

WAR WITHOUT VIOLENCE? DEWEY'S INSIGHTS ON MODERN WARFARE

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With the rise of violent, non-state actors such as Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and Al-Shabaab, and the ensuing military responses, Dewey's 1916 essays on force, violence, and coercion are worthy of revisitation. While Dewey advocated international frameworks to prevent military confrontations between nation-states, his theories are largely silent in addressing non-state actors with agendas seemingly antithetical to democratic and pluralistic societies. If such non-actors are unconstrained by the international laws and conventions which Dewey advocated, and diplomacy is not a viable option, then Dewey might concede that military action may be the most appropriate response. Justification for military action, however, requires an accounting of both the character of the non-state actor as well as the capacities of the nation-state. Counterintuitively, Dewey's insights on force also provide a framework for characterizing the nature of such military action as something other than violence, i.e. war without violence. In this paper I argue that it is incumbent on the modern nation state (and international nation-state community) to create bold and innovate coercions that engage non-state actors. Unfortunately, however, the U.S. is currently moving in the exact opposite direction by destroying its own capacity for coercions that would avoid war.



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Dewey's Force: Energy, Violence, and Coercion¹

On the eve of U.S. entry into WWI, Dewey examined the philosophical aspects of force. He characterized them as energy, violence, and coercion.² Force-as-energy was the intelligent and appropriate use of force to achieve an end. Force-as-violence was the ill-considered and often excessive use of force that did not contribute to realizing a goal. Force-as-coercion was that grey area between energy and violence – the force expended in converting wasteful violence to useful energy.

Dewey used a traffic analogy to illustrate his point. Force-as-energy was the act of driving with purpose, turning left and right with an end in mind and arriving safely at a desired destination. Force-as-violence was driving at cross purposes with other drivers (running intersections, exceeding safe speeds, ignoring traffic signals, etc.) and inevitably creating collisions that prevented anyone from assurances of reaching their destination safely or efficiently. Force-as-coercion was realized by establishing rules of the road: right-of-ways, center dividers, speed limits, licensing and registration, driver's education programs, and so on.

The international scene prior to WWI, Dewey might argue, resembled the road with no rules, and collision was the norm for nation-states to resolve disputes. Due to a lack of international dispute resolution frameworks, when nation states came to cross purposes, war was the standard method of resolving major disagreements. For Dewey, however, collisions/violence (i.e. war) could be avoided if the proper rules-of-the-road (i.e. international agreements and institutions) were in place. Dewey advocated the hard work of

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2018 John Dewey Society annual meeting in New York (April 13-14, 2018).

² John Dewey. "Force and Coercion," in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*. Vol. 10, 1916-1917, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980/1916), 244-251; John Dewey, "Force, Violence and Law," in *John Dewey: The Middle Works, 1899-1924*. Vol. 10, 1916-1917, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980/1916), 211-215.

creating force-as-coercion in the form of international frameworks and institutions that gave nations alternatives to war. In the context of Dewey's force framework, force-as-violence (war) was converted to force-as-energy (dispute resolution) through force-as-coercion (international frameworks).

Dewey and War

Dewey's perspective on war is complex. Noted Dewey scholar Leonard Waks writes that Dewey considered "war in itself [. . .] completely destructive of personal freedom – a wholesale enslavement of entire populations."³ In the wake of WWI, Dewey took his distaste of war so far as to promote the radical idea of outlawing war itself.⁴ And yet, despite his fundamental opposition to the idea of war, Dewey ultimately favored U.S. military action in WWI, WWII, and the Korean War (Ratner, 1988).⁵ Even with pacifist proclivities, Dewey, it seems, was not fundamentally opposed to military action.

Dewey's examination of force was no repudiation of war either. Dewey concluded his essay *Force and Coercion* by indicating that war may sometimes be an appropriate course of action:

. . . there is always a possibility that what passes as a legitimate use of force may be so wasteful as to really be a use of violence; and *per contra* that measures condemned as recourse to mere violence may, under the given circumstances, represent an intelligent utilization of energy.⁶

³ Leonard J. Waks, "Research Note: John Dewey on Nationalism," *Dewey Studies* 1, no. 2 (2017): 117.

