



Think about this before you apply for military funding

Letter circulated to members of the University of Toronto Physics department

Letter to my Colleagues from Derek Paul, 7 September 2003

Dear Colleagues,

The call for scientists at the University of Toronto to apply for US Department of Defense (DoD) money in support of research has attracted attention far beyond the ranks of those who face the problem every year of how they are going to support an adequate research program. More money for research is always an attractive prospect, but the implications of this call are truly far-reaching.

There are basic reasons why I would not, at the present time, accept money from DoD if I were still doing experimental research in universities, which was a major occupation for me for over 40 years. My reasons stem from a general understanding of social structures to which I started to pay attention in the late 1980s, when the Cold War was drawing to a close. Money is merely money, however, and is neither good nor bad of itself. Furthermore, research sponsored by DoD can in principle be of value to the whole human race. Why then would I not apply for DoD money at this time?

To understand this, one needs to look at general directions in which all of human society is being pushed, and at the Culture of War. It is a culture that leads, on a scale of a hundred years or less, to a decline of the whole ecosphere or, at best, to the survival of a small dominant group at the sacrifice of the vast majority of others. Some of you will know of the writings of Wackernagel and Rees on the ecological footprint, telling how the human race's footprint already greatly exceeds the Earth's productive land area. Coping with such a desperate world situation requires maximum international cooperation, the revision of many false economic principles (this alone is exceedingly difficult), and the abolition of war. These are things I cannot prove as one does a theorem but, as soon as one begins to study these matters and the influence of one set of conditions on another, it becomes obvious enough. A highly militarized world is simply not sustainable. We stand only at the threshold of knowing how to pursue the healthier new directions for human progress, and the United Nations is likely to play a major role in their pursuit. It is useful to look to the UN because many of the world's finest minds have made important contributions there.

The very significant “Culture of Peace” was initially a UNESCO project. It envisages a transformation from a war culture that is easy enough to define. When the UN decided to go for a culture of peace, it was faced with the problem of defining what would be meant by such a culture. It turned out not to be too hard to do, by suitably reversing those things that define a “Culture of War.” In what follows, I have chosen the definition of the “Culture of Peace” [1] used by the Canadian Voice of Women for Peace, a nongovernmental organization (NGO) that keeps a close relationship with the United Nations and is registered as an official NGO there. My definition of a “Culture of War” was obtained in the reverse direction, starting with the given “Culture of Peace” — see Table 1.

Referring now to Table 1, it would be absurd to suggest that any country on Earth operates completely in the mode of either culture, war or peace. It is a question of degree. However, that degree is measurable in various ways. We have only to ask ourselves which countries are least likely to go to war, or the reverse, and some factors will stand out. Military budget is one of the tell-tale factors; actual participation in wars another. Human rights violations tell another story; the practice of torture yet another, the ruthless exploitation of resources another, and so forth. No one country has a monopoly of constructive or of destructive tendencies, of generosity or cruelty, and so on.

However, there are factors that can now be discerned that were not clear twenty years ago during the Cold War. As early as 1985, Professor Emeritus Anatol Rapoport wrote that, far from defending the people whom they were established to defend, the principal purpose of the militaries was to defend themselves! The huge military budgets of the day were not really serving to defend “us” from the Soviet Union, but rather the Soviet Union served as an excuse to bolster the huge power and influence that the western military-industrial complex already commanded, and the Soviet fact was manipulated to justify the enormous budgets. The fall of the Soviet empire, and the rather small peace dividend reaped from it — namely, the barely perceptible decline in military budgets — fully justified Rapoport’s insightful paper [2].

TABLE 1

Culture of Peace

- Transforming values, attitudes and behaviours based on violence to those which promote peace and nonviolence;
- empowering people at all levels with skills of dialogue mediation and peacebuilding;
- democratic participation of people in decision making;
- equal representation of women

Culture of War

- Retaining violence as one of the accepted ways of settling disputes, within and between nations;
- retaining top-down structures that impose the wishes of the hierarchy;
- decision making essentially in cabinet or by small cliques;
- perpetuating male dominance, especially at the highest

- in decision making at all levels;
 - the political and economic empowerment of women;
 - the free flow of information and transparency and accountability of governing structures;
 - the elimination of poverty and sharp inequalities within and between nations;
 - the promotion of sustainable human development for all;
 - the preservation of the planet and all its species;
 - advancing understanding, tolerance and respect of diversity among all peoples.
- decision making levels;
 - preserving male political and economic predominance;
 - maintaining secrecy as an essential tool of the power structure;
 - preserving the wealth and power of the rich without regard to the consequences;
 - pursuing dominance through competition backed up by military might;
 - exploitation of the planet's resources so as to maintain dominance;
 - making use of knowledge to maintain dominance.

The desperate search for new enemies, which had to be identified before the public woke up to the fact that it was being bilked of a couple of hundred billion dollars annually in the United States alone, finally resulted in the discovery of a new enemy in Al Qaeda, and the military might was put into full action. Never mind if the action was appropriate to the threat or served to further increase that threat, the release of those pent-up weapons, with their stored violence, became the vogue. The world's military budget has now topped \$830 billion (US), so we are on track in the war culture [3].

Had the appeal to scientists to seek support for research from DoD occurred two years ago, I would not have been happy at the prospect, but would probably not have bothered to write a letter of this kind. However, five major changes in US policy have occurred since the beginning of 2002, most of them within the last 13 months, and all of them indicating firm changes into the direction of the culture of war, and with disregard for established international law and norms. These changes pose hugely increased dangers for everyone on Earth, imply disregard for sustainability, and will make it difficult (fortunately not impossible) for the rest of humanity to sustain and further the achievements to date of the United Nations. Four of the five changes in policy were discussed by Nobel Peace Laureate and nuclear physicist Sir Joseph Rotblat at an open forum during the 53rd Pugwash conference, 18 July 2003, in Halifax [4]. These are:

1. Nuclear Posture Review. January 2002
2. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. September 2002
3. National Strategy to Combat Weapons of Mass Destruction. December 2002
4. National Policy on Ballistic Missile Defense. May 2003

I urge all my readers to see what “Jo” Rotblat has to say about each of these [4]. In addition, I draw your attention to “Vision for 2020.” This frightening document was

prepared by US Space Command and became open literature about six years ago. When I first saw it I could not believe it was official US policy and took it to one of the US Consuls in Toronto, who thought it disturbing as I did, and he went to the trouble of finding out if it was official policy. "It is not", he came back to me in April 2002. Vision for 2020 openly declares that the United States will place and maintain armaments in outer space so as to be able to protect its interests everywhere in the world, and to prevent any other power from similarly maintaining weapons in space. It is perhaps the clearest statement of intention to maintain absolute power of any of the various new declarations, since it clearly extends to resource, industrial and commercial interests. "Vision for 2020" has been allowed to stand as official objective of Space Command for at least six years, and must surely now also be regarded as official policy of the US administration.

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Notes

1. "Creating a Culture of Peace" a workshop kit, Canadian Voice of Women for Peace. 1999?
2. Anatol Rapoport, "Whose Security does Defence Defend?" in *Defending Europe: Options for Security*, ed. Derek Paul and Gwen McGrenere (Taylor and Francis 1985)
3. One of the justifications for high military spending is job creation. However, it was shown in the USA during the Cold War that investment in military industries cost much more per job created than in any other sector of the economy. By having key military industries in every State, however, a major lobby for military contracts is assured.
4. Joseph Rotblat, "The Nuclear issue: Pugwash and the Bush Policies" available at www.pugwash.org