we would actually live in a world in which there was more, rather than less, use of violence, and in which desirable forms of political and social life could no longer exist.

The second criterion for the practicality of a moral policy is that it must be possible for beings like us to act in the way demanded by that commitment. But, so the argument goes, it is very doubtful that we could actually act in the ways that we would be supposed to act as pacifists. Consider the situation in which we or our loved ones were threatened by deadly force and the only way to save our lives was by using deadly force ourselves. Could we restrain ourselves from doing so - and should we blamed if we cannot? Furthermore, the impossibility of pacifism in this respect contributes to its counter-productiveness. If most people realise that they are incapable of acting according to the precepts of pacifism, pacifism becomes inaccessible to them as a possible commitment, licensing them to use force and participate in war as a realistic means to protect or advance their principles.

Even if Anscombe’s arguments that pacifism is impractical apply to pacifism as a doctrine of personal refusal, they are flawed as objections to pacifism as a view about institutional design. Let us consider firstly the supposed counter-productiveness of pacifism. It cannot be generally required of someone who believes in the desirability of some non-actual social institutional arrangement that they act as they would be supposed to act if that arrangement did hold, nor is it a valid objection to note that if they acted now in the way in which they would be supposed to act when that arrangement held that their action would be futile or even counterproductive. So a socialist may hold that ideally the means of production should be owned by the community, not by private individuals. There is nothing inconsistent in someone who lives in a capitalist society holding and actively promoting this view and at the same time being a factory owner, for example. Nor is the fact that if this person gave up their property this would by itself do nothing to promote socialism an objection to their views (in fact it might retard it by cutting off a source of funds). Similarly, it is not an argument against someone who is an institutional pacifist to point out that their present security depends on the protection of their national defence forces, say, or that a society of individuals who were committed to a doctrine of personal refusal would invite and incite a military takeover. The question is whether it is possible to institutionalise pacifism in an effective way, that is in a way that protects the
political realm from violent usurpation in the way in which the institutionalisation of force is now supposed to do.

Before addressing that question, however, we need to turn to the second charge of impracticality levelled against the pacifist, that is, that most people are incapable of acting according to the precepts of pacifism. It is only if we can rebut this charge, I think, that the question of the possibility of institutionalising pacifism can be live. Contrast the situation involved in institutionalising pacifism with that involved in institutionalising compassion (or on some accounts justice), through a social welfare system, say. Firstly, the operation of a social welfare system involves only a relatively small group of people, who are trained for, and engage in, specific tasks. And even though such a system is, presumably, motivated by compassion and, if effective, marks the society as more compassionate than it would be without it, it may well that none of the workers in the welfare system are themselves motivated by compassion towards any particular person in their dealings with clients. In bureaucratised institutions each functionary need only be motivated by the desire to do the specific tasks required of them. There are a number of reasons why this kind of arrangement in fact is likely to be more effective in achieving its goal, particularly in large and anonymous societies like ours, than one which relies simply on people being motivated by compassion. Firstly, we have the phenomenon of the 'bystander effect' where members of a crowd are less likely to act to help others than they would be if those others were not present. Secondly, compassion is a fickle emotion. Thirdly, it is emotionally costly - and often costly in other ways if acted on - and if not shallow, at least finite.

The general point is that a social institution may serve moral ends even when no-one in that institution is - or at least need be - directly motivated by those ends, and may do so more effectively than an institution which relies on such direct motivation among all its members.

However, institutionalised pacifism, unlike conventional military institutions, would seem to rely on people being directly motivated by their desire to resist external power, and this motivation being stronger than countervailing emotions. Pacifist resistance can only be effective if there is, if not universal, at least very general participation - that is, participation by people who have no experience of facing armed opponents. Such participation is likely to be costly, both to the individual and to the society as a whole. How can ordinary people be expected to have the fortitude to act in the way required for civilian defence to be effective? In a society that relies on institutionalised pacifism for its defence then if individual members of the civilian population do not have what is
required to effectively resist armed aggression and intimidation then neither does the institution of which they are part.