⁴ Oona A. Hathaway and Scott J. Shapiro, *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017); Charles F. Howlett, "John Dewey and the Crusade to Outlaw War," *World Affairs* 138, no 4 (Spring 1976): 336-55.

⁵ Sidney Ratner, "John Dewey's Philosophy of War and Peace" in *Philosophy, History and Social Action: Essays in Honor of Lewis Feuer*, eds. Sidney Hooks, William L. O'Neil, and Roger O'Toole (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1988), 373-90.

⁶ Dewey, "Force and Coercion," 251.

By Dewey's definition, a force (even in the form of war) is not violence if the force is the appropriate and efficient means to achieving a given end. Similarly, a force that prevents war could be considered violence if it is not a proper use of energy. An illustration of this somewhat counterintuitive notion might be the attempted diplomatic appeasement of Nazi Germany as a form of violence (as it was an ultimately ineffective means that did not produce a desired end) and the ensuing military confrontation with Allied military forces as a form of energy but not violence (as war was perhaps the only effective means of challenging the spread of Nazi totalitarianism). As the Allied forces end goal could (arguably) not be achieved without military action, Dewey's framework characterizes the Allied military action in WWII as energy and not as violence.

Yet, while advocating both for the outlawry of war and the justifiability of certain wars, Dewey remained philosophically consistent in the context of force as energy, violence, or coercion. In the instances where Dewey advocated war, war was, specific to that time, to that place, and to Dewey's personal subjectivities, the most appropriate and efficient use of force to achieve an end. However, Dewey might have considered these same wars a form of violence if more efficient and effective alternatives to armed conflict existed. To prevent future wars, Dewey advocated the construction of international frameworks that would provide alternatives to war. These frameworks would serve as a force-as-coercion by providing alternatives to war for nation-states.

Addressing the Nation-State

The force-as-coercion capacities of the nation-state (and the international nation-state community) are important in characterizing military action as either force-as-energy or force-as-violence. Modern force-as-coercion capacities include frameworks and institutions such as international courts, multilateral trade agreements, inspection teams, and professional career diplomats. When these force-as-coercions are operating effectively, they often provide a means other than war for resolving disputes. War in the

presence of such force-as-coercions is unnecessary – a form of violence. When, however, these force-as-coercions are not in place or are not operating effectively, the nation-state may determine war to be the most appropriate and efficient means of achieving an end. War then becomes a force of energy (and some would go so far as to call such war a “necessary war”). Allow me to restate this point. When coercions exist and can be effective in achieving ends, war is unnecessary, and Dewey’s framework characterizes a resort to war under unnecessary circumstances as violence. By contrast, when coercions do not exist or are not effective, Dewey’s framework characterizes war as energy. What some would call a “war of necessity” is force-as-energy, while an unnecessary war is force-as-violence.

For those desiring to prevent or end a war, such an action requires changing the character of the war from force-as-energy (necessary war) to force-as-violence (unnecessary war) through coercions. This change may be neither quick nor easy. Once war is established as energy, it may be difficult for the nation-state to later re-establish it as violence. Why is this? Because the institutions and frameworks that provide coercions take time to build. Dewey noted that organization cannot be “whisked out of existence” at the end of a war, but I would also add that they cannot be whisked into existence to end or prevent war either.⁷ Professional career diplomats take decades to develop. Effective international frameworks often take years of negotiation to establish. And in the case where a nation-state has either failed to construct coercions or systematically eliminated or degraded existing coercions, these degradations are not quickly reversed by a change in heart (or even a change in government).

The neglect and damage may take decades to overcome. Even a government bent on solutions other than war may find that, despite its best efforts, military action remains its only effective option due to the lack of diplomatic alternatives left to it by a preceding government.

⁷ John Dewey, “The Social Possibilities of War,” in *Characters and Events: Popular Essays in Social and Political Philosophy by John Dewey*, ed. Joseph Ratner (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1918/1929), 2: 551; Originally published as John Dewey “What Are We Fighting For?” *The Independent* (June 22, 1918).

The new government cannot immediately re-characterize the existing wars of the previous government as violence and withdraw, because effective options other than war have simply been neglected or eliminated. Despite intentions otherwise, war remains a force of energy because of the lack of coercions that would have made war otherwise. War may remain a necessity (a force-as-energy), rather than unnecessary (force-as-violence), for the foreseeable future.

