

# Book Reviews

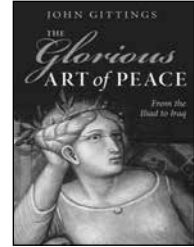
*The Glorious Art of Peace: From Iliad to Iraq*

John Gittings

(Oxford University Press, 2012)

£18.99

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The history of mankind is inundated with narratives of war and its glory, while those of peace have been regrettably obliterated by the pen of historians. In fact, war has been upheld as a basic instinct inherited by all human beings as a means to their very survival. Enormous time and energy has been spent on understanding the causes, the process as well as the consequences of war, while there has been less effort made to study and highlight the discourse on peace and its role in human history since ancient times.

In the present case, John Gittings makes a valuable attempt to trace the evolution of the international movement for peace by drawing attention to Erasmus on the Art of Peace. Inspired by the role of Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Gandhi in advocating peace, Gittings reemphasises the forgotten narratives of, and presents a coherent and erudite discourse on, peace. He traces the origin of ‘the peace movement’ in the ancient Greek epic poem *Iliad* and compares its contemporary relevance with the case of the Iraq War 2003.

To begin with, the author scrutinises the existing literature on peace to be able to state what peace actually means. Is it just ‘the absence of war’, as Thomas Hobbes attributes or is there more to it? Gittings finds that the definition of peace may be more complicated, but what is evident

is that it is a condition of life without which humanity could not continue to exist. He claims that peace is a prerequisite for the growth of culture, education, and the values of a humane society. Contrary to many loose statistical claims, there has been more 'peace' than 'war' in human history. He further argues that peaceful societies are not utopias and peace is a dynamic process rather than a permanent state: it is a goal for which one should strive.

Gittings examines the perceptions of war and peace in different periods of history and how that has shaped the mainstream academic discourse, which often extols the glory of war and its heroes, neglecting the subtle craving for peace. According to the author, there are four prevailing views on war versus peace: (1) that war, however horrible, is intrinsically more interesting than peace, and that the history of war, if not its current reality, is still a glamorous subject; (2) that historically, and statistically, war has been the *default mode* of human civilisation, while peace has been the *interval* between war; (3) that war until recent times has been satisfying and beneficial to progress, and even today there are positive benefits from war preparedness; and, finally, that (4) however, much one may wish for a world at peace, war is in some sense 'natural', even perhaps 'in our genes' and these assumptions can be demonstrated by reflecting on the primitive society.

The author meanders through the narratives of war and peace as extrapolated by Lawrence Freedman, Francis Beer, Shakespeare, Andrew Marvel, an English poet and finally finds solace in the verses of the fourth-century BC Greek playwright, Philemon. His assertions are based on historical statistics for peace from all over the world beginning from the counsel offered by ministers and advisers in historical annals, especially, the ancient Greek narratives in Homer's *Iliad* and Confucius' *Kongzi*. He persuades the reader to comprehend the 'blessings of peace' in human history though accepts that war, like the poor, has been always with mankind and always will be so.

Further on, the author makes a case that human attitude towards peace has dramatically changed with emphasis on morality in human behaviour. Ethics played an important role by not only transforming the war into a principled violent engagement but also shaped the idea of peace in terms of moral values. He traces the advent of moral values in human life to the coming of Jesus and the subsequent birth of the Church as an institution. It was then that Pacifism emerged as a counter ideology to war and violence. These values, however, suffered a setback with St. Augustine's formulation of the "Just War" doctrine, which completely distorted the real spirit of peace and disdain for war/violence as preached by Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the author argues that Augustine himself was concerned much more with peace than war. When compelled to wage war, he maintained, one should cherish the spirit of a peace-maker.

The period also witnessed several efforts to restrict warfare by new rules, expressed in the *pax dei* (peace of God) and *trucea dei* (truce of God) movements, which, followed by the failure of the Crusades, underscore the lost zeal for war on moral grounds. For Gittings, Erasmus and Shakespeare heralded a new era of human understanding on peace and its values through their outstanding work in the field of literature and arts, which made the concept of peace very popular and well understood amongst laymen. Yet, Gittings expresses his displeasure on the fact that the humanist sentiment of the Renaissance, a precursor to the liberal ideas of the Enlightenment, is so often overshadowed by the *realpolitik* attributed to Machiavelli. This argument seems valid since a majority of students studying political science or peace studies are hardly aware of Erasmus, the great humanist scholar and theologian of the age.