The best, or at least simplest, rebuttal of a claim that some kind of thing is impossible is to produce examples of it in actuality. Certainly there have been effective organised non-violent resistance to political violence within states - Gandhi and Martin Luther King led such resistance, for example. Moreover in a number of recent political transformations of repressive regimes largely non-violent popular action has been an important agent of change. However, perhaps in neither of these cases could it be claimed that there was an established pacifist institution of the kind that would be required to deter attack on a state by a hostile state, or defend it in the case of such an attack: in the Gandhi-type cases passive resistance was engaged in only by a self-selected, highly politicised sub-group of the broader population, and the Philippines type popular uprisings were spontaneous and relatively short lived phenomena.

There is, however, one clear example of such institutionalised resistance of which I am aware, that which occurred in Lithuania in 1990-91 in its fight to protect its newly proclaimed independence against the coercive power of the USSR. In its ongoing and ultimately successful struggle the Lithuanian government actively promoted the tactics of civilian defence: the very first resolution of the governing body, the Supreme Council, stressed the importance of the discipline of non-violence. They translated and circulated civilian defence literature (e.g. Gene Sharp’s *Civilian-Based Defence*) and trained people in the techniques of non-violent action. These techniques were tested against military violence. On January 11 1991 paratroopers opened fire on unarmed civilians in the capital who were trying to protect the Press Building. In the early hours of Jan 13 a tank and infantry attack took place against civilians guarding the television tower; fourteen people were killed and 702 injured. After the seizure of the tower, the people did not disperse, but moved to the centre of the city to join the crowd surrounding and protecting the Supreme Council from the threat of imminent attack. . . . No attack came. The Lithuanian philosopher Grazina Miniotaite, from whose account these details are drawn, claims that ‘Undoubtedly, the Soviet government’s decision to refrain from the assault was due to the people’s dogged determination despite the loss of lives at the television tower’. The USSR eventually withdrew its troops - international recognition of the state of Lithuania was granted in late 1991.

Of course none of this shows that institutionalising pacifism is superior to military force as a policy for the protection of the political realm. It does, however, provide good enough grounds for rebutting the charge of impracticality levelled against institutional pacifism.
The first section of this paper aimed to show that pacifism could be understood as a view about the design of an institution to resist violent external disruption of the political realm. The second section argued that, so understood, pacifism is not vulnerable to the charges of impracticality that have commonly been made against it, since it has been demonstrably effective. Even if this argument is accepted, it still falls far short of even making a case for taking pacifism seriously. Effectiveness is simply a *sine qua non* of some proposed institutional arrangement. It may still be that that arrangement is so manifestly inferior to feasible alternatives that it can justifiably be ignored.

In this section of the paper I want to point to some considerations in favour of taking political pacifism seriously as an alternative to the institution of war. There are at least three sorts of criteria by which competing policies can be assessed and compared. Firstly, there is relative effectiveness - which of the available policies is most likely reliably to bring about the desired end? The second criterion is that of ‘cost’, broadly understood. Here we need to consider things like time, amount of effort, production of (desirable and undesirable) by-products, and so on, as well as financial outlays. Provided a means is effective to some extent it may still be reasonable to prefer it if the costs associated with the use of another more effective means are prohibitive. No doubt dynamiting a house is a more effective means of riddling it of rats than laying traps. Nevertheless, in all but the most extreme circumstances we would not think it reasonable to prefer blowing up a house to laying traps as a way of rat extermination. Finally, some policies may be compared in terms of expressive values - the way in which a policy is exercised may itself to a greater or lesser extent directly manifest values which we support or oppose or be consistent or inconsistent with principles we accept. Again, it is possible that a policy will be inferior in terms of both relative effectiveness and cost but preferable - and ultimately preferred - in terms of expressive value.

In the light of these criteria let me briefly canvass some of the issues which bear on the relative merits of institutionalised pacifism and conventional military defence as policies for the protection and preservation of the state. (I won’t directly address the question of the expressive values associated with these policies though I take it that the nature of these values will emerge to some extent from what I do say.)