Of course, some might argue that all war is unnecessary, and many more may profess that they desire it to be. Given his writings, it seems that Dewey did not consider war unnecessary, but that he desired to make it so. Dewey himself lived through two of the most destructive wars of human history. To end such wars Dewey advocated forceful action. In *Force and Coercion*, Dewey implied that the only way to make war unnecessary was through the application of force itself. Stated Dewey “No ends are accomplished without the use of force. [...] Squeamishness about force is the mark not of idealistic but of moonstruck morals.”⁸ Dewey called for those idealists who would end war to put their ideals into tangible efforts that create the coercions that prevent war. He called for the construction of international frameworks that would put an end to war itself.

The Nation-State: Force and the Rational Actor

In applying Dewey’s analysis of force to the international arena, I believe an important caveat to be that such an application assumes the behaviors of a rational actor. By the term “rational,” I mean to say an actor who considers alternatives and chooses the option of most utility. In applying the rational actor to Dewey’s traffic analogy, such an actor follows the established traffic laws. As the laws create restrictions, the driver may not complete a given trip as quickly as they would like. Their movement is delayed from obeying speed limits, stopping at traffic lights, and yielding to other drivers where appropriate. But the long-term benefit of a slower arrival over many trips to many destinations is soon apparent. Thanks to the traffic laws,

⁸ Dewey, “Force and Coercion,” 248-249.

the driver reaches their numerous desired destinations with a high degree of reliability and safety. The driver follows the rules-of-the-road because they provide the most utility to the driver. Similarly, nation-states can be deterred from war by international rules-of-the-road that provide long-term benefit and utility. Individual nation-states may not resolve disputes as quickly, as fully, or as favorably as they might envision a swift military victory would, but the long-term benefit of lives saved, treasures spared, and the uncertain results of war outweigh these short-term costs.

The Non-State Actor

Given Dewey's application of force to the entity of nation-states, what then of the non-state actor participating in the national or international arena? And particularly, what of the seemingly anti-liberal, anti-democratic non-state actor? What of the actor who, for instance, opposes freedom of religion or the education of women? What of the actor who kidnaps children to serve as child-soldiers and sex-workers? The actor who opposes coexistence with democratic pluralities exacts violence qua violence on democratic pluralities? Is military action against such an actor an appropriate response? Applying Dewey's framework to these questions calls for an examination of both the desired ends of the non-state actor and the effectiveness of forces available to the responding nation-state.

The Non-State Actor: The Ends of the Non-State Actor

First, let us address the desired ends of the non-state actor. While the preceding paragraph lists brutal means used by some non-state actors, I contend that Dewey's framework ultimately calls for an examination of an actor's desired ends. Importantly, for Dewey, the ends worthy of military action were democracy. Consider Dewey's stance in WWI. In advocating for military action in WWI, Dewey defined the end state of the war to be "...a world safe *for* democracy *and* a world *in*

which democracy is safely anchored . . .”⁹ For Dewey, democracy was *the* end worth fighting for. The preservation of democracy was an end worthy to Dewey even of war. As Dewey advocated for democracy for the world’s nation-state democracies, it only seems appropriate that the democratic ends of a non-state actor also be taken into account. If the ends of the non-state actor are democratic, the nation-state should look for opportunities to advance that cause. However, if the ends are anti-democratic, the nation state may be justified in its opposition.¹⁰

But in this opposition, can war be avoided? Given an anti-democratic non-state actor, Dewey might argue that opportunities for compromise or agreement are limited because that actor’s ends are incompatible with the ends of democratic and pluralistic nations. With incompatible ends, neither the nation-state or the non-state can be satisfied, and thus, military action may be the most effective force for resolution (perhaps the only means). If the nation-state considers non-military coercions to be ineffectual, military action against the non-state actor would be characterized as a “necessary war.” And, as previously discussed, Dewey’s framework characterizes “necessary wars” as force-as-energy and not as force-as-violence.