These literary and aesthetic paeans on peace laid the ground for a movement to spread the consciousness on the need for peace desired to limit the possibilities of war. It became even more necessary with the rise of nation-states and the accompanying revolution in military technique, and the peace-makers/thinkers from the Enlightenment movement

mooted a serious consideration of an international approach for limiting war. This period was severely dented by the horrors of war which shook the collective consciousness of the masses to the core. Consequently, the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries witnessed the rise of many societies advocating the necessity of peace through intellectual discourses. Immanuel Kant's essay on *Perpetual Peace* which stressed the universality of human rights and the need for international agreements to prevent war was most influential and laid the foundations for conceptual discourses on peace. These efforts culminated in the institutionalisation of the efforts to promote peace and to prevent war through the First Hague Peace Conference of 1899, which stressed on arbitration and the regulation of rules of war and placed peace and disarmament on the international agenda, where they have remained ever since. The author argues that this enabled the growth of international law or norms to prevent war, and inspire respect for humanity.

The creation of the League of Nations at the end of World War I was seen as a historic collective achievement for preventing war among nations. The League of Nations, indeed, provided an alternative framework to war: nations could settle their disputes and differences without resorting to war. However, the subsequent failure of the League should not be construed as attributing to the demise of the 'peace culture'—rather it pruned the idea of 'collective security' in a more realistic sense.

Paradoxically, history's most violent era also saw the dawn of an age of non-violence'. Mahatma Gandhi identified and made popular non-violence as an effective alternative strategy of resistance. Prior to that, Leo Tolstoy's magnum opus, *War and Peace* had influenced and continues to inspire many peace lovers. Moreover, Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* has made such a deep impression upon Gandhi as did his discovery of John Ruskin's essay on social justice *Unto this Last*. Gittings observes that Gandhi was quite different from Tolstoy in his approach in the sense that he was more of a doer than a thinker. He was the first one,

perhaps after Jesus Christ, who put words of peace into action and steered change through peaceful activities in the socio-political spectrum. Today, according to the author, the voices of those protesting peacefully resonate around the world and present a practical alternative to war as the means of remedying injustice and oppression.

Since the end of World War II, the pursuit of peace has been conditioned amidst the confrontation of the two superpowers: the USA and the USSR. This might have prevented a Third World War but has actually brought the war to the Third World countries. Although the United Nations (UN) was founded on the lessons learnt from the failure of the League of Nations in order to strengthen international organisations to promote peace and development, it could not prevent the superpowers from waging surrogate war or Cold War. It would be apt to say that the relative peace harnessed after the end of the Great Wars did not last longer due to the misappropriation of peace by the vested interest of the great powers.

It was believed that the end of the Cold War, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, would herald a 'New World Order', where the word 'war' would no longer exist in the dictionary of human history. However, as Gittings points out, though a new global discourse on the linkage of peace and development and the need for UN reform did begin to emerge in the early 1990s, the much-promised 'peace dividend' which would have helped to achieve ambitious objectives like reducing global inequality and deprivation, failed to materialise because of orthodox strategic doctrines. He further alleges that when the threat of global terrorism was dramatised and magnified by Al Qaeda, the orthodoxy of 'new war' (on terror), prevailed, leading to the disaster of the Iraq War.

To give peace a chance, world leaders must realise the humanitarian responsibility without undermining the overarching authority of the UN. Gittings suggests an alternative agenda for peace, bringing together

efforts to solve the four separate challenges facing the world: nuclear proliferation, long-standing injustices such as the issue of Palestine, an out-of-control financial system which nurtures poverty and inequality, and environmental degradation which threatens the poor more than the rich. For this, we need to regard peace, not war, as the Glorious Art, he concludes.

