

# War and Peace revisited: Practicing positive eugenics

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Genetic loss due to wars and selection of the fit to be placed in the least favorable survival position is examined in a historical and speculative vein. On the basis of advances in genetic technology, a practical positive eugenics paradigm is offered to insure those who will perish in future wars of progeny if they so desire.

*Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourself. —Moses, The Bible, Numbers 31:17-18*

The Greek city-state of Sparta instituted infanticide to eliminate the obviously mentally and physically unfit from society. It was believed that infanticide, plus allowing only the “fit” to breed, would eradicate the “unfit” from their society. This idea has been around for a long time but it has not worked.

Another human activity that also eliminates people and that has occurred since prehistoric times is war. Sorokin (1957) studied 11 European countries over time spans ranging from 275 to 1,025 years and found them engaged in war 47% of the time. Germany was in military engagement 28%, and Spain, 67% of the years covered. These 11 nations were at war nearly 1 out of every 2 years.

Although governmental leaders in the United States talk and write about SALT agreements, detente with the Soviet Union, and other measures designed to insure world peace and the continued survival of *Homo sapiens*, the lessons of history clearly show that mankind does wage war—and all too often.

Only with rare exceptions, every war since the earliest recorded has been waged by young men who are intellectually and physically fit. And, since the advent of intelligence testing in World War I, men of borderline or lower intelligence systematically have been rejected for combat duty; prior to using intelligence testing in the military, the obviously unfit were summarily rejected. Throughout the ages, nations have selectively sent their fittest to fight, possibly to perish, or to be maimed mentally, physically, or both. Such a philosophy clearly is antithetical to Darwin’s dictum of sur-

vival of the fittest, for it places the fittest in the least favorable survival position. Worse yet, such a practice encourages not just death of the physically and mentally fit but the denial to each nation of large numbers of future combatants: the (potential) offspring of the fit. When a country’s soldiers die in battle, it is not just blood that is spilled, but genes as well.

While some would argue that 18-, 19-, or 20-year-olds with intellectual fitness could avoid wars, many did not. And, until recently, most were disinclined to even attempt to avoid military service. Still others may argue that the gene pool would be influenced only minimally by the death of a relatively small number of warriors. But nearly 300,000 of the 962,403 casualties of World War II died in battle (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963). Moreover, statistics from the Civil War through Korea show that 519,387 died in battle, and total casualties were 1,261,675 (casualties and deaths from the Revolutionary and Vietnam wars excluded), and these are hardly insignificant totals. In other combatant nations in the two world wars (France, Germany, and Russia), losses were much heavier than the U.S. incurred and, near the ends of both wars, even 12-year-old boys were pressed into service. From Sorokin’s (1957) analysis relative to frequency of war and the foregoing statistics on U.S. losses, the argument that genetic loss due to war is inconsequential appears specious. Thus, while Darwin’s (1859) natural selection concept addressed geologic time or eons, we should not ignore the relativity of time and man’s “time tampering” as offsetting of nature’s time.

Losses due to wars are rendered even more impressive if we consider that, for the U.S., about one-half of the war-eligible age group are female (and, to date, in-

eligible for combat), and this group comprises less than one-third of the total population. During the 1950-1962 period, the Selective Service examined 6,801,000 men and, of this number, 4,306,000 were disqualified for physical or mental reasons (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1963). Again, the argument that genetic loss due to war is inconsequential appears implausible.

Let us examine the consequences of gene loss due to wars from prehistoric times to the present in an admittedly speculative vein. Suppose sperm storage, artificial insemination, and test-tube babies had been possible since the very first war. Suppose also that, in every war ever waged, all combatants' sperm had been collected and that each combatant had been guaranteed, if he so chose, at least one offspring were he killed. Is it inconceivable to think that our current mean population intelligence quotient might be 130 or 140, instead of the often-cited 100 or 105? This theoretical outcome, of course, is premised on the physical and mental fitness of the sperm recipients, as well as the donors. Mating is, of course, ordinarily selective for intelligence, as well as other characteristics.

Some years ago, John Rader Platt wrote a speculative article entitled "The Coming Generation of Genius." Because of the flowering of "think tanks," and the development of space centers, Platt saw men and women scientists of impressive intellect being attracted to such centers, love blossoming, and a spate of very gifted offspring ensuing.

Recognizing that the young, physically and mentally fit probably always will be those who fight the wars, is there anything nations can do to prevent such a waste of apparently good genes? Genetics technology and research have advanced remarkably during the last 2 decades. It now is possible to produce "test-tube" babies and to store sperm for future use. Before long it may be possible to clone humans as it now is with lower life forms. With such proven scientific capabilities, it seems timely to provide systematically for the propagation of the genes of all combatants in future wars. One simple expedient might be to store the sperm (and/or necessary tissue cultures) of those who serve in the military.

In addition to the survival of the species and on a more personal and humane level, individual families would be assured of the continuation of their particular lines of descent. As was tragically portrayed during World War II, occasionally entire sibships were abolished simultaneously (e.g., the five Sullivan brothers). Since it is only human nature to be concerned primarily with ourselves and our families, and secondarily with our nation, a safeguard of this nature would be a boon to the families of men in the armed services.

Infanticide in most of the world is rarely practiced,

despite the earlier advice of Moses and other sages. Wars, however, continue inexorably to destroy the young of nations. While we offer no panacea for world peace, it does not seem too farfetched to imagine the United Nations or some other world organization developing rules of war that would enable the military personnel of combatant nations to store sperm if they choose, so that those who subsequently perish may be assured of progeny. Nearly everyone dreams of having a small stake in immortality and, for most, children are the best insurance. Safe sperm storage somewhere in a neutral site would also help insure Darwin's group selection model. As he wrote in the "*Descent of Man*" (Darwin, 1871), "if such men [superior and inventive members of a tribe] left children to inherit their mental superiority, the chance of the birth of still more ingenious members would be somewhat better, and in a very small tribe decidedly better."

Darlington (1958) has indicated that mixture of varied racial groups throughout history via "friendly or forcible" means has evolutionary value, "for it is from this mixture that we have . . . the hybridity and hybrid vigor that we ourselves need and . . . the recombination, the release of variability that our posterity need" (p. 6). Previously, wars and social class shifts insured this genetic mixing. Transportation and mobility currently augment this purpose. Some may argue this brief "survival paradigm" contains an elitist philosophy. However, our basic premise is that while world peace is the best answer, war is a stark reality. Perhaps the grimness of this brief proposal and the sobering statistics regarding genetic loss and human death can inspire efforts from others to work toward a lasting and permanent peace. This proposal does offer a positive eugenics program, one that should escape most of the criticism leveled at the negative eugenics approaches of the past, with their primary emphasis on the elimination of deleterious recessive genes. As Darlington (1958) indicated, "there is indeed much evidence of a genetic component in the survival of nations. The nation which takes most serious thought for its own genetical future is, therefore, most likely to have a future" (p. 9).

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