WEB-WATCHING FOR PEACE-BUILDING IN THE NEW COMMUNICATION ORDER

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Abstract

UNESCO's MacBride report attributes to communication a substantial role in matters of democratisation and peace and, thus, provides a firm foundation on which to build toward a better understanding of media as a resource for enriching democratic culture to resist war. Accordingly, this paper works at the intersection of media and messages to advance the argument that democratic peace-building communication is usefully thought of as a tactic, or set of re-humanizing tactics, of dissent exercised by citizens operating in media saturated settings to resist the dehumanizing caricatures propagated by war propaganda. The notion of web-watching as a creative use of alternative media to locate incipient peace-building metaphors is examined and briefly illustrated with reference to an emergent image of secular bomber as homeland defender.

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No subject is more basic to peace than communication. Dissenting from war means nothing less than communicating a bond of humanity to mitigate fractious relations between disputing parties. Absent the expression of such a bond, enemies emerge where parties in dispute can no longer abide differences between them. Their differences become increasingly alienating and are made to appear progressively more threatening across a lengthening line of division. In this way, discord escalates all the more readily into systematic and sustained violence, which is the scourge of our technologically sophisticated world. We have learned to kill with unprecedented proficiency, to engage in total violence, killing without limit and transforming war into annihilation. As Jonathan Schell envisions our plight, "If an evil god had turned human society into an infernal laboratory to explore the utmost extremes of violence, short only of human extinction, he could scarcely have improved upon the history of the twentieth century" (Schell 2003, 3).

Many affirm that the twentieth century was the most violent in human history, and few would attest that the prospects of an already vicious twenty-first century are any better. We live in an age of terror and counter-terror, an escalating cycle of self-perpetuating violence.[1] For many disparate voices to cohabitate peacefully in one shrinking world, we must ascertain an order of communication that resists relations of sheer hostility and imparts compensating points of affinity. This is the very kind of information and communication world order that UNESCO's International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems envisioned in 1980 with the publication of its MacBride Report (MacBride et al. 1980/2004).

Democratic Media and Messages of Peace

The image of peacemaking through communication that the MacBride report projects is strikingly humane and strongly committed to a democratic ethic. It is a hopeful view of a better world in the making, a vigorous expression of our right to communicate, and a frank avowal of our obligation to exercise such a readily available means of strengthening human relationships so basic to democratic self-governance. As Andrew Calabrese says clearly and candidly in his foreword to the 2004 edition of the report, "By our humanity, and as citizens of the world, it is our birthright and our duty to speak, write, read, listen, watch, assemble, and associate as a means to better understand one another and our shared and separate histories, needs, and interests" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, xiii). Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, writing as the Director General of UNESCO, understood when the report was first released that "communication is at the heart of all social intercourse." He believed it was not wishful to think or imagine people around the world could come to understand better how "their national destinies are closely intertwined," even though they were still vulnerable to and tempted by old habits of enmity and coercion. We might "seek to develop ties of growing fellowship" and "establish little by little relationships based on mutual respect and co-operation," he suggested. Unless we "enlist" the media of communication instead to "assault" human dignity and "aggravate" existing inequalities "in the service of narrow sectarian interests," the emergence of a new communication world order could help humankind to take "a decisive step forward on the path to freedom, democracy and fellowship" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, xvii-xix).

Sean MacBride, paraphrasing H. G. Wells, likewise understood that humanity was in "a race between communication and catastrophe" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, xxi). As president of the commission that produced the report, he recognized that the chances of peace and human betterment were most at stake. The report itself understood that the key to overcoming obstacles to peace and mobilising the resources of communication for human benefit was to make the public's voice heard by infusing communication systems and practices with "the spirit of democracy" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, 13, 166). In an era of economic globalisation, media consolidation, self-censoring by journalists, and one-way, vertical flows of information, the commissioners conceived of communication anew as "*a powerful means of promoting democratization of society and of widening public participation in the decision-making process*" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, 265; emphasis in original). Democratic communication would quicken mutual awareness and "*the supreme interest of all humanity in peace*" at a time when "*the dangers of war are heightened by intolerance, national chauvinism, and a failure to understand varying points of view*" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, 172, 179; emphasis in original).

The MacBride report was rejected by powerful Western interests for its vision of social justice and its criticism of corporate control of media flows. Indeed, the U.S., followed by the U.K., withdrew from UNESCO, insisting that the MacBride Report's criticism of the one-way flow of information amounted to support for censorship of Western media by authoritarian regimes in the non-Western world. The Non-Aligned Movement understood the call for a new world information and communication order as resisting cultural colonisation and affirming economic development, peace, and democracy. The U.S. government and corporate media interests distorted these aims by claiming falsely that the MacBride report proposed to license journalists and by misrepresenting the report's desire for equity and balance as an attack on the free flow of information and the free marketplace of ideas (Boulding 2000, 213-14; Roach 1993, 29-32; Mosco 1993, 54-55). Other critics identified with the MacBride Commission's aims but criticised it for defaulting to the forces of centralisation and accommodating too readily to statist inclinations without adequately taking into account the diversity of viewpoints operating within civil society. Caught in a rhetorical crossfire, the report appeared to fall ironically short by the measure of its own democratic standard, even as it called for "new attitudes for overcoming stereotyped thinking and to promote more understanding of diversity" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, 254).