Let’s begin with the issue of relative effectiveness, and look first at conventional military means. In order to achieve their political end the military use - or at least are supposed to use - the threat or exercise of organised violent force for two purposes: to deter external
attack and to resist and overcome such attack if it nevertheless occurs. How effective are these uses of force in achieving the desired outcomes? When it comes to resistance we know that when two armies clash only one of them can prevail. There is the occasional inconclusive result, but roughly speaking for any randomly selected army there will only be about a 50% chance of their successfully resisting attack. Not a very good rate for something on which so much rides. However, this will not be so important if the threat of the use of force generally acts to deter armed conflict. Does it? It would seem not - the frequency and intensity of war appears to have been increasing for at least the past couple of centuries. In terms, then, of its absolute effectiveness the military way does not look very good. But whether a policy should be adopted depends not on its absolute but rather on its relative effectiveness. So how does pacifism compare here? Obviously, it is impossible to say - we simply don’t have sufficient data. However, it is worth noting here that if institutionalised pacifism became general - adopted by all states - it would be 100% effective, since no state would have the capacity to attack another so there would be nothing to deter or resist.

Assessment of associated costs and benefits (if any) of the competing policies depends in part on normative questions regarding the nature of the state. After all, what we count as a cost or a benefit depends on what we take to be good or bad. Even among those who accept the need for institutions to protect the state from violent usurpation there can be - and obviously is - substantial disagreements concerning these normative questions. For simplicity’s sake I will just consider two normative models. The first is what might be called Hobbesian minimalism. On this account a state exists purely to provide security and the conditions for personal happiness for its members. The second is Kantian republicanism. On this approach the state is, or at least aspires to be, constituted by a community of autonomous enlightened beings, engaged in critical dialogue with each other, as well as the institutions that embody and provide scope for the exercise of such critical dialogue in their operations, such as universities, free press, parliament, and so on (‘Kantian institutions’).

On either model there are very considerable costs associated with the present system. Even when they are not actually involved in a war, the financial costs of supporting military institutions are enormous. Once these institutions actually engage in war, death and suffering occur, often on a vast scale. Undoubtedly, this is the greatest harm associated with the present system. But there are others. War frequently leads to destruction of economic resources and important cultural artefacts, as well as wide spread pollution. Those who participate in war are often psychologically disturbed for the rest of their life. This is bad for them, but also for those close to them and indeed their society as a whole.
Furthermore, the costs associated with the present system continue to grow. For centuries the financial costs of the preparation and waging of war has increased, as has the devastation caused by wars. This is not accidental, but rather a seemingly inevitable result of the present system. As one armed force gains weapons of greater destructive power and delivery systems capable of carrying these weapons further and faster, others strive to match them, for fear that they will be overwhelmed by these weapons in potential future conflicts. So the deadly spiral of the arms race escalates. As I have already pointed out the effect of this escalation is to make us less, not more, secure. And as the cost of these weapons increases so more and more of the world’s productive resources are diverted to their production. At the same time, states are forced to tighten control of their populations: to tax and conscript them against their wills to provide the resources and personnel necessary for war.

So even on a Hobbesian minimalist account of the state there are very considerable costs associated with the present system, costs that are more or less totally absent in the case of organised pacifism. Though there may need to be a state funded body to arrange training in non-violent tactics, the cost of such training would only be a fraction of that incurred by the present system. With the lessening of the financial burden associated with the preparation of war, taxation could be reduced. Without the clash of armies the death and destruction that is the inevitable concomitant of battle would be absent (though there may be still deaths etc in the face of invasion). Of course, it has been allowed, a state that adopted a pacifistic defence policy may leave its citizens vulnerable to abuse at the hands of violent invaders, but as has already been argued, it is not clear that such invasion is more likely, or more likely to be successful, given the right kind of organised resistance for its members.

