

Young Zionist

War, peace, and individuals

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I have always denied it when it's been said, but, maybe it is true - conflict is unavoidable in society. I say this though I wish, like many, for there to be a way for it not to exist - **peace is a virtue that we often take for granted, and when it's not there, we forget that it could exist, or believe that to get to it we have to use violent methods.**

We are an individualistic society, which is why a singer can stand on stage and sing one song and then another can come on stage after him and sing another - and they are both completely different: one dances, the other stands stiff, one belts the song out with passion, the other sings it as though its words are talking about the saddest thing in existence. If we were to become a society adopting the reality of 'Brave New World', there would be no individuality left to praise. Some would be singers others athletes, some would write, and others paint – and there would be no variations between them, just predetermined roles, entirely separate. We are all individuals, each with a personality interesting enough to talk about in conversations with new friends. When we meet each other, we ask: "What are you interested in?" When we discuss a topic, we ask: "What do you think?" We are individuals: we have different opinions. We expect different answers between our neighbour on the right, and the one sitting on our left. If we answer a question the same as the one next to us we are judged incapable of defining our own opinion.

It is only to be expected, then, that each person should have a different opinion on one topic. And an opinion that is completely opposed to ours causes, without doubt, conflict. We all wish it were not so; we all wish for peace, but conflict comes with argument and argument comes with individualistic societies. And individualism is good.

It is how we deal with the conflict - not the fact that it exists - that we need to look at. **"Peace" should not be termed so; instead it should be known as "tolerance"**; otherwise it should be emphasised in much the same way as a conversation: you ask someone what their view on a topic is, and when you realise that you are wrong, do you suddenly lurch forward and smack them round the cheek? No. You ask them why, you discuss, you might even argue! But you do not scream and shout or run away and never speak to them again.

Some do, of course. Who is right, then? In an individualistic society, we all have different opinions on how to deal with conflict. It is only the extreme ones which are excluded. Still, there is a problem that we often fail to highlight: it is not the opinions which someone holds which are wrong: it is the way in which they believe conflict should be dealt with - and maybe we should have a detailed report of the "tried and tested" - the opinions which have led to serious difficulties across history. When Hitler tried eugenics. *Never again.* When terrorists tried bombs. *Don't you dare.* When Stalin drew the Iron Curtain and cut off one side of the world from the other. *Dangerous and invasive.* When silly "clever" people

developed and tested the nuclear bomb, and then thought it might be clever to drop it over an entire city. *Stupid.*

What to do and what not to do. Should we go to war? It has been tried and tested. The report would say something like: "*Depends.*" Of course, it would also say: "*Dangerous*"; "*Murderous*"; "*Be careful.*" For war that tears people apart, it would say: "*Why bother?*" But of course, there is a need to bother. **For years people have called for peace - but no one has actually addressed the reason why the war started.** Truces. Truces this and truces that. The leaders grudgingly shake hands - neither are satisfied with the truce, but they will be seen as terrible people if they do not accept it. And then, when the next leader comes through, the thinking starts all over again. Has anyone ever tried to think of an alternative to war? War has prevailed since the very first societies, in many shapes and forms, but always "war." Even the tribal societies across the world have their own "warriors" who are looked up to as the protectors of the villages. It features, even, in fantasy films; in science fiction, where one species always has a bitter motive to destroy the other, and in utopian novels we are often to understand that war leads to perfection. Perhaps it is time we changed our ideals. Perhaps it is time we realised that war does not lead to perfection. How can it? What remains when it ends - a grey mess that even the media cannot bear to describe? Hasn't anyone ever tried to think of an alternative?

Perhaps it's time we should. I cannot propose one. It is hard, in a time where historic remnants of the past are discussed almost daily, where there is talk of a new "Cold War" breaking out in a society crippled by an economic crisis reminiscent of the Great Depression, where wars break out, end, and then break out again so often in the Middle-East, it is hard to think of an alternative that every individual would applaud. But then, nothing is impossible. The technology and world records of this century and the centuries passed have proved this against our ancestors' words. There is always a way – the issue that remains is whether or not we are prepared to recognise that way, and whether or not we are prepared to attempt to make a change so great and so morally perfect that our brains tell us it is impossible.

Louise went on Hanhaga in 2008.