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Conflict in inter-state relations

Riassunto. - I conflitti nei rapporti interstatali

La guerra è antica come il mondo. Il vero problema è se mai spiegare l'origine del pacifismo che è estremamente recente e risale alla reazione emotiva ai massacri delle due guerre mondiali. La guerra è cambiata moltissimo nel corso del tempo, sebbene le linee essenziali siano rimaste sostanzialmente simili. Oggi sono scomparsi sia la dichiarazione di guerra sia il trattato di pace. I conflitti sono divenuti endemici. Il fatto che l'Europa sia stata scarsamente coinvolta in guerre aperte dopo la fine della seconda guerra mondiale, almeno fino ai conflitti in Bosnia e nel Kosovo negli anni Novanta, ha creato un senso di falsa sicurezza. Inoltre l'interesse alla pace maschera il fatto che alcune nazioni vogliono conservare lo staus quo senza dover combattere, ed altre vogliono cambiarlo pure senza dover combattere. In realtà non è con il pacifismo che è stata vinta la guerra fredda contro il comunismo, e neppure col pacifismo può vincersi la guerra contro il terrorismo. In quanto idea astratta portata avanti senza badare alle conseguenze reali, il pacifismo è moralmente assai meno difendibile del realismo, che si limita a prendere atto dell'inevitabilità dei conflitti.

Political systems, international relations and types of war

"War appears to be as old as mankind, but peace is a modern invention" (Sir Henry Maine, quoted by Howard 2000). This sentence of a 19th century English legal scholar gives expression to a proven fact. On the constant presence of war in history we might provide anthropological, psychological, sociological explanations (Wright 1942). To limit ourselves to historical ages, from the bat- tle of Thermopylae to the Hiroshima bomb, war has known countless varieties; however, *The art of war* by Sun Tzu, dating back to the 6th century BC is still reprinted and studied in military academies. Some "novelties" are not so new under a conceptual viewpoint after all.

Theological explanations are also possible (*Gaudium et spes*): a Catholic knows well that "insofar as men are sinful, the threat of war hangs over them, and it will hang over them until the return of Christ". It is known that von Clausewitz (1980) defines war as "not (...) a mere political act, but a true *instrument* of politics, a follow-up of the political procedure, its continuation with other means". Since man is a "political animal", a close relation must exist between human nature and war. War, in fact is more ancient than political institutions, "war antedates the State, diplomacy and strategy by many millennia" (Keegan 1994). We are going to examine here above all the evolution of war in the contemporary age, and its link with changes in international relations (Best 1980, 1982, Bonanate 1998, Bond 1984, Howard 1983).

The fact that war was regarded as a "natural" phenomenon, did not exclude a condemnation of its evils. Without indulging to pacifism, the Church, from St. Augustine onwards, made clear the rules of just war, both as *jus ad bellum* and as *jus in bello*. Humanists also entered the fray: Erasmus from Rotterdam defined Mars "the stupidest of all the (...) gods", in an essay attacking war on emotional rather than rational grounds (Howard 1981). By will of rulers, "the exhortation to peace, accompanied by detailed and dramatic descriptions of the benefits of peace, opened with long

preambles the treatises of the 15th and 16th centuries", moving "from a discourse centred on religious precept of peace to a concern for the disasters caused by war", even if sometimes such harangues were just opening statements to war alliances and therefore "there was a strident gap between expressions of generous, utopian intentions, and the harsh realities of the implacable unfolding of history" (Annoni 1996).

Just at the outset of the modern age, wars became far harsher than those of the Middle Ages, which were instead comparatively bloodless and chivalrous (Contamine 1980), (at least between Christians). In the 16th century and the first half of the 17th, ruthless conflicts erupted, in connection both with "military revolution" (Parker 1988), entailing the diffusion of gunpowder, new weapons and new organizational models, and with ideological factors linked to the religious strife brought about by the "reformation". After the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, however, war was fought in a more restrained way, again for reasons both technological and "ideological". Professional armies were a precious asset in the 18th century, and commanders were reluctant to risk decisive open battles. Wars unfolded regularly from beginning to end, an arrangement which was done away only with the First World War. The pattern was as follows: a crisis regarded as unsolvable by means of negotiations, an ultimatum or an incident, followed by the formal war declaration; after hostilities came an armistice then, after a period of variable length, a formal peace treatise (Holsti 1996).

The international system born at Westphalia assumed a homogeneous European society of sovereign States, whose ruling policy was equilibrium; religion was no longer a motive for conflict, whereas ideology was not yet one. There were no absolute enemies, but only rivals, who, thanks to the widely spread custom of the overturning of alliances, could become the allies of tomorrow (Luard 1992). War, therefore, did not aim to the annihilation of adversaries. At the same time, in the 18th and 19th centuries, as the international acknowledgement of the spiritual overlordship of the Church had come to an end, and the concept, derived from Machiavelli, of sovereignty as a blanket legitimization of the actions of the State, both led to discussions on "just war" being left aside, so that international law "has (...) no alternative but to accept war, independently of the justice of its origin, as a relation which the parties (...) may set up if they choose, and to busy itself only in regulating the effect of the relation" (Anderson 1933). Utopian writers hatched project after project of perpetual peace by means of societies of States: all these projects had to wait for the 20th century to be tested, and to be found unworkable.