If instead of a Hobbesian we work with a Kantian model of the state there are further significant costs associated with the present system. In his discussion of relations between what he calls 'reasonably just constitutional democracies' (which are marked by the presence of Kantian institutions) in *The Law of Peoples* Rawls claims that 'The absence of war between major established democracies is as close as anything we know to s simple empirical regularity in relations among societies' Rawls, however, does not consider the relationship between the power of military institutions and the preservation or fostering of 'reasonably just constitutional democracies'. For the Kantian there are reasons to believe that the mere presence of the war institution tends to subvert the political values that it is supposed to be protecting. As noted above, the state claims a monopoly on the right to determine how violence is to be used within its borders. Undoubtedly one of the triumphs of the modern state has been its ability to make this
claim good - to ‘domesticate’ violence as it were, to subordinate it and put it at the service of political goals. In the case of armies this has involved the creation of organisations which are effective and responsive tools of the will of the leaders of the state. Samuel Huntington speaks of the military as an ‘instrument of obedience’. By definition an organisation that can be characterised as an instrument of obedience is not a Kantian institution. The habits of mind that are required for people to be effective members of the armed forces, such as deference and unquestioning obedience to authority, respect for people calibrated to their position in a hierarchy, and loyalty to the organisation, are directly antithetical to those that are necessary for participation in Kantian institutions. As the military becomes larger and more influential in a society it may become more difficult to foster the ways of thinking and forms of life that conduce to Kantian institutions. Institutionalised pacifism, on the other hand, can take the form of a Kantian institution in which decisions and strategies are made on the basis of open and free discussion by the community as a whole. Furthermore, pacifist resistance typically involves appealing to the invaders as rational human beings, rather than simply confronting them as threats to be obliterated.

The American political historian Brian Downing provides evidence that the growth in the institution of war has been at the expense of Kantian institutions. Downing summarised his findings as follows:

I have argued the case for . . . political change brought on by military modernization, mainly in the seventeenth century. Countries faced with heavy protracted warfare that required substantial domestic resource mobilization suffered the destruction of medieval constitutionalism [roughly, what are here being called Kantian institutions] and the rise of a military-bureaucratic form of government. Second, where war was light, or where war needs could be met without mobilizing drastic proportions of national resources (through foreign resources, alliances, geographic advantages, or commercial wealth), conflict with the constitution was much lighter. Constitutional government endured and provided a basis for the development of democracy. Third, where war was heavy and protracted, where domestic politics prevented military modernization and political centralization, and where the benefits of foreign resources, alliances, geographic advantages, or commercial wealth superiority were not available, the country lost its sovereignty to strong expansionist states.

The fact that the growth of military institutions subverts reasonably just constitutional democracies provides a reason for the supporter of such polities to favour pacifism; and conversely the fact that such polities make the fighting of wars less likely provide a reason for pacifists to favour them.
1 Jan Narveson 'Pacifism: A Philosophical Analysis' in Richard A. Wasserstrom (ed.) War and Morality Belmont: Wadsworth, p. 63
3 Elizabeth Anscombe ‘War and Murder’ in Richard A. Wasserstrom (ed.) War and Morality Belmont: Wadsworth, p. 42


6 Peter Brock Pacifism in the United States from the Colonial Era to the First World War op. cit. pp. 458-68; Ceadel The Origins of War Prevention pp. 11-12, 222-24.

8 It is also is importantly different from contemporary conflicts which do not involve opposed state actors, for example conflicts between war-lords where centralised political authority has broken down (as in Somalia), or conflicts between the forces of state authority and elements of the population who deny the legitimacy of such authority (as in Northern Ireland). The degree of confusion – moral, legal and practical – regarding intervention in such conflicts by outsiders reflects the extent to which our military institutions have been tailored to inter-state conflicts.
12 F. H. Hinsley Nationalism and the International System op. cit., p. 92. For graphic descriptions of the horrors of such wars, see Michael Howard, War In European History op. cit.
13 F.H. Hinsley, in Nationalism and the International System op. cit. p. 85 sees the modern international system emerging 'as a body of assumptions and restraints that was accepted by governments, and not merely advocated by theorists' in post-1815 Europe.
The Origins of War Prevention op. cit.