The commissioners understood and rightly insisted that better answers to the challenges of the new world communication order would not be premised on the development of increasingly advanced technologies. A more just and democratic social order would require instead greater attention to the conceptual and political foundations of human development. The penetrating question the commission report asked, but could only begin to answer, was: "What type of communication practices and structures are needed to institute truly active involvement by the people in making global, overall development their own responsibility?" (MacBride et al. 1980/2004, 205). For, as Vincent Mosco later noted, information technologies, including computer communication systems, do not by themselves create a more peaceful and equitable world; they require instead an expression of will and exercise of inventiveness by citizens dedicated to democracy in order to convert the technologies of a war system into instruments of a just peace (Mosco 1993, 59-69).

The vitality of communication was appropriately understood by the MacBride Commission to extend to the formation of community and to encompass the ordinary activities and personal responsibilities of everyday people. It was not conceived narrowly as just a process of conveying information, transmitting knowledge, disseminating culture, or providing other such neutral mediations. Human understanding, mutual appreciation, and social cohesion could be produced in communication when differing viewpoints were engaged widely in debate and discussion (MacBride et al., 1980/2004, 14). Yet, nowhere in the report was a richly democratic practice of peace-building communication described, conceptualised, or otherwise explained. Instead, the more or less centralised modalities of communication media, well removed from the grassroots of everyday political participation, were featured by the commission. Attention was focused throughout on matters such as the protection of journalists, the democratisation of media management, inequities of communication facilities, impact of new media, and in general the infrastructure, economics, advanced technologies, organisation, and operation of mass media, all of which are important considerations of media institutions and media policy. While the MacBride commissioners recognized the role of symbols, gestures, language, and images in the makeup of messages, they did not pursue the question of how these elements of discourse can work in the interactions of common citizens to constitute and strengthen cultural investments in peace.[2]

Here, then, at the intersection of media and messages is where we need to look more closely at how the discourse of the citizenry can enrich the democratic practices of society. Media messages are consumed and attitudes are articulated into public opinion at the grassroots of society. Collective attitudes about war and peace are composed in public discourse, not simply or automatically adopted in the form transmitted by governing elites. The threatening images of foreigners, which are packaged and conveyed in mainstream media, ultimately must pass muster with the people. Public talk reconstitutes menacing images into commonplace terms that may or may not conform to the will of economic and political elites. Democratic communication shapes media messages one way or another into civic attitudes that favour hostilities or, alternatively, resist war. Ruling images can continue to rule, then, only if they make sense at the grassroots of society as expressed in commonplace terms. The vernacular of political talk among the citizenry is a potential – but not inevitable – source of recalcitrance to the governing discourse of reigning authority.

Thus, a decent regard for human diversity expressed in the discourse of ordinary people can be a hedge against the whirlwind of prejudice and can provide a basis of public disenchantment with fear-mongering propaganda. We should ask, therefore, how the mesmerizing rituals of vilification and the governing discourses of victimization that are conjured up so readily by media institutions in the service of controlling authorities might be held more accountable to the articulated conscience of the citizenry. How might public opinion become more responsive to an ethic of peace and more resistant to war? The MacBride report's remarkable and lasting achievement is the seriousness it attributes to the role of communication in matters of democratisation and peace. It challenges us to probe further into the workings of democratic communication and peacemaking. As such, it is a firm foundation on which to build toward a better understanding of media as a resource for enriching democratic culture to resist war.

(Re)Humanizing Tactics of Dissent

Democratic peace-building communication is usefully thought of as a tactic, or set of tactics, of dissent exercised by citizens operating in media saturated settings. Thinking of peace-building in this way is critical to determining how a people might feasibly resist the ubiquitous caricatures and dehumanizing images with which political elites goad the general public to fight a phantom enemy or to defend a vague symbol such as freedom that has been emptied of any significant meaning. The latent power of the public is its potential to resist what delegated or ruling authority initiates, including war propaganda. The strategic perspective from which governing authority would have the people see warfare as a nation's only realistic option is vulnerable only because it is subject to challenge by ordinary people widely distributed but potentially linked by media.