With the French revolution, war became again a totalitarian affair, with the *levée en masse* and the strategy of Napoleon, based on a decisive open battle, and the ideological proclamation of the revolutionary "crusade". "*Il faut déclarer la guerre aux rois ei la paix aux nations!*", cried out MP Merlin de Thionville at the war declaration of April 20, 1792; "*paix aux chaumières, guerre aux châteaux!*", wrote the philosopher and scientist Condorcet (Tulard, Fayard & Fierro 1988). The revolution unleashed a civil war inside (with its Vandean climax) and in the invaded countries, where the armies of revolutionary and Napoleonic France found allies, but especially opponents, such as Catholic and monarchic insurgents (Godechot 1961, Viglione 1999): a pattern destined to be repeated in the Second World War, with collaborationists and anti-Nazi partisans, and which would have been repeated if the cold war had become hot and Soviet armies had invaded western Europe, finding road companions, but also anticommunist fighters. Sovereigns in past times had sometimes supported rebel subjects to other sovereigns with whom they were at war, but not without moral scruples and attaching no ideological connotations to the fact. ("*Mit Gott, für König und Vaterland*", motto of the Prussian *Landwehr*, can be regarded as the conservative answer to the revolutionary "nation in arms"). Those who supported the enemy were quite simply regarded as traitors. With the Nazi and communist "internationals", the problem of "twofold allegiance", either to the State or the ideology, arose again.

Between 1815 and 1914, the international system was substantially ruled by the "European agreement" of great powers, with episodes of closer or lesser cooperation and awareness to belong to a common "European society" and, in the final stage, a rising difficulty to contain rivalries and nationalistic thrusts. Ideology, in this case the principles of liberty and nationality, at least till the unification of Italy, played an important role, but in any case constantly in connection with classical principles of power politics, so that even the great revolutionary explosion of 1848-49 did not upset peace among the great powers. The wars of that century were short, limited to some powers only at a time and had no social consequences. "Before 1914 war was almost universally considered an acceptable, perhaps an inevitable and for many people a desirable way of settling international differences, and (...) the war generally foreseen

was expected to be, if not exactly *frisch und fröhlich*, then certainly brief; no longer, certainly, than the war of 1870 that was consciously or unconsciously taken by that generation as a model" (Taylor 1954). "Perpetual peace is a dream, and not even a beautiful dream – stated Marshal Helmut von Moltke, and Wilhelm II: "War is an element of the divine order of the world. In it are developed the noblest virtues of man: courage and self-denial, fidelity to duty and the spirit of sacrifice; soldiers give their lives. Without war, the world would stagnate and lose itself in materialism" (Best 1980).

In the ages considered so far, as well as in the previous and following ones, two models of war emerged alternatively: between opponents fighting over matters of interest, but within the framework of a shared institutional and value system, or between enemies divided by irreconcilable *Weltaschauungen* and political systems (Miglio 1988). As Raymond Aron (1992) points out, as to ideology, international systems can be homogenous or non homogenous: the former will fight wars of the first type, such as between Westphalia and the French Revolution as well as between 1815 and 1914, the latter are going to unleash wars of the second type, such as the wars of religion, those of revolutionary and Napoleonic France, the Second World War. Von Clausewitz (1980) aptly stressed that the appearance of an actor, revolutionary France, by its rejection of the ruling system, led to absolute war.

Solid interests are negotiable, but not *Weltanschauungen*. Speaking of *Realpolitik*, national interest, or diplomacy based on ideological principles, it is worthwhile to quote Aron (1992): "The concept of national interest implies simply that rulers are concerned mostly of the nation of which they are responsible, of its security and its existence, that they do not set themselves overambitious objectives, they do not harbour illusions as to the resources at their disposal and do not dream to change the world. Vague slogans – a world safe for democracy, collective security, and similar – end up normally in wars spreading and getting gangrenous. Far from being guilty, the egoism of nations is reasonable and even moral. Diplomats inspired by idealist views let themselves be misled by a cherished dream of a universally valid conception of national or international society. So, idealism degrades into imperialism". Also Morgenthau (1951) points out that realism is far more moral than irresponsible idealism, which busies itself with good intentions disregarding results.

The multifarious reality of history constantly compels to bear in mind exceptions to rigorous taxonomies. With reason Howard (1981) defines

"bold and unhistorical" the statement by Montesquieu that the "the spirit of monarchy is war and enlargement of dominion: peace and moderation are the spirit of a republic". In the various ages, besides the prevailing type of war, there might have been others, perhaps in different geopolitical areas; within the same conflict various kinds of war can coexist. The Second World War witnessed chivalrous episodes worthy of the Middle Ages and ruthless brutalities. After 1945, as well as after 1990, it seems conflicts of past ages have all left their own legacy.

