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To the Reader.	2
Terrorism	
Robert L. Holmes.	4
Inwit and Outlaw	
Liane Ellison Norman	6
Gandhian Nonviolence:	
Guidelines for Action	
Michael W. Sonnleitner.	9
Report from Hiroshima	
Robert Ginsberg.	13
Book Review:	
Gray Cox, <i>The Ways of Peace</i>	
Robert Barford.	15

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To the Reader:

In his famous work *On War* (1832), the Prussian philosopher of war, Carl von Clausewitz, writes: "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse, with a mixture of other means" (R. A. Leonard's edition, 215). This statement expresses his view of Real War, namely, of actual wars fought between nations. As opposed to this descriptive notion of war, he also speaks of "Absolute War"—war considered by itself, independently of whatever political purpose it is to serve. Absolute War is a philosophical idea of pure, perfect war, a sort of ideal war. Speaking of war in ideality, he states: "The aim of War in conception must always be the overthrow of the enemy" (208). But this is what every warrior seeks. Thus, "the aim of War in conception" is at the same time "the real absolute aim of the act of War" (211). In the real world, this objective of ideal war is neither to be pursued nor to be realized. For war is to be fought only as "a political instrument" (58). The aim of Real War lies *beyond* the aim of Absolute War. War must always be subordinate to whatever political objectives the policy-maker pursues. When a war is fought simply for the destruction of the enemy and for no political objective beyond it, Clausewitz contends, "we have before us a senseless thing without an object" (216).

Significantly, Clausewitz acknowledges that Absolute War is "only conceivable in contests which are Wars of life and death" (216-217). Absolute War is "conceivable" in such contests, for no political consideration can be more important than the survival of the nation itself. In a war of life and death, the aim of Absolute War itself becomes the aim of Real War, and everything else becomes subordinate to it. Obviously, Clausewitz, writing in the early nineteenth century, is not interested in such an imaginary war, so he mentions it only in passing as something merely "conceivable." But the aim as well as the means of war has undergone enormous changes since Clausewitz's time. In the twentieth century, Michael Howard observes, Absolute War has become "a commonplace of international relations" ("Preface" to Leonard's edition, x). Indeed, it seems that the distance between Absolute and Real War has altogether disappeared with the advent of the atomic bomb.

Perhaps few politicians, except cold-war warriors, would openly declare "the overthrow of the enemy" to be their supreme political objective. All the same, today every ruler, every policymaker, is preoccupied with it, since he regards national defense as his overriding political concern. Prevalent among politicians in this age is a sort of jungle-mentality that only a nation with adequate military preparedness—whether by itself or through alliance—can deter its potential or actual enemy from destroying it. Hence the supreme importance of national security and the necessity of security-politics. In security-politics, war preparedness means not only the ability but also the willingness to destroy the enemy; so each nation prepares for Absolute War.

Absolute-War mentality subordinates politics to the preparation for "the overthrow of the enemy." Here we find the reversal of Clausewitz's formulation of war as "a political instrument." Now the political must give way to the military. This is exactly what Clausewitz warns against: