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Wage Peace, Not War

Joel Lee (National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law) · Thursday, August 14th, 2014

“Peace is not the absence of conflict. One must wage Peace as much as others wage war”.

I do not know from whom this quote originated or whether my unconscious has unwittingly amalgamated two different quotes. I only know that I feel the need to spend this month’s entry writing about peace and this quote speaks to me.

Maybe it’s because the news has been inundated with stories of humans firing missiles at one another. Or maybe it’s because a civilian airliner had been shot down because it was mistaken to be a military aircraft.

This isn’t the first time I have dedicated a blog entry to the topic of peace. My entry for [February 2013](#) talks about Ronny Edry’s attempts to build peace from the ground up. That has always struck me as an interesting idea. What would happen if we tried to crowd-source peace? For the moment, my heart goes out to Ronny because for his efforts to build peace, there is clearly some way to go. If you would like to see his current efforts, see [here](#) and [here](#).

For this entry, I’d like to approach Peace creation from a slightly different perspective. Most of us could probably name a number of reasons why countries wage war. These reasons may focus around sovereignty, historical slight, territorial disputes or simply feeling threatened. It is not my purpose to debate the validity of these reasons.

We could also probably name a number of reasons why countries will agree to cease hostilities. These reasons are likely to be phrased or framed in terms of avoiding something. Hostilities have become too costly in some way whether monetary, human or political.

What if we were to ask a different question? For example, what would motivate a country to create and maintain peace? What would have to happen for countries to feel proud of having maintained peace?

There is nothing that motivates countries and the politicians who run them to take pride in maintaining peace.

Some readers may know about the Doomsday clock. Readers can read more about [here](#). Initially, this clock represented how close we were to nuclear war. Today it represents how close we are to global disaster. It is adjusted from time to time to reflect how close we are to that point. Again, the idea is to serve as a deterrent; a reminder of how close we are to the abyss.

What if we had something that celebrated peace and each country's efforts to and record of peace making? What if there was, for lack of a better term, a Peace Almanac? What would this Peace Almanac do? It would keep track of how long any nation has been in a relative state of peace.

Of course what this means will need to be defined. Is it peace with other nations? Peace within the country? Both? Does involvement as an ally in other countries' war efforts breach the definition? All of these will have to be worked out.

However, whatever the eventual definition, the Peace Almanac will celebrate the various milestones that each nation has spent in that state of Peace. This could be recognized by awards or a listing within a circle of similar nations, etc. The idea is to engender a sense of pride in one's own nation's peace achievements.

I admit it. It's a simple idea, some may call it simplistic or naive or overly idealistic. I make no apologies for being idealistic. As for simplistic and naive, perhaps. Then I challenge my critics to come up with something that is not simplistic, not naive and puts us one step towards creating peace.

And really, that is the point. What are we doing, individually and collectively to wage peace?

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