Communication strategies, as Michel de Certeau has observed, belong to the strong whereas tactics are the ordinary resources of the weak. Whereas strategy deploys superior symbolic and material force to establish a position of strength, tactics are mobile operations of wit and resistance on the terrain occupied by the superior force (Certeau 1984, 35-36, 38). Tactics require an operation of insight that reveals the apparently better position staked out by the controlling authority to be actually the worse stance to assume on the matter at issue. They are rhetorical tropes of "linguistic combat" that construct "a *different* use of a language *already used*" by established authority (Certeau 1997, 30; Certeau 1984, 39). Language tactics, in this sense, provide the citizenry with a way to articulate liberating insights, but the counter-tactics of a controlling political authority are likely ultimately to prevail unless and until a resistant citizenry attains a position of ascendancy by producing "a new *cultural and political unity*," a new or revised structure of discourse that puts in place a "different order" of meaning, rather than just an immobilizing negation or rhetorical inversion of the original regime of interpretation (Certeau 1997, 23, 32, 39).

What kind of a new order of meaning might erode the authority of war propaganda? Given that the strategy of war propaganda is to dehumanize adversaries so that they can be portrayed as utter enemies, the tactics of resistance are most aptly focused on expressing (re)humanizing themes. By means of a dehumanizing and de-civilizing rhetoric of savagery, citizens are goaded to dissociate themselves from an alien identity marked as barbaric, irrational, aggressive, and coercive. Stereotyped enemies become demons or mere animals to be exterminated without the dissonance of recognizing their complex human identity or acknowledging that they share a world in common (Schirch 2005, 41, 49-51). This has been the traditional strategy of war propaganda throughout U.S. history, including the current war on terrorism (Ivie 2005b, 55-65). Rather than resist such caricatures by relying on negative tactics that reverse attributions of guilt and innocence and thus reinforce the hostile imagination, a more viable mode of antiwar dissent is to articulate an alternative order of understanding, that is, a way of grasping the common humanity of those who would otherwise be designated as enemies.

Resisting a regime of war propaganda on its own turf becomes increasingly viable as the tactics of dissent manoeuvre away from the strategic disjunction of good and evil and begin to articulate a conjunction of humanity on both sides of the symbolic divide between Us and Them, ally and enemy, friend and foe, civili-

zation and savagery, victim and victimizer. However, the tendency of dissenting tactics is to reverse the order of attributions rather than to transcend the disjunction itself. Thus, an officially designated enemy is typically re-inscribed in antiwar dissent as the victim rather than the victimizer, and the vaunted Us is transposed into an evil force. This inversion of good and evil makes it all the easier for a governing discourse to recapture any rhetorical ground previously lost to antiwar dissent.

To avoid perpetuating rituals of recrimination and talk of evil that work strategically to the advantage of the war regime and to improve the chance of securing gains and making additional headway, antiwar dissent must bridge the differences between adversaries rather than just invert attributions of innocence and blame. It must develop ascending tactics of communication that rise above and supersede the rhetoric of recrimination, that is, (re)humanizing tactics. Despite any reservations the people as a whole may have about war, they must be able to envision an alternative to the monster they have been taught to see and fear (Ingebretsen 2003). As social linguist George Lakoff would say, people can think only of monsters if that is the sole frame available to them in the public discourse (Lakoff 2004, 3-4).

Web-Watching as Creative Media Usage

The feasibility of antiwar dissent also depends on circulating its message as widely as possible, which brings into focus the media of dissent and how they figure into resisting a war regime's strategy of dehumanization. What are the resources of media for circulating information, images, and narratives that (re)humanize the parties in conflict? Which media are readily accessible to the citizenry for actively resisting war propaganda? What are the media of democratic dissent and their potential for promoting peace and justice? These are important questions about the intersection of media and messages that dissenting citizens must ask and answer in particular circumstances. There are no universally valid answers when citizens operate in the realm of rhetorical invention to develop tactics of resistance. The art of manoeuvre requires adaptation to specific situations and shifting conditions. It is an exercise of wit, dexterity, and ingenuity – a matter of rhetorical twists and turns to enrich the democratic imagination and evade the tyrannizing image of a dehumanized enemy. Thus, the question of media is a consideration of usage, that is, a matter of how a potential resource might be utilised in certain instances for express purposes by networks of dissenting citizens.

If the specific aim is to resist a war regime's dehumanizing propaganda, citizens operating in a media-saturated environment will encounter a confounding plethora of alternative resources on the Internet alone. Moreover, dissent may be stymied or misdirected by the negative tactics of reverse recrimination, which dominate a multitude of dispersed sites of resistance. Even websites founded on a principle of reconciliation and committed to the purpose of humanizing society can default to tactics of dissent that vilify the agents of war, thus rearticulating and recirculating the rhetoric of evil and perpetuating a forced choice between Us and Them that underpins the case for war. To ascend strategically beyond the discourse of evil and to see the face of humanity in a reputed enemy of the civilized world – that is, in Certeau's terms, to achieve a new understanding that resists recapture by the ruling discursive order – requires innovative uses of existing media resources.