Having freely used the term “democracy” in the preceding paragraphs, it is worth pausing here to briefly explore Dewey’s concept of democracy. Democracy, for Dewey, was not about the process of voting or of political parties. David Hansen writes that Dewey considered democracy to be “more than a set of institutions [...] but as what Dewey calls an “associated form of living” characterized by open, fluid channels of genuine communication and collaboration among people who may differ from one another with respect to values, interests, and aspirations.”¹¹ Kathleen Knight

⁹ Dewey, “The Social Possibilities of War,” 559. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰ As noted by Clarence Karier, many were critical of Dewey’s stand on the war. Former student Randolph Bourne was particularly vocal in denouncing Dewey and his pragmatic philosophy for justifying ends without fully considering the means that those ends entailed. See Clarence Karier, “Making the World Safe for Democracy,” *Educational Theory* 27, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 24-29.

¹¹ David T. Hansen, forward to *John Dewey’s Democracy and Education: A Centennial Handbook*, eds. Leonard J. Waks and Andrea R. English (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), xxi.

Abowitz ties Dewey's concept of democracy to an associated form of living that promotes both individual growth as well as social growth, and to a society that "that prizes experience, participation, experimentation, and pluralistic organizational forms."¹² The association and free communication of individuals within a democratic society then serves to find and promote the value of all individuals and social groups within that society. In *Democracy and Education*, Dewey summarizes his notion of democracy:

The two points selected by which to measure the worth of a form of social life are the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom which it interacts with other groups. An undesirable society, in other words, is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic.¹³

Conceivably, no nation-state or non-state actor fully meets the high standards Dewey sets for democracy. But many aspire to do so, even if in incomplete fits and starts. In contrast with the imperfect democratic actor, however, the anti-democratic actor seeks to repress individuals and groups within its society while brooking no voice for dissent. And it is in examining the democratic or anti-democratic ends of the non-state actor that we are able to move forward in in applying Dewey's analysis of force.

¹² Kathleen Knight Abowitz, "A Mode of Associated Living": The Distinctiveness of Deweyan Democracy," in *John Dewey's Democracy and Education: A Centennial Handbook*, eds. Leonard J. Waks and Andrea R. English (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 65.

¹³ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*. (Lexington: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016/1916), 59-60.

The Non-State Actor: Force and the Non-Rational Actor

Now, let us return to Dewey's traffic analogy for a moment. I have previously argued that Dewey's analysis of force assumes the behavior of a rational actor, and that nation-states can be coerced into diplomatic behaviors through rational consent to international frameworks. Such a rational nation-state is analogized as a driver who complies with the rules-of-the-road. Similarly, a non-state actor who complies with the international rules-of-the-road is similar to the nation-state in this analogy. These actors address grievances and seek solutions within the existing national and international frameworks. How then should we conceive of a non-state actor that refuses these international frameworks? What if the non-state does not display "rational" behavior and cannot be coerced through diplomatic actions? If Dewey analogized a rational actor as a safe (and sober) driver, then let us consider a non-rational, non-state actor as akin to a drunk driver. Allow me to expand on this analogy.

When confronted with drunk driving, what can a society do to address it? Dewey's framework calls for the creation of coercions that convert violence to energy, that is, that return drunk driving (violence) to sober driving (energy). Society creates many coercions to counter drunk driving such as laws, legal enforcement, education programs, and public service campaigns. These coercions work to convert the violence of drunk driving to the energy of sober driving. And while seeking to change behavior, it is also important to note that these same coercions unapologetically seek to eliminate the behavior of drunk driving. The coercions of society are not efforts to democratically tolerate drunken driving but efforts to defeat it entirely. Society accepts no compromise with drunken drivers as the drivers' mere presence endangers the efficient and safe trip of every other driver. Similarly, democratic nation-states with democracy in mind act to eliminate destructive anti-democratic non-state actors.

As long as the non-state actor's ends are anti-democratic, the democratic nation-state has justification in opposing them. And the threat of physical harm by such a non-state actor may accelerate the nation-state's sense of urgency to respond while also limiting the

force-as-coercion tools available to the nation-state. The presence of a drunk driver on the road means that the coercions of education and public service announcements have failed and that now legal enforcement is required. Just as the presence of a drunk driver on the road requires immediate and decisive action to prevent violence, a non-state actor active in physical destruction requires immediate and decisive attention. This brings us to our second consideration.