Not all of those who have been called pacifists have had such orthodox views. The Anabaptists, and their successors the Mennonites, for example, accepted the legitimacy of the state as necessary for (fallen) man’s well-being on Earth, and its right to wield the sword to maintain domestic order and protect against foreign invasion. Nevertheless, they thought that true Christians, as a minority, who accepted the injunction to ‘Resist not evil’ as the kernel of the new dispensation introduced by Christ, could play no role in assisting in the protection of the state. Brocks dubs such groups ‘non-resisters’, and distinguishes them from ‘non-violent resisters’ such as the Quakers. (Pacifism in the United States from the Colonial Era to the First World War ‘Part One: Pacifism in Colonial America and the American Revolution’-21- 329; cf. Peter Brock Freedom from Violence: Sectarian Nonresistance from the Middle Ages to the Great War Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991) So though non-resisters such as the Mennonites are generally counted as pacifists because of their refusal to be involved in wars, that refusal is not politically motivated, and not part of a broader commitment to the doing away with war. On the other hand, non-violent resisters such as the Quakers have always been important in the organised pacifist movement. The doctrine of ‘providentialism’, which might be thought to cut across the non-violent resister/non-resister dichotomy seems to have been relatively widely accepted (or at least espoused) by early political pacifists. Providentialism has it that God will protect countries that renounce the use of arms. This might be seen as a form of non-resistance. On the other hand it might be seen as reflecting confidence that a powerful protector would do whatever resisting was necessary on behalf of the disarmed. (‘God’s on our side.’) In any case, the appeal of providentialism seems to have waned fairly rapidly. (Ceadel The Origins of War Prevention, pp. 242-4.)

In The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism op. cit. esp pp.1-50, Chatfield details the ‘strong connections with foreign policy decision makers' enjoyed by the US peace movement over this period. From the early part of the Twentieth Century leaders of the American peace movement were 'mostly college-educated professionals drawn from the middle and upper classes, prominent in education, law, business, journalism and religion. . . . Three fourths of them lived in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, or Chicago.' (p.22) Woodrow Wilson was at one time a member of the American Peace Society. Ceadel gives similar information about Great Britain in Semi-Detached Idealists op. cit.

See e.g. the Charter of the United Nations at http://www.un.org/Overview/Charter/contents.html

This sort of understanding of war, and correspondingly of peace, goes back to Hobbes, who wrote in Ch 13 of Leviathan that ‘Warre, consisteth not in Battel only; but in a tract of time, wherein the Will to contend by Battel is sufficiently known: and therefore the notion of Time, is to be considered in the nature of Warre; as it is in the nature of Weather. For as the nature of Foule weather, lyeth not in a shouwre or two of rain; but in an inclination thereto of many days together: so the nature of Warre, consisteth not in actuall fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time’ concludes Hobbes ‘is PEACE.’ (Thomas Hobbes Leviathan Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981, first pub. 1651.) In other words, as he makes explicit elsewhere, for Hobbes there is no peace between sovereign states, whether or not actual fighting is occurring. Other significant philosophers who took the same view about the nature of war and peace include Kant, Rousseau, and William James - all of whom are clearly pacifists in my favoured sense (in James’s case, self-professedly so). In 'Toward Perpetual Peace' Kant says, for example, that 'The idea of the right of nations presupposes the separation of many neighbouring states independent of one another; such a condition is of itself a condition of war (unless a federative union of them prevents the outbreak of hostilities) and that by a peace pact a current war can be brought to an end but not a condition of war.’ Immanuel Kant Practical Philosophy Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 336 (8: 367), 327 (8:355). Similarly, in his essay The State of War Rousseau
distinguishes between what he calls the ‘waging of war’, which involves actual fighting, and ‘the state of war’ which involves two or more states having the will and capacity to destroy each other. It is clear that Rousseau would see the contemporary condition of international relations as being a state of war. Thus he asks whether ‘a truce, a suspension of arms, a ‘Peace of God’, are a state of war or peace’, and answers that ‘It is clear from the preceding motions that they all constitute a modified state of war in which the two enemies tie their own hands without losing or disguising the will to harm to each other. They make preparations, pile up weapons and materials for a siege, and all the nonspecified military operations continue apace.’ Rousseau further asks, regarding treaties, ‘what are such forms of peace in the end but a continual war that is all the more cruel because the enemy can no longer defend itself?’ Jean-Jacques Rousseau The State of War in Grace G. Roosevelt Reading Rousseau in the Nuclear Age Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990, p.196. Cf. ‘Rousseau’s ‘ “Summary” and “Critique” of the Abbe de Saint-Pierre's Project for Perpetual Peace’ in the same volume. William James claims that ‘Every up-to-date dictionary should say that ‘peace’ and ‘war’ mean the same thing, now in posse, now in actu. It may even be reasonably be said that that the intensively sharp competitive preparation for war by the nations is the real war, permanent, unceasing, and that the battles are only a sort of public verification of the mastery gained during the ‘peace’ interval.’ William James ‘The Moral Equivalent of War’ in Richard Wassertrom War and Morality Belmont: Wadsworth, 1970 4-14, p.6