Resourceful media usage by U.S. citizens who would resist a debilitating war on terror means, for example, assembling information into humanizing perspectives on Islamic peoples, beliefs, cultures, and grievances. Given the consolidation of corporate control over mainstream media, such dissent depends heavily on alternative media and thus must develop content from diverse and divergent sources, making coordination difficult and circulation of messages circuitous, reflecting multiple frames of reference, and increasing demand for artful rhetorical invention.[3] Under these circumstances, passive consumption of antiwar messages simply is not a viable alternative. Creative media usage is an absolute necessity for dissent to develop its tactical manoeuvres into an alternative expression of human solidarity that is resistant to recapture by a governing authority seeking "information dominance" and thus to contribute over time to the formation of a culture of peace.[4]

Engaging media actively and imaginatively at the grassroots of dissent is feasible but challenging. A culture of peace can develop and exist only in a context of respect for human diversity, and achieving solidarity in a context of diversity is a function of communication. As such, solidarity is shaped or formed by communication adapted to particular audiences and circumstances. It must emerge from and, as Kenneth Burke underscored, contribute to an ongoing and unending conversation (Burke 1973, 110-11). No single configuration of humanizing messages can serve as a universal standard of reconciliation appropriate to all media, audiences, and situations. Thus, a principal challenge of communicating dissent is devising messages that are configured to respond to specific contingencies of time but also are tailored to capitalize on the resources of media in order to enhance circulation and transcend strict limitations of space. In meeting this challenge, antiwar dissent can cultivate everyday tactics at the grassroots into a larger and more lasting strategy of peace.

Developing tactically adept messages for culturally strategic media usage is an exercise in what John Paul Lederach (2005, viii) has called "the messiness of innovation." Peace-building, he argues, is primarily a creative act, an exercise of "moral imagination," an innovative response in a context of human conflict and violence (Lederach 2005, 29, 52, 171-72). It is a grounded and reflective process of "constructive social change" rather than an exercise in rote technique (Lederach 2005, 10, 42-43, 52, 58-59, 175). It is a capacity to imagine something new that is responsive to existing conditions – to operate within the complexity of a situation and respond to the "actual messiness of ideas, processes, and change" (Lederach 2005, ix-x, 29, 55-58). Imagination "must emerge from and speak to the hard realities of human affairs" if it is to facilitate peace-building by envisioning a "canvas" or "web" of human relationships that includes even our enemies (Lederach 2005, x, 5).

The pragmatic aesthetics of grounded innovation link intuition to observation and experience. They involve a focus on synthesising images both in deep listening and creative expression. With a disciplined stillness in places of conflict, we can watch for images and listen to metaphors that infuse communication and shape experience. These images and metaphors comprise "a living museum of conflict resources" for developing a meaningful "voice" and participating in substantive conversations that restore, repair, or reconstitute broken narratives (Lederach 2005,72, 56-57, 146-47; see also 69, 70-71, 105-06). Lederach calls this a process of

"web watching," of vigilantly observing and patiently locating the web of relationships that is in place before stepping into it to repair or remake it (Lederach 2005, 34-35, 111). Innovative acts of moral imagination are a capacity to envision "relational interdependency" while engaging the complexities of situations and without ignoring immediate historical challenges or resorting to "dualistic polarities" of right and wrong, victim and victimizer, etc. An expression of human connectivity emerges in context and in the form of an apt metaphor that re-synthesises experience in a grounded gesture of peacemaking (Lederach 2005, 35-36, 58-59, 66-70, 115).

An uncommon emphasis on innovation in media usage is strategic, not only in its synthesising and transcending capacity but also in its potential to connect people who can make a difference in different venues. It works strategically over time much like "social yeast" to activate a process of changed thinking when mixed with appropriate ingredients under the right conditions (Lederach 2005, 91-92). Tapping into the strategic resource of creative media usage requires monitoring metaphors and images in situ, that is, observing closely the media of dissent. The challenge is to mix the yeast of unifying imagery into an otherwise negative tactical discourse so that it can rise above the stasis of recrimination. If relationships between warring peoples can be envisioned anew in ways that are indigenous to a given discourse of dissent, then key players in those venues can redirect their dissent toward articulating constructive social change, which is a mode of resistance more difficult for governing regimes to counter and discredit.

Any number of potentially synthesising metaphors may emerge from web watching in alternative media. Not every metaphor, of course, possesses the same potential for re-humanizing degraded images of designated enemies. There are no guarantees of success in the domain of rhetorical invention, just as there are no universally valid responses to the contingencies of particular rhetorical situations. Innovation is an exercise in calculated risk taking, an attempt to create something new and beneficial but also recognizable and appropriate in circumstances of human conflict. It is a tactical exercise of practical wit in the sense that it is grounded in particular complexities and adaptive to certain constraints and exigencies. One should expect only modest innovations in their singularity. The strategic value of separate tactical tropes can develop over time only as they accumulate within, and propagate across, contexts into a collective antidote to demonising imagery.[5] Envisioning the web of humanity can be achieved only one grounded metaphor at a time. This is the creative rhetorical process by which an idea of peace eventually might "move from the unimaginable to common sense" (Reed 2005, 76).