Addressing the Non-State Actor: The Capacities of the Nation-State

The second consideration in responding to the non-state actor is examining the responding nation-state's (or international community's) capacity for coercion. That is, to ask if the nation-state has the capacity to convert the violence (or potential violence) of the non-state actor to energy. What capacity does the nation-state have (other than military action) to address the actions and grievances of the non-state actor? Do diplomatic equivalencies exist for non-state actors? Are lines of communication open? How can their grievances be heard and addressed short of armed conflict? Do timelines allow for prolonged negotiations, or is more immediate action necessary? In responding to the non-state actor, it is incumbent on the nation-state (and the international community) to develop such coercive capacities. Where Dewey advocated the development of international frameworks, we should today be extending similar innovations to the non-state actor where possible. Where Dewey called for the hard work of international coercions, we should continue that hard work to address non-state actors. And while we should be idealistic in our efforts, we should not be naive. This is hard work that requires the use of force, and Dewey would advise us to not be squeamish about the application of force to achieve these goals.

In discussing the non-state actor, I have placed a heavy burden on the nation-state (and international nation-state community) which should be explained. Today, as in Dewey's world a century ago, the nation-state remains the dominant instrument of realizing (or denying) democracy for the individual. Cosmopolitan philosopher

Kwame Anthony Appiah refers to the nation state “the primary mechanism for ensuring [basic] entitlements” such as “health, food, shelter, [and] education” are met.¹⁴ Dewey, I believe, would likely include democracy as one of those basic entitlements. In advocating for the necessity of democracy, Dewey stated that “autocracy means uniformity as surely as democracy means diversification [... and] the great hope lies with the latter. The former strains human nature to the breaking point; the latter releases and relieves it – such, I take it, is the ultimate sanction of democracy, for which we are fighting.”¹⁵ To realize international democracy, Dewey advocated for self-governing democratic nations bound by international agreements as an opposition to anti-democratic, or autocratic, forces.¹⁶ While Dewey focused on anti-democratic nation states as the source of totalitarianism, appropriate for his time (and not without precedent today), the democratic nation-state’s opposition should today be extended to anti-democratic non-state actors as well.

Also, as nation-states consider the application of force to non-state actors, it is important to acknowledge that there are limitations to the behaviors that liberal, pluralistic, democratic societies may brook. Among those limitations are the anti-democratic practices they will tolerate. Democratic nations certainly should subscribe to resolving disagreements through democratic practices (such as robust communications and international frameworks) but they should also oppose anti-democratic practices where they can. Genocide, the suppression of women and minorities, and the imposition of a single religion are among the anti-democratic behaviors a democratic society should confront.

This is not to imply that Dewey would immediately advocate military action against anti-democratic non-state actors. Except for an existential threat to democracy, surely he would not. Rather, as he did in outlining international frameworks, Dewey would advocate the difficult work of creating coercions that prevent the need for military

¹⁴ Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., 2006), 163.

¹⁵ Dewey, “The Social Possibilities of War,” 560.

¹⁶ Dewey, “The Social Possibilities of War,” 551-60.

action. The nation-state (and international community) should be seeking creative ways of engagement with anti-democratic non-state actors. And the nation-state should also be addressing the conditions that give rise to such repressive actors and intolerant dogmas.

The limitations of this interpretation

There are several limitations to my interpretation of Dewey's framework worth acknowledging. I address three here. The first is to imply that all of today's nation-states are liberal, pluralistic democracies with the goal of democracy in mind. Certainly, they are not. However oppressive nation-states may be, in most cases modern international agreements act as effective coercions for resolving international disputes in a manner short of war. Additionally, since the advent of nuclear weapons and the accompanying paradigm of mutually assured destruction, the incalculable cost of war between nuclear armed states serves as a "force-as-coercion" for even the most warlike nation-state. While democratic nation states may continue to promote democratic progress, major state-on-state warfare has largely been eliminated through effective force-as-coercions and the sheer destructive scale of modern warfare.