In sum, the book weaves together historical narratives of peace and war and churns out a very fundamental theoretical understanding of the desire for peace and penchant for war. The book will prove to be a value addition to the existing literature on peace and will be of immense resource for students as well as an inspiration for peace activists around the world. In his painstaking job of traversing through such vast literature in order to bring the unfeigned discourse of peace, the author has explored all the essential readings to give a sense of justice to his preordained thesis. It appears from the sub-titles that the author sets his intellectual journey from the mythological narratives of the *Iliad* to the reality of the Iraq War, which is a rare academic attempt, especially in the field of peace studies.

However, it is quite disappointing that instead of pronouncing various methods and means to achieve peace and prescribing ways on how to avoid war or conflict at the individual, social and international levels, it merely presents a review of the literature on war and peace. Besides, while enhancing the script through a colourful use of anecdotes from the past, the author undermines its tenor by giving a hushed-up account of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and current narratives of peace. It would be even more useful to dwell on the prerequisites for establishment of peace in the current times. Notwithstanding the follies, the book lauds the subtle glory of peace in an artful way and, hence, provides a credible alternative to war for inquisitive minds.

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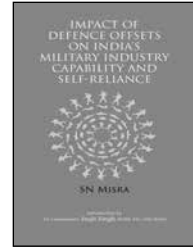
*Impact of Defence Offsets on Military Industry  
Capability and Self-Reliance: The Road Ahead*

SN Misra

(New Delhi: KW Publishers, 2012)

Rs 680.00

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The challenges to the development of indigenous defence industry at par with international standards, a concise and transparent policy on defence procurement, a pivotal role by the government and a methodology for indigenous capability enhancement form the keystones of SN Misra's book. The eminently researched book provides the reader a clear insight into the Indian defence sector, the impact of its liberalisation policies and a way ahead for a robust defence base.

The book begins with a factual narration of the existing defence structure in the country and a brief account of the current procurement methodology followed by the Ministry of Defence. The author has analysed in exhaustive detail the offset mechanism and its accrued benefits, both by direct and indirect offsets by comparing the existing mechanisms in the United Kingdom, South Korea, Poland and Saudi Arabia. The comparison of various offset mechanisms provides a knowledge base to the reader for understanding own existing offset policy. It also demonstrates that by emulating proven global practices, the offset policy can become a powerful tool for a higher degree of indigenisation.

The chapter on India's offset policy and its impact gives a detailed account of the existing defence industry capability and the challenges faced in achieving self-reliance in the manufacture of world class military equipment. The study of licensed agreements with various foreign collaborators from 1960s to 2004 indicates the reasons for a nascent defence industry due to overreliance on foreign equipment and

lack of encouragement or incentives to local firms. The self-reliance index continues to be low as there are large technological gaps in the manufacturing capabilities of the public sector enterprises.

Though the offset policy was promulgated almost a decade ago, the impact has not been to the desired level as major defence companies have wavered in committing resources due to an uncertain policy directive by the concerned ministry. This uncertainty has led to investment in low end sectors like repair platforms. The author is of the opinion that absence of a level playing field has benefitted the public sector units which led to lower investments by the foreign firms in the initial stages. The fourth chapter on indirect offsets gives a comprehensive account of investment requirements for the development of a manufacturing and infrastructural base for the creation of a robust defence industry. It also focusses on the available technological capability in the civil sector in the aerospace and shipbuilding fields and its application for future military requirements, thus, benefitting both the civil and defence sectors. A commonality of the industrial base for both the sectors can generate multiple avenues for growth.

Though India has permitted Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the defence sector, a long-lasting and clear policy will make India an investment friendly destination. The fifth chapter gives an overview of the shortcomings of the Defence Procurement Policy (DPP) 2005 and the military technology sectors where transfer of technology is essential to enable manufacture of state-of-the-art equipment and sub-systems. It also discusses the present FDI policy and brings out the reasons for the low level of interest shown by foreign defence companies due to a smaller share of permitted FDI at 26 percent. The research and development as well as infusion of funds has been slow in the defence sector as it was opened for foreign investment almost ten years behind the other sectors like manufacturing. The author has brought out with logical reasoning, the need for increasing the FDI and its benefits to Indian defence industry.



The last chapter lists suggested reforms necessary for development of a robust defence industrial base. Having carried out an in-depth study, the author has provided a lucid examination of the offset policy and the achievable benefits due to the amalgamation of both military and civil sector requirements. As India is one of the largest importers of military equipment, the offset policy can have a significant impact on the expansion of the defence industrial capability in the coming years.