Citizens can undertake this creative exercise of the moral imagination by monitoring alternative media for latent, dormant, and/or underdeveloped rhetorical resources to supplant the hostile imagination with viable visions of constructive cooperation and respectful coexistence. They can look for incipient metaphors of a common humanity amid clashing differences. They can watch for potentially empathising images to project onto otherwise estranged peoples across political barriers and to recast alienated identities despite cultural differences and divisions. They can search for seeds of commonality that might be nurtured and developed into expressions of identification and figures of solidarity. In sum, watchful citizens might locate in alternative media rudimentary rhetorical starting points, or

emergent expressions of convergence, that enable them to begin seeing a reassuring likeness of themselves reflected in reconfigured images of others whom war propagandists have stereotyped as subhuman and threatening.

Using the alternative press and the Internet, as Robert Jensen (2001, 131-32, 141) observes, "has to be part of any long-term media strategy" because, at their best, they are an independent and rare source of information, analysis, and communication that is "vital to activists." Moreover, mainstream news media rarely carry stories that relate to articulating a culture of peace. Mainstream media, as Johan Galtung (1993, xi-xii) has underscored, exhibit a "perverse fascination with war and violence" and thus "neglect the peace forces at work," which undermines the emergence of a peace perspective. Computers, however, are changing the way people access information and organise their lives. As the "centrepiece of the global information society," Elise Boulding argues, computers make available to ordinary citizens – not just to governments, the military, and corporations – a worldwide web of communication and thus open up "the possibility of widespread democratic participation in public policymaking." Thousands of websites, she explains, "tell the stories of peacebuilding around the world that the media ignore"; these websites are concerned with issues such as human rights, development, and the environment and with making visible "zones of peace unreported by the press" (Boulding 2000, 219, 221). Peace-building websites range from online journals and electronic books to alternative news and commentary, Internet radio news, discussion forums and weblogs, protest organising, and on-site reports by peace activists and peace journalists operating in war zones around the world. This is a tangled, decentralised, and transnational zone of information proliferation, alternative news, and contested opinions that is not controlled by government or commercial media and thus can be confusing to ordinary citizens, 80% of whom are accustomed to receiving their news mainly via television (Tehranian 2004, 239). Computer citizenship is a challenge – a test of will – to use information and communication technology creatively as a resource for democratic peacemaking (Mosco 1993, 68-69).

The very notion of peace journalism is instructive in this regard. Even though little of it actually exists, the concept of what can and should be done by journalists to promote a peace perspective is indicative of what citizens who are actively engaged in web watching might hope to discover in alternative media. Galtung's model of peace journalism stresses, for example, that stories should be written to give voice to all parties in the conflict, to explain in a longer timeframe the multiple conditions out of which the conflict arose, to identify the variety of issues and goals at stake, to bring into focus the invisible damage to cultures and structures, to feature the suffering of people impacted by war, to be creative and solution oriented, highlighting peace initiatives, and so on.[6] Jake Lynch (2005) adds suggestions such as avoiding "stark distinctions between 'self' and 'other'"; "asking questions that may reveal areas of common ground" between the divided parties; avoiding disempowering and "'victimizing' language such as 'destitute,' 'devastated,' 'defenceless,' 'pathetic' and 'tragedy,' which only tells us what has been done to and could be done for a group of people"; similarly, "avoid demonising adjectives like 'vicious,' 'cruel,' 'brutal' and 'barbaric'" or "'terrorist,' 'extremist,' 'fanatic and 'fundamentalist.'" Tehranian emphasises that peace journalism should "identify the

views and interests of all parties to human conflicts" because there "is no single truth; there are many truths." Moreover, he cautions that peace journalists can become part of the problem if their reporting "exacerbates dualism and hatreds" instead of employing "creative tensions in any human conflict to seek common ground and nonviolent solutions" (Tehranian, 241-42). To the extent that alternative media work toward such goals, citizens who are actively monitoring and creatively using the Internet should be able to locate incipient metaphors for (re)humanizing adversaries.

A Modest Example of Web-Watching

What kind of humanizing metaphor might include even our enemies? How, as in the case of America's pre-emptive invasion and occupation of Iraq, might U.S. citizens achieve some degree of empathy with an enemy that has been designated a terrorist? The challenge might seem overwhelming when a Manichean rhetoric of good versus evil pervades the nation's political atmosphere. It is a terrifying expression of the hostile imagination that is historically rooted in American political culture and has been readily extended in a post-9/11 world to defending freedom, democracy, and civilization from the forces of savagery (Ivie 2005b, 55-65). A reader of Howard Zinn's telling essay on the living myth of American exceptionalism, published online in the *Boston Review* midway through 2005, would be reminded of how powerfully this myth constrains domestic criticism of divinely sanctioned warfare in the name of liberty, democracy, and civilization. As Zinn (2005) observes, even the editors of the liberal magazine, *The American Prospect*, have argued that the U.S. has the right and the obligation to strike pre-emptively and unilaterally because "Islamist terrorists with global reach pose the greatest immediate threat to our lives and liberties." No one should expect a single metaphor to discredit and overthrow by itself such a tyrannizing image of the enemy.