19 See e.g Gene Sharp Civilian-Based Defence: A Post-Military Weapons System Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990 for a discussion and defence of such an approach and further references.

20 According to Charles Chatfield in The American Peace Movement: Ideals and Activism op. cit. ‘The word pacifist, coined in Europe at the turn of the century to describe all those who worked for peace, became an epithet for those who would not sanction even an apparently just war.’ (p. 28)

21 Martin Ceadel, in his discussions of peace movements, has distinguished two kinds of anti-war positions, that he labels ‘pacifism’ and (following A.J. P. Taylor) ‘pacifism’ (Origins p. 44; Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945 Oxford, Clarendon, 1980 p. 3 Thinking about Peace and War (OUP, 1989, p.5). The philosopher Richard Norman, in Ethics, Killing and War (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p.237), endorses Ceadel's distinction, which he calls ‘very helpful’. Ceadel gives somewhat different descriptions of these views at different places in his writings. I will discuss the characterisations in Thinking about Peace and War, since they are the ones that Norman quotes: ‘pacifism’ is ‘the absolutist theory that participation in and support for war is always impermissible’, while ‘pacifism’ is the view that ‘war can not only be prevented but in time also abolished by reforms which will bring justice in domestic politics too . . . Pacifism rules out all aggressive wars and even some defensive wars . . . but accepts the need for military force to defend its achievements against aggression.’ Norman thinks that one of the defining differences between these positions is their temporal orientation: 'Pacifism, by contrast [to, inter alia, pacifism] is future oriented rather than present oriented.' (Ethics, Killing and War, p.238.) There are a number of problems with the Ceadel/Norman view, both in the way in which it is presented and the uses to which it is put. Ceadel/Norman are trying to describe positions that are mutually exclusive. The supposed incompatibility between these views generates a good deal of the narrative tension in Ceadel's historical writings on peace movements. Such exclusivity can only be generated by doing historical and conceptual violence to the views actually held by many, perhaps most members of the peace movement. Many, perhaps most, members of peace movements, including those who held what Ceadel/Norman call 'pacifist' views have believed that 'war can not only be prevented but in time also abolished . . .' It is true, of course,
that this view is not equivalent to nor entailed by the view that 'participation in and support for war is always impermissible', but it is at least logically compatible with that view. Further, for many who believe that 'participation in and support for war is always impermissible' the relationship between these views is surely closer than mere logical compatibility. If one believes that 'participation in and support for war is always impermissible' and further believes such things as that humanity is not fundamentally irrational, that war has its roots in certain social and political arrangements, and so on, then there seems to be at least a reasonable moral expectation that one will support actions that are likely to lead to the prevention and possible abolition of war, and at the very least that one will accept the proposition that war can not only be prevented but also abolished. Consider an analogous case: if someone thinks that the killing of the innocent is absolutely wrong and that abortion is the killing of the innocent, and further believes that certain social arrangements such as the legalisation of abortion, unavailability of information about birth control etc. makes such killing more frequent, then there seems to be a reasonable expectation that they will support campaigns to revoke such legislation, promulgate such information etc. The general point is that if one thinks that a certain kind of action is absolutely wrong (should never be engaged in) and further thinks that people are likely to engage in it given the persistence of certain social arrangements, and that one is in a position to (possibly) help change those arrangements to make it less likely that people will engage in the wrong action then surely there is a very strong moral reason to so help.