The book assumes significance in the present changing strategic and geopolitical environment as the need for self-reliance will be greater than ever and India is still many decades away from achieving that level of technological competence. The author's analysis and recommendations merit serious attention for the development of an important strategic sector. A well researched book, it will provide a ready reckoner to enable defence planners, procurement agencies, analysts and readers to understand own offset policy and form a benchmark for all related future studies in this field.

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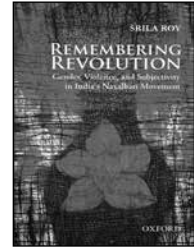
*Remembering Revolution: Gender, Violence and  
Subjectivity in India's Naxalbari Movement*

Srila Roy

(Oxford University Press, 2012)

Rs 725.00

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The face of revolutionary politics is becoming increasingly female, in fact, according to recent reports, women now form 40 to 60 percent of the Naxal cadres, yet none so far have held any position of leadership. Despite these alarming figures, there has only been a recent emergence of feminist interest in the Naxalbari politics. Against this backdrop, a book like *Remembering Revolution* by Srila Roy attempts to fill the gender gap that existed in India's Maoist Revolution. The author has extracted research material from a vast pool of literature, films, activist writings and women's personal testimonies through extensive field data. What is interesting to note here is that despite women's participation in the movement being the author's core concern, she has also interviewed men, both cadres and leaders of the Naxalite movement.

Not only does this book facilitate viewing the 1970s in a "new gendered light" but also provides a whole canvas of significant events that shaped Naxal politics since its inception thereby establishing the long tradition of peasant and Communist struggles in Bengal. In each of the chapters, the author has dealt with various facets of the Naxalite movement by carefully tracking theoretical perceptions of revolution, love, memory and violence and focussing on their gendered dimensions. Right from the beginning, the author attributes, middle class character to the Naxalbari struggle which tends to subvert gender issues with those of class. The idea of a rural utopia which was functional in the Naxalbari movement, inadvertently made the participation of middle class women inauthentic, thus, affirming the popular belief that these women entered the movement as mere wives, mothers,

sisters and daughters. Therefore, the author has clearly cited that her study is aimed at commemorating the experience of urban-middle class women which feminists often tend to obscure in privileging rural women.

The author raises certain crucial points which imply that war is masculine, making women's bodies visible and prone to threat in a normative male space. The masculinity of war precisely lies in leaving the female behind in her domestic space, the contrary often tagged as a sign of weakness. What granted supreme validity to the struggle and violence in the revolution is the subordination of women and peasants by the state and the landlords. In fact, in male memoirs of the Naxal struggle, women are symbolised as nurturers, lovers and glorious mothers. Yet there existed a clear divide in the perception of rural and urban women, often romanticising the former. The female peasant (lower class) who struck down the police officer was often looked at with amazement, at times compared to a *female panther* by virtue of her speed and attack which fell in sharp contrast with the domestic attributes of urban middle class women.

The middle class women had immense pressure to conform to the codes of Bengali womanhood which incorporated the virtues of shame, modesty, honour, devotion to the husband. The traditional roles came under threat with the onset of the revolution: due to the rising cost of urban living many women took to waged work which also entailed transgression of moral/social codes. These women were said to have wreaked social havoc in becoming too "educated" and "liberated". Still, many of them continued to battle against these gender norms and middle class values hoping for a new gendered order through the revolution. Their labour within the private domain which continued to sustain the male revolution was not only rendered invisible but also rarely acknowledged.

Moving on to everyday life where revolutionary femininity was performed and lived, the author gives an analytical perspective on life in the underground which is often considered a safe sanctuary and consequently, less theorised. Females usually acquired only politically subordinate jobs along

with the daily drudgery work of domesticity (as is also the present case). They were employed to do courier work, provide logistical support to robberies, stealing arms, disrupting classes and examinations. The dominant thinking within the Party was that women would be inefficient in organisational work. Many women left the safe confines of their households to participate in the *gram biplab* (rural revolution), driven by their desire to bring about socio-political change. Party members, however, were not keen on women's participation since finding shelter in the underground movement was quite challenging, with women often vulnerable to violence. In several instances, women were assumed to be free domestic servants in shelters which portrays the all pervasive nature of traditional feminine roles. The author provides an interesting analysis of the relationship between women of the household (shelter) and women activists where patriarchal structures were reproduced while imposing certain conditions on women activists which, however, were not applicable to the males.

