



War

By Gwynne Dyer

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While modern science ponders whether human beings are programmed toward belligerence and warfare, there is no doubt that war has been humanity's constant companion since the dawn of civilization, and that we have become all too proficient in its conduct. In *War*, noted military historian Gwynne Dyer ranges from the tumbling walls of Jericho to the modern advent of total war in which no one is exempt from the horrors of armed conflict. He shows how the martial instinct has evolved over the human generations and among our close primate relations, such as the chimpanzee. Dyer squarely confronts the reality of war, and the threat of nuclear weapons, but does not despair that war is our eternal legacy. He likes and respects soldiers, even while he knows their job is to kill; he understands the physics and the psychology of battles, but he is no war junkie. Dyer surveys the fiery battlefields of human history, never losing sight of the people caught up in war. He actually believes there is hope that war can be abolished, that human beings are more than just our genes. *War* is an award-winning book that explores the human past to imagine a different future.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A chronicle of organized human aggression gets a timely update in this new edition of a seminal book originally published 20 years ago. As Dyer covers the history of human warfare—from primitive tribal skirmishes and the "total war" of WWI and II to the imbroglios of the past 30 years (including the current one in Iraq)—a sense of cyclical inexorability begins to creep in, of history repeating itself again and again. One is struck by the notion that the only changes in the historical narrative of humans at war are new strategies necessitated by new, and exponentially more deadly, technologies. Implicit in Dyer's argument is the idea that, in war, humans have become increasingly subjugated to the increasingly awesome power of their machines, so that the nuclear stalemate of the Cold War becomes a logical extension of the deadlock of WWI trench warfare. Dyer is an accomplished military historian who bolsters his extensive knowledge with a rhetorical style that is at once invisible and entirely convincing. Structurally, the book accords in and out from the psychology of individual soldiers, to the workings of whole armies, to broader historical movements and how they change (and stay the same) through time. It is a powerful effect, and one that ultimately makes this book at once a valuable historical treatise and a fervent and compelling call toward pacifism.

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About the Author

GWYNNE DYER served in the Canadian, British, and American navies. He earned a Ph.D. in military history from the University of London, and was a senior lecturer in war studies at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. The original version of this book, published in 1985, won a Columbia University School of Journalism Award. A seven-part television series based upon *War* was broadcast in forty-five countries in the mid-1980s; one of the episodes was nominated for an Academy Award. Dyer writes a twice-weekly newspaper column on international affairs and security policy that is published by 175 newspapers worldwide, many in the U. S. He lives in London with his wife and children.

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