A second limitation is to imply that all non-state actors are bad-actors or that all violent non-state actors do not have legitimate grievances. The distinction between terrorist and legitimate freedom fighter can sometimes be a difficult one to draw and may depend on one's own positionality. Determining the character of the non-state actor is important in addressing this limitation. Dewey repeatedly, if reluctantly, called for citizens of democracies to fight to protect international democracy.¹⁷ It seems likely that Dewey would advocate the same for those who desired to establish or extend democracy if they have no good options outside of armed conflict. This is not to call for armed actions by frustrated non-state actors, but a call for nation-states to examine the reasons that cause such actions and to address them early. If the non-state actor has legitimate grievances in

¹⁷ Howlett, "John Dewey and the Crusade to Outlaw War," 336-55.

realizing greater plurality and greater liberty, the nation-state should do what it can to recognize those grievances. The nation-state should also work to create coercions that realize and expand the democracy that democratically minded non-state actors seek.

A third limitation I will address is the implication that all international frameworks are effective and legitimate. They are not. While international frameworks are important and provide among the most important coercions preventing war today, it is important that such frameworks continually be evaluated as a means of promoting democracy in its truest sense. International frameworks must promote a democracy that, to borrow again from Leonard Waks, “emphasizes the importance of social bonds within national and transnational groups formed through communication,” that promotes “a broad communication, and its conscious acceptance as the principle in settling conflicts,” and that aims to resolve differences “through inquiry rather than force.”¹⁸

In addressing these limitations, I believe Dewey would place the burden on the nation-state and specifically those who call themselves citizens of liberal, pluralistic democracies. The burden is on us as citizens to ensure (1) that their nation-state is in fact a liberal, pluralistic society acting with democracy as an end goal; (2) that their nation-state and the international community is considering the character and grievances of non-state actors when considering possible military action against such actors; and (3) that modern international frameworks are promoting an international form of democracy for the nation-state as well as the non-state actor.

Application (part 1)

Unlike Dewey’s world prior to WWI, the modern world is largely characterized by the international frameworks and agreements. In 1918, Dewey called for the creation of a “federated world government and a variety of freely experimenting and freely cooperating self-

¹⁸ Waks, “Research Note,” 113-14.

governing local, cultural and industrial groups.”¹⁹ That vision is realized, however imperfectly, in modern institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, multilateral trade agreements (like the Trans-Pacific Partnership), and international agreements (such as the Paris Accords on climate change). Dewey’s concept is not a world government, which would undoubtedly lead to even greater concentrations of wealth and power than we experience today, but a federation of self-governing nations operating under democratically developed agreements. This federation opposes war by creating opportunities other than war in which to resolve disputes. In this regard, evidence indicates that this international federation has been largely successful.

Since the end of WWII, the world has seen a sharp decline in wars between nation states. This decline can largely be contributed to the development of international frameworks for dispute resolutions. For example, the United Nations’ International Court of Justice, established in 1945, provides a force-as-coercion in allowing nation-states to address border disputes without military confrontation. The General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs, established in 1948, and its successor the World Trade Organization, established in 1995, provide force-as-coercions in allowing nation-states frameworks to address trade disagreements. To move forward, then, and to make such frameworks applicable to warfare with non-state actors, the nation-state (and international community) should seek similar innovations and frameworks to engage and resolve disputes with non-state actors.

And yet...

Unfortunately, of late, we seem to have discarded Dewey’s wisdom and have headed in the exact opposite direction that Dewey would advocate. Rather than developing innovative ideas for addressing non-state actors, or even of continuing the hard work of building, revising, and evolving international frameworks, we instead find ourselves in the process of destroying them.

¹⁹ Dewey, “The Social Possibilities of War,” 560.

Since the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the U.S. has experienced the systematic dismantling and destruction of its own coercive diplomatic institutions. The American Diplomatic Service Association, for instance, reports that in 2017 the U.S. Department of State has “lost 60 percent of its Career Ambassadors” and that its ability to hire new diplomats has been cut by 72 percent.²⁰ At the same time, U.S. military expenditures have increased substantially. The U.S. Secretary of Defense presciently stated that the U.S. military would need to buy more ammunition in response to the drastic budget cuts to the U.S.’s diplomatic branch.²¹ Dewey likely would have agreed — not necessarily with buying more ammunition, but with the increased likelihood of war given the destruction of coercive alternatives other than war. As military capacity increases while diplomatic capacity simultaneously decreases, military action and war becomes more likely out of simple necessity. And even where international frameworks continue to exist, as the U.S. loses diplomats, it diminishes its own capacity to work within these international frameworks. The coercions to prevent war which Dewey sought are thus diminished or destroyed.