More modest metaphors, however, may well prove feasible to find and articulate one by one until they accumulate over time into a somewhat less stereotyped take on terrorism. By weaving a few strands here and there into a growing web of human relations, the tactical potential and humanizing entailments of multiple metaphors might accumulate enough momentum eventually to move the issue of terrorism beyond the stasis of recrimination. An example of one such incipient metaphor appeared June 10, 2005 on the Antiwar.com website in an article by Michael Scheuer (2005). Antiwar.com described itself as a libertarian site dedicated to the cause of non-interventionism and to advancing a patriotic peace movement. It aimed to publish "citizen experts" and to reach out to conservatives, independents, leftists, pacifists, and greens opposed to imperialism (Antiwar.com 2005). Scheuer, author of the book *Imperial Hubris*, wrote from the vantage point of a CIA officer concerned with why the U.S. might lose the war on terror (Anonymous 2004). His essay in Antiwar.com featured the argument advanced in a new book by Robert Pape (2005a) on the subject of "suicide terrorism."

Pape, a public intellectual and associate professor of political science at the University of Chicago, directed the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism. His book, Scheuer wrote, destroyed the argument advanced by neoconservatives that "Islamist suicide attacks against America and other countries are launched by undereducated, unemployed, alienated, apocalyptic fanatics." Pape's data dem-

onstrated that "there is little connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism, or any of the world's religions." Instead, terrorist attacks are motivated primarily by the secular and strategic goal of compelling a foreign occupying force to withdraw from their "homeland." Their aim is "victory, not mere destruction." The U.S. "faces a logical, patient, and deliberate enemy" that "is attacking because he perceives his country, culture, and/or religion are under attack." He is revered by his people for defending their society from "a foreign threat," that is, from an occupier that would "conquer" and "transform Muslim societies" and thus devastate their "way of life." Thus, Scheuer observed, attempting to destroy Islamist "monsters" in order to "install democracy" may be well intentioned, but it is a myopic course of action that courts "disaster" (Scheuer 2005).

Jude Wanniski, who ran his own "supply-side investor" consulting practice and monitored Antiwar.com for arguments that he could use against recent U.S. interventions that had been concocted by his "old neo-con allies," spotted a metaphor of interest to him in Scheuer's internet article about Pape's findings on suicide terrorism (Wanniski 2005a). Are these secular suicide bombers, Wanniski asked, the equivalent of "freedom fighters"? "From the dawn of civilization," Wanniski observed, "the man of the house has been the protector of hearth and home from outside enemies." Aren't these so-called "insurgents" assuming "the role of the male in defending the 'home,' or the 'homeland'" from "American invaders and occupiers"? (Wanniski 2005b) Wanniski's commentary, with Scheuer's article attached, was picked up and republished on the internet the next day by LewRockwell.com, an "anti-state, anti-war, pro-market" website (LewRockwell.com 2005). It also reappeared on websites such as The Conservative Voice (http://www.theconservativevoice.com/articles/article.html?id=6555) and uruknet.info ("information from occupied Iraq," http://www.uruknet.info/?s1=1&p=13147&s2=28) and was linked from the latter by the likes of williambowles.info (http://www.williambowles.info/iraq/uruk/uruk_280605.html), Iraq News Network (http://www.iraq-news.de/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1786&Itemid=124), and Orb Standard world news (http://orbstandard.com/editorial070405.html).[7]

The metaphor in Wanniski's post that may have been potentially most suggestive to Americans was not the notion of terrorist as freedom fighter but rather the image of suicide bomber as homeland defender. Freedom fighter implied some kind of ideological equivalency between American and Islamist conceptions of liberty or liberal democracy – an unlikely equivalency that neither comports with common sense nor respects cultural differences but instead imposes the logic of an alien political system and way of life onto an occupied people. Thus, a predictable objection raised in Internet posts was that insurgents in Iraq could not be considered freedom fighters because they opposed liberty and democracy and they killed civilians instead of, or in addition to, soldiers. There is no "moral equivalence between these animals and coalition soldiers," wrote "Greyhawk" on "The Mudville Gazette" blog (Greyhawk 2005). Referencing Pape's book, "Mountain Girl" retorted that "they are freedom fighters. There were never suicide bombers in Iraq until Bushitler invaded" (Mountain Girl 2005b).[8] Michael McLarney objected to Mountain Girl's take on Iraqi freedom fighters, insisting instead that:

> *the terrorists (not insurgents!) are viscious [sic] criminals and sociopaths who desire killing as a fulfillment of some sick need. There is no military justification for these attacks. If they were insurrgents [sic] they would attack the army not the innocents. Many Iraqis have died during these last two years, but most of those dead were killed by Islamic terrorists not American bullets. To leave Iraq now would be to abandon the innocent to the rule of the minority* (McLarney 2005).