The subject of love and sexual politics within the movement has never been dealt with in a manner as profound and detailed as in this book. That violence and love are fellow travellers has been illustrated by citing examples of novels like *Antargat* and *Manabputri* which further exemplify that love provided a political agency for women to participate in the revolution. Free choice marriages and sexual unions were popular within the movement. Yet the middle class values the Party workers adhered to raised a sense of discomfort against the sexual freedom and anarchy within the movement. Consequently, the Communist Party of India (Maoist) (CPI-M) played a role in ensuring sexual propriety and presided over marriages and divorce: Red Book marriages became extremely popular in the 1970s where the couples would just exchange Mao's book to get married.

Often marriage proved to be the only way to protect women from sexual violence within the movement. Divorce was rampant and was pronounced through words; however, children born out of these unions were not taken care of by the Party. Instead, women who attended to

their maternal duties were often tagged as lazy and selfish by the Party members. The sexual politics within the movement was echoed by patriarchal underpinnings where female mobility and sexuality were subverted by male power.

In the concluding chapters, the author delves deeper into sexual violence within the movement as well as that unleashed by the state. In both the realms of the political as well as the underground, women's bodies were considered to be either already 'raped or rapable'. Female cadres encountered threats at the hands of their own comrades; the lines between the protector and the prosecutor were often blurred. The fabrication of a rapist state was instrumental in creating an illusion of safety within the underground life. Rape within the Party was not only ignored but also treated as consensual sex. Minor sexual transgressions were qualified as deviations or mere mistakes and also required women to remain silent on these issues in order to preserve the positive image of the movement. Women also chose to remain silent to secure their middle class honour and respectability. Those who challenged the unequal gender relations were accused of destroying the movement even by their fellow women revolutionaries.

These instances not only reproduce male power and patriarchal structures within the movement but also speak volumes of the insensitivity towards incorporating gender concerns and normalisation of certain kinds of violence. Also, rape was only seen as synonymous to class oppression and not an offence against the bodily integrity of women. For example, while the rape of a peasant woman by upper class landlords or state officials was politically acknowledged, the rape of a middle class woman by a lower class male was never acknowledged. Often in the latter case, women emerged as the victimisers who harass the subaltern victim along class lines. The sexual exploitation of peasant women by the upper class male cadres is rarely taken into account.

The author provides a rare insight into the ambiguous nature of violence. While the rape of middle class women dominates the state

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terror, it has no memory/significance in the underground. An Amnesty International Report on Detention Conditions in West Bengal jails published in 1974 contained details of horrific conditions of women in prisons. Many girls were stripped naked and state torture often led to rupturing of sensitive organs. Joya Mitra's *Hanyaman* (Under the Shadow of Death, 1989) , Minakshi Sen's *Jail Bitor Jail* and Mary Tyler's *My Years in an Indian Prison* are certain texts cited by the author which exhibit the state's disciplinary control over women's bodies.

The author towards the end flags issues of trauma, memory and healing with special reference to women survivors and their afterlife. According to her, testimony does not necessarily heal the trauma since many women have borne suffering for the sake of others, often forgetting their own in the process. Citing the famous Archana Guha (victim of torture in police custody) case, the author has shown how Latika Guha (the victim's sister) has spent her entire life fighting for justice despite few material and psychological resources for her life sustenance after the revolution. This shows that many survivors tend to domesticate their traumatic experiences, never granting these a past status in their lives.

Overall, this book, despite certain repetitions and overlapping of contents, offers a closer look at the lives of women who participated in the movement. Besides that, it raises certain troubling questions regarding conflicting identifications of both male and female comrades wherein they negotiated with "good" and "bad" violence in their everyday lives. Last but not the least, it lays bare the fact that the left revolutionary movements often start with empowering the women involved and in due course of time, got regulated by rigid conformity with patriarchal structures and hegemonic masculinity, thereby considering the same women as nothing but "space invaders".

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