

DARING TO TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT WAR

How to write about war and peace in less than 1000 words? Make it simple, by necessity. But go to the core of the problem, which our politicians never dare to do because of public opinion and polls!

The Trudeau government has kept its electoral promise to take our F-18 combat jets out of Iraq and Syria: fine! But what his new «anti-ISIS plan» does not dare to say is that war has never settled anything, neither in Irak (war itself has created the current mess there), nor in Syria (where the situation has never been worse in 5 years), nor in Afghanistan, in Lybia or against ISIS.

When it comes to war, public opinion *becomes totally irrational*: when Canadians are killed (like the six Quebec humanitarians recently killed in Burkina Faso) or when we feel threatened (as after the Paris terrorist attacks), we call upon our government to send troops «to kill them all»; then, when our soldiers get killed, we put pressure on our government to bring them back home!

But *our governments are no more courageous to dare telling the inconvenient truth*: the only real winners of all wars are the arms dealers. Ours (look at the lucrative General Dynamics contract with Saudi Arabie, whose ideology is the origin and support of ISIS) and those of all the big arms producer countries (USA, Russia and European Union).

Whatever the justifications (noble principles or sordid interests), **wars are always unable to deliver justice and to create the conditions necessary for peace**. But who pays the price for this recurring mess? A few hundreds or thousands of military personnel (hopefully from theirs), but always millions of civilian innocent people, mainly women and children, whose luckiest will die on the spot (most often in bombings which we call «surgical» but are totally blind to their victims), but whose vast majority will live forever a life of sequels (mourning of loved ones, physical handicaps, lost houses, internal displacement or permanent exile).

Yes, what happens in Syria and Iraq is outrageous. Yes, the behaviour of so many jihadists is criminal. Yes, humanitarian needs for often besieged civilians are enormous and urgent. But **the Coalition bombings (with or without Canada) will solve nothing, absolutely nothing**, except for increasing human costs on the ground and juicy profits for the military industry investors.

If our new Canadian government shares this analysis (which I doubt, its current position on withdrawing our CF-18s being probably only a way of distancing itself from the more militaristic posturing of the Harper era), it certainly never said so. The Trudeau government never dared to clearly tell the Canadian people (and even less since its election) that the conflicts in Syria and Iraq cannot be solved or settled by war, whatever the number of CF-18s or soldiers we send over there.

But such a position is not a popular one, neither with our allies, nor with a vast proportion of our public opinion. Even worse, such a political discourse is not even possible to hear, let alone to accept, because we live in a world which has always been spontaneously relying on violence in order to solve conflicts. And even though violence has repeatedly proved itself unable to really solve any problem, public opinion usually prefers to believe the misleading security promises uttered by its political leaders to make people feel safe (look at the rhetoric used by French authorities after the November 13 attacks in Paris), rather than to look at the clear lessons from History with lucidity and courage.

So, if war is always a failure, what can we do? To sit and talk with **all** belligerents and find, with patience, determination, political will and courage, the solutions and necessary compromises in order to get out of the vicious spiral of violence. The best example of such a spiral is the conflict between Israel and Palestine which has been rotting the political situation of the whole Middle East for more than 60 years. Violence, however well intentioned, cannot but breed more violence.

If the stand I take on war and peace, with many others, is still so marginal, it is only because **our political leaders do not dare to propose it since it flies in the face of powerful economic and political interests**: even the WWII hero Dwight Eisenhower, at the end of his last mandate as a Republican President of United States in January 1961, felt obliged to warn his fellow Americans against the growing influence of the military-industrial complex in his farewell speech.

The Trudeau government has a unique opportunity to use the current international situation and his will to reposition Canada back on the international scene in order to innovate significantly in its foreign policy. Given its «middle power» status whose diplomatic reputation has long been very much esteemed (think of the «blue helmets» invention which brought the Nobel Peace Prize to Lester B. Pearson, or the Treaty to Ban Landmines), **Canada is one of the best positioned countries to dare stating that war is outmoded as a mean to solve conflicts**. And to invest, massively and systematically, in non military alternatives as the Canadian contribution to international security... and to the Western Coalition which pretends to end conflicts in Iraq and Syria.

Is it really utopian? When even a mainstream daily paper editorialist as Mario Roy in *La Presse* dares to question the fatality of war («La guerre? No sir...», January 3, 2012, based on Steven Pinker's and Joshua Goldstein's writings), it is reasonable to believe that such an idea is not foolish. As we must never forget that the engineering of an atomic bomb was such a utopian endeavour when the United States authorities decided to put all its resources (scientists and money) into making it a reality! Where there is a real will, there is a way, for war or for peace.

Dominique Boisvert
121, rue Albert
Scotstown, QC
J0B 3B0
819-231-8047
www.dominiqueboisvert.ca