Again, though the view that 'war can not only be prevented but in time also abolished . . . ' does not entail the view that 'participation in and support for war is always impermissible', it is clear that in many cases people have come to accept the second view because they held the first. There are at least two kinds of cases here. Firstly, those committed to the abolition of war might think that even though defensive wars may actually be justified in particular cases, the (more important) cause of war abolition is best served by promoting the exceptionless policy of opposing all wars. Secondly, it might be thought that although particular wars conceivably could be justified (and perhaps in the past have been), no war now actually is, because, for example, the nature of modern weaponry is such that the amount of destruction that is now the inevitable consequence of any war is disproportionate to any possible good outcome that could be achieved. (This seems to be the view supported by Teichmann in Just and Unjust Wars, and by Robert L. Holmes in On War and Morality Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.) Ceadel himself gives examples of both cases himself. In Origins (228-9) Ceadel describes a meeting of the Peace Society on 24 February 1818. 'The meeting reaffirmed . . . that "the fundamental principles of the Society that all war is inconsistent with Christianity cannot be conceded." It seems to have done so for four reasons. . . . The second was a belief that to allow defensive wars in principle was to allow all wars in practice. . . . In advancing this argument the society was adopting the 'contingent' approach . . . stressing that a just war was so improbable that it was better to oppose all wars than examine each on its merits with the risk that the government would thereby manage to pass off a number of unjust wars as defensive ones.' In Semi-Detached Idealists (p.15) he writes that ' in the Twentieth Century when first aerial bombardment and then nuclear warheads raised the cost of war to a level for which few if any political benefits could compensate; a new type of pacifist appeared who believed that war was wrong only under the modern technological conditions which ensured that its harmful side-effects would outweigh any good it did.' The reality, then, is that in the peace movement what Ceadel and Norman call 'pacifism' and 'pacificism' have been inextricably intertwined and mutually reinforcing. (p, 15)


25 A positive recent discussion of pacifism which emphasises the institutional (anti war system) focus of pacifism is found in Soran Reader ‘Making Pacifism Plausible’ Journal of Applied Philosophy 17 (2000), 169-180. However, Reader characterises pacifism as a moral rather than political doctrine. Although Robert L. Holmes does not define pacifism in institutional terms, (as far as I can see he does not define pacifism at all, though he describes himself as a pacifist in ‘Pacifism for Nonpacifists’ in James P. Sterba (ed.) Social and Political Philosophy: Contemporary Perspectives, London: Routledge, 2001, p. 397) in On War and Morality op. cit. Ch. 8 ‘The Alternative to War’ pp. 260-294 he argues, in effect, for the replacement of the institution of war with an institution of peace.

26 Cf. Richard Norman, in ‘The Case for Pacifism’ Journal of Applied Philosophy 5 (1988), 197-210. Norman, who believes ‘that the case for pacifism is very strong indeed’, defines pacifism as ‘the view that it is always wrong to go to war’ (p.197).

27 Presumably she has in mind here groups such as the Mennonites.

28 Anscombe argues further that the mere espousal of pacifism (as she defines it) as a serious position can have bad consequences. People will both be attracted to pacifism as an apparently morally superior view and recognise its impossibility - ‘pacifism teaches people to make no distinction between the shedding of innocent blood and the shedding of any human blood . . . seeing no way of avoiding “wickedness”, they set no limits on it.’ (‘War and Murder’ p. 49). Hence the responsibility of pacifism for corrupting 'enormous numbers of people'. (ibid.) Anscombe gives no evidence for this empirical claim about the effects of pacifism. More plausible candidates for the tendency to engage in and support the targeting of innocents in enemy states come readily to mind.


31 For some relevant facts and figures, and further references, see Alexandra ‘Militarism’ op.cit.