In short, terrorists could not be considered freedom fighters because they had no military purpose and no respect for life, liberty, or democracy.

The metaphor of homeland defender, however, suggested a comparison that did not presume suicide bombers were fighting for American notions of freedom and democracy or against Americans enjoying their own liberty and security. It invited instead the assumption that these Muslim fighters were protecting a way of life from foreign invaders, that they were the weaker party protecting their home from a stronger occupying force that would conquer and transform their country, that their targets included anyone who would cooperate with or support such an occupation, that they were defenders, not aggressors, and harboured no desire to impose their way of life on Americans, and that continued occupation would strengthen their resolve to resist the American occupation rather than quell the rebellion. This, more than an image of freedom fighters, was the metaphor lurking within Mountain Girl's online observation that "the terror has not abated" because "civilian Iraqi's who were not part of any terror group are now seeing terrorist tactics as their only way of survival against the Forces invading their country. When civilians feel this way we must be doing something wrong . . . . The war is simply feeding the fire and perpetuating terrorism" (Mountain Girl 2005a). And as Robert Pape emphasised in an online interview with The American Conservative, "The central fact is that overwhelmingly suicide-terrorist attacks are not driven by religion as much as they are by a clear strategic objective: to compel modern democracies to withdraw military forces from the territory that the terrorists view as their homeland" (Pape 2005b).

As with any metaphor, this one could be challenged or even redirected, but it also offered American citizens an opportunity to grasp a basic point of identification with another people in a different land who, like Americans, would defend their home by whatever means available to them when they were invaded and occupied by an alien force, especially when that force threatened their basic way of life. It was a metaphor that suggested the Iraqi "insurgents" were in some degree rational, not merely irrational; that they were defenders more than aggressors; that they were resisting coercion rather than either exalting it or succumbing to it; that, in short, they were complex humans, not simplistic monsters. It was the kind of metaphor that might help Americans understand in some small measure the humanity of their enemy when, for example, *Chicago Tribune* columnist Steve Chapman wrote in the *Baltimore Sun* that "Americans have trouble imagining how the insurgents could hope to succeed without any positive vision of Iraq's future – and without any apparent agenda except slaughtering people. But the core of their appeal is the same as that of most other suicide bombing campaigns: nationalistic opposition to a foreign military presence" (Chapman 2005). It was a metaphor that could even catch the eye of some members of the U.S. Congress, eighteen of whom

attended a briefing by Professor Pape. According to the *Washington Post*:

> *Several of the 18 legislators at Pape's Capitol Hill briefing last month found his ideas interesting. Sen. Richard G. Lugar (R-Ind.) "was impressed with the analysis," his spokesman, Andy Fisher, says. And Sen. Craig Thomas (R-Wyo.) says he found it plausible. "Apparently his findings are that these folks want to get everyone out of the Middle East who aren't native to it," Thomas says, and although he does not regard the U.S. military presence as an occupation, "I could see how they would use that" word* (Murphy 2005).

Moreover, it was an image that did not require Americans to invalidate themselves in order to empathise with an enemy. As Scheuer observed, people were not attacked by suicide car bombs because of who they were or what they believed but because they were occupying someone's homeland (quoted in Murphy 2005). And this was the kind of metaphor that could help citizens to conclude, as did blogger Darrell Udlehoven, that "invading Iraq was a gigantic mistake" (Udlehoven 2005).

Toward a Culture of Peace

My purpose is not to examine definitively the metaphor of terrorist as homeland defender or to develop it fully, along with other humanizing imagery, as it eventually would have to be developed in order to achieve the symbolic form and rhetorical force of a full-blown peace-building ritual or drama. Peace-building, as Schirch underscores, must be no less dramatic than the conflict it attempts to resolve if it hopes "to capture people's imagination and interest." Thus, "peacebuilders are the choreographers, directors, and set designers of a drama" on "a stage that must be constructed and set in a way that draws people to observe and take part in the peacebuilding drama." For this "peacebuilding stage," themes must be articulated, scripts developed, and movements choreographed to develop meaningful messages that "engage people's emotions, senses, and passions" enough to transform their "worldviews, identities, and relationships" (Schirch 2005, 1, 17). And, as Bleiker (2000) has demonstrated in the case of popular dissent that ended eventually in the fall of the Berlin Wall, such change does not occur quickly or through simple cause-and-effect calculations but is the outcome of collective agency, diverse articulations, and multiple symbolic practices. My immediate and more limited goal is to indicate the promise and potential of creative media usage – specifically, of web watching on the worldwide web – to contribute to this overall process of peace-building.