Meanwhile, the U.S. continues to increase military spending despite outspending every other nation three times over and accounting for over a third of all worldwide military expenditures.²² War becomes more likely simply because it is constructed to vastly exceed all other options. It evokes the old adage, when every tool is a hammer, every problem becomes a nail. Similarly, when all the nation-state has remaining are military options, every solution becomes war. In this paradigm, the coercive actions (other than military action) to address non-state actors, that arguably were never robust to begin with, seem less and less likely to develop in the current

²⁰ Barbara Stephenson, “A Time to Ask Why?” *The Foreign Service Journal* 94, no. 10 (December 2017): 7.

²¹ U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, *Open Letter to Congress*, (February 27, 2017), http://www.usglc.org/downloads/2017/02/FY18_International_Affairs_Budget_House_Senate.pdf.

²² Niall McCarthy, “The Top 15 Countries for Military Expenditure in 2016,” *Forbes* (April 24, 2017). <https://www.forbes.com/sites/niallmccarthy/2017/04/24/the-top-15-countries-for-military-expenditure-in-2016-infographic/#69c6ee943f32>.

environment.

Application (part 2)

The continued work of the nation-state (and international community) is clear. We must continue the struggle of creating effective force-as-coercions. This is not the work of maintaining status-quo but of creating coercions that are appropriate to the challenges of the modern world. This work must continue the work of cultivating and modifying international frameworks and agreements, and it must also address the non-state actor in ways that are innovative, far-sighted, and, to borrow from Dewey, non-squeamish in their application of force. The creation of force-as-coercion that converts violence to energy is Dewey's vision. Working the convert the violence of non-state actors to energy should be our goal as well.

What exactly those coercions are, I cannot say, but I believe they must take some form of increased communications through diplomatic engagement, economic development, and educational investments that revolutionize and exceed any such efforts to date. Whatever form they take will require a basic reversal of U.S. policy direction and an investment and expansion of U.S. diplomatic capacities. While I am hopeful as to what coercions may accomplish, I am not (as Dewey would say) moonstruck. Even the best coercions are not panaceas. There will continue to be non-state actors for which the democratic nation-state can never find common ends and military action is determined "necessary." In these instances, military action should seek to install or restore effective coercions as soon as possible.

One final note. For those professional civil servants who have dedicated their lives to advancing diplomacy and preventing war, and yet are demoralized by the recent direction that their country has taken, I believe Dewey would say something to the effect of "hold on." These are the individuals who have done and who continue to do the hard work that Dewey knew was necessary for international peace. To the extent that they can continue to serve in their capacities while keeping their principles and morals intact, hold on. These are the

individuals who continue to hold the frameworks of peace together. The nation-state and the world community need them in place should the U.S. reverse its direction. Should their conscience demand that they find work elsewhere, may they remain engaged such that that are morally and intellectually available when conditions permit. Hold on.

Conclusion

Dewey's provides a framework for examining force as either energy, violence, or coercion. It is through coercions, Dewey argues, that violence is converted to energy. Dewey sought to prevent wars between nation-states by creating robust coercions in the form of international agreements and frameworks. In using Dewey's framework to addressing modern non-state actors, particularly brutal and seemingly anti-democratic actors, the concept of coercions remains applicable. The nation-state (and international community) continues to play an indispensable role in responding to non-state actors. In determining an appropriate response, the nation-state must first consider the desired ends of the non-state actor (are the ends democratic or not?). Secondly, the nation-state must cultivate existing and develop innovative new coercions that address non-state actors. In instances where military action is still determined "necessary," Dewey's framework characterize such action as energy and not as violence. While current U.S. foreign policy abandons much of Dewey's wisdom, I advocate a return to, and an expansion of, the hard work of diplomacy as well as the creation of effective coercions directed toward engaging the non-state actor. It is in implementing Dewey's force-as-coercions that we may find a way to contain, or even to end, violence.

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