Watching the Internet for metaphors to articulate into peace-building images can help a democratic public resist war by empathising or identifying with others, even enemies, who have been dehumanized in war propaganda. By itself, the metaphor of homeland defender is a modest construction, as it must be for immediate tactical uses, but it is the kind of trope that, together with other (re)humanizing figures, might contribute strategically over time to an alternative image of human solidarity that transcends the rhetoric of retribution and constrains the hostile imagination of ruling elites. As we can see from this single instance, bridging metaphors do travel about on new and old media and between alternative and mainstream venues, enabling citizens with different ideological orientations to interact with one another and even to interface with experts and political elites. Accord-

ingly, it would seem that the feasibility of dissenting from war constructively can be enhanced by the democratic prospects of internet web watching and thus that citizens might reasonably expect to formulate and communicate many more peace-building figures of human solidarity by engaging alternative media artfully.

The peace-building metaphors produced by dissenting citizens exercising their moral imagination in a media-saturated state of ongoing warfare are ultimately the strategic source of an alternative vision of human relations. More immediately, they are also a tactical resource or thematic ingredient for structuring healthier political relations. Communicating dissent is made more feasible for everyday citizens and tactical manoeuvres become less vulnerable to strategic countermoves when metaphors, such as homeland defence, become available to reconfirm and reconfigure – rather than disconfirm and denigrate – the cultural capital of an embattled nation. Without such metaphors to establish links between contesting parties, dissent defaults to negative tactics and fails to rise above a self-perpetuating and polarising rhetoric of recrimination. Without connected dissent that resists demonising rivals, antiwar discourse remains at the tactical disadvantage of operating within a controlling framework of reciprocal recrimination with little chance of developing a strategic alternative to the war regime's dehumanizing constructions of foreign foes.

Creative media usage is vital to achieving a world communication order that is more democratic and a world that is less violent. Democratic dissent from war becomes increasingly constructive as its tactics develop strategic vision to transcend fearful stereotypes and build toward a culture of peace based on relations of consubstantial rivalry and configured in the double gesture of nonconforming solidarity. A culture of peace, as Boulding explains, exists "when groups of humans hold the need for bonding and autonomy in balance – nurturing one another, engaging in many cooperative activities, and also giving each other space." Peace-building is a dynamic process, not a static end state. It actively promotes "peaceable diversity" and requires a "willingness to venture into the unknown" (Boulding 2000, 1-2). It is a creative process of web watching and metaphor making. It is a messy, grounded, and intensive exercise in innovation with no guaranteed outcomes.

Media, especially alternative media, are rich resources for just this kind of web-watching ingenuity. They make the articulation and circulation of constructive dissent feasible but not inevitable. Antiwar dissent in the form of cyber-activism can draw on new information and communication technologies as a resource for progressive change but not as a panacea.[9] The digital world must be actively engaged by citizens to realise its potential, and even then it can be utilised to promote narrow interests rather than peace and social justice. As Bruce Gronbeck notes, surfing the net for political purposes is definitely on the rise, but the search processes utilised by citizens influence the messages they produce and consume (Gronbeck 2004, 28). Dissent configured for peace-building messages – for transforming a warrior culture into a dynamic peace culture – deploys humanizing metaphors drawn creatively from and grounded deeply in the Internet and other media to transcend the cycle of reciprocal recrimination. In this critical sense, dissent from war is a question of communicating a web of human relations that bonds people with their political adversaries and even their enemies under circumstances of con-

tinuing rivalry and contestation. There are many possible answers to this question of communicating connected antiwar dissent and articulating human solidarity in the midst of conflict and division, but they can be found only one modest metaphor at a time by media-spanning cyber-citizens exercising their democratic imagination individually and collectively in an ongoing practice of web watching.

Notes:

1. See, for example, the chapter on "Fighting Terror" in Ivie 2005a, 123-47.

2. I am referring here to the kind of distinction in cultural studies that is often made between media institutions and media texts, economic structures and discursive articulations, political economy and discursive analysis, etc. See, for instance, Turner 1990, 174-81. A variation on this same distinction is evident Colleen Roach's discussion of communication and culture as an approach to the study of war and peace. For her, communication is a matter of mass media that can be separated from the "distinct area" of human communication (Roach 1993, xx).

3. For a discussion of mainstream media consolidation, see Bagdikian 2004 and McChesney 2004.

4. The U.S. military doctrine of "information dominance" explicitly aims at capturing and neutralizing dissent that interferes with its plans. There is reason to suspect that independent media and critics are being increasingly targeted when they are perceived to be challenging U.S. information dominance. This is a program of "weaponized information." See Miller 2004, 9-10, 12, 14.

5. For a useful discussion of how sustained and decentralized popular dissent expressed in distinct forms can accumulate rhetorical force over time, see Bleiker 2000.

6. Galtung's chart of criteria is reproduced in Lynch and McGoldrick 2005, 271. 271.

7. All accessed 2 August 2005.

8. Mountain Girl's reference to Pape's book sent the reader to her own blog for details (Mountain Girl 2005a).

9. For a discussion of cyberpolitics, see McCaughey and Ayers 2003 and Donk et al. 2004.

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