The impact of the first world war

There is no doubt that the Great War ("the first conflict in which the main combatants suffered more casualties by enemy action than by disease", see Bond 1984) upset the perception of war (Mueller 1991). Until that moment, ruling opinion had it that having resort to military force by a State was entirely legitimate, that it was the most typical attribute of sovereignty; war was also extolled as an experience in which the noblest virtues of man came to the fore. The Great War, so long, bloody, total, midwife of dreadful socio-political upheavals, different from the short non general conflicts of the 19th century, gave rise to new ways of thinking. During that conflict three "new diplomacy" patterns arose: wilsonian, bolshevik, and that of the Papacy, which all repudiated, more or less in good faith, the war. In reality only the Church was going to keep faith to a "pacifist" position. The communists exploited the weariness towards war to achieve power and consolidate it, they made peace, bidding their time in order to develop the military power of the Soviet State. The United States, after the utopias of the Twenties and Thirties, have made of military force one of the pillars of their empire, neither could it have been otherwise.

At the top of the fond hopes placed on the new concept of "collective security" (Andreatta 2000), war was naively "outlawed" by the well-known Kellogg-Briand Agreement of 1928, whose article 1 read: "The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it, as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another", admitting therefore only a war declared by the international community against a country acknowledged as aggressor by the Society of Nations. In some enlightening pag-

es of 1932 and 1938, Carl Schmitt (1972) submitted that agreement and the Society of Nations to a pressing critique, forecasting that their effects were going to be not the giving up of force in international relations, but merely the disappearance of war declarations. Already the war of 1937 between China and Japan was not formally declared, because none of the opponents had any interest to do it, and the same occurred in all conflicts following the Second World War. After 1945, a "typical war" does not begin with a declaration of war, often does not lend itself to a precise identification of the opening date of hostilities, can last tens of years (as the Vietnam conflict, in its two stages, French and American, or the uprising in Eritrea begun in 1961 and ended only in 1991, with occasional fighting still erupting on the border between the two countries), and does not end with a formal peace treaty (as the war in Korea) (Holsti 1991).

Again, Schmitt had foreseen that "An imperialism based on economic grounds will naturally endeavour to create a world situation in which it can employ openly, to the extent which is necessary to it, its means of economic power, such as credit restrictions, embargoes of raw materials, devaluation of foreign currency and so forth. It will regard as 'extra-economic violence' an attempt by a people or another human group to avoid the effects of these "peaceful" means. For example, in 1941, Japan, faced by measures decreed by Washington, such as the oil embargo, the "freezing" of Japanese assets in the United States, and the restrictions to commerce, resorted to "extra-economic violence" and launched its planes against Pearl Harbor.

The more insightful observation by Schmitt (1972), however, was this: "If a State fights its political enemy in the name of mankind, what it really fights is not a war of mankind, but a war whereby a given State seeks to master, against its opponent, a universal concept in order to become identified with it at the expense of its enemy (...) The concept of "mankind" is a particularly suitable tool for imperialistic expansion and is, in its ethico-humanitarian form, a specific means of economic imperialism. In this regard, though with a necessary adaptation, a saying by Proudhon, is particularly to the point: "he who talks of mankind, wishes to deceive you". Here are the far origins of a new tongue of Orwellian hue, already emerging in 1914 with the slogan, *summa* of the idealistic illusions (or hypocrisies?), by H. G. Wells on "the war to end all wars", which came to a climax in 1999 in the oxymoron of the "humanitarian war" (Howard 1981). But is it true progress to call a war "international police operation" or "peace enforcement"?

"In the fifteen years after the First World War, – wrote Edward Carr (1951) – every Great Power (except, perhaps, Italy) repeatedly did lip-service to the doctrine by declaring peace to be one of the main objects of its policy. But (...) peace in itself is a meaningless aim (...) The common interest in peace masks the fact that some nations desire to maintain the *status quo* without having to fight for it, and others to change the *status quo* without having to fight in order to do so". If there has been a century scourged by wars which, to a far greater extent than in any other age, were violently ideological, this has been precisely the 20th" (Garibaldi 2001).

The cold war

The moral condemnation of war was even greater after the Second World War, not least because of the dreadful devastations suffered by Europe. The dismissal of the use of military force from the horizon of possible options, however, was far stronger in the defeated countries, Germany and Italy, than in those which had won, or thought they had, Great Britain and France, all the more because the latter had to face decolonization conflicts in their vanishing empires.

A wholesale war, however, was made impossible above all by the equilibrium of terror: the so-called "mutual assured destruction". War in Europe was only "cold". The Old Continent stayed in peace for 45 years; but the cold war period was not so peaceful overseas, where the two blocks clashed in the so-called "wars by proxy", from Korea to Vietnam and Afghanistan, to the manifold communist guerrillas. Whereas in Europe a phony war, "rich and virtual", was being fought, elsewhere true wars erupted, dirty, "poor and solid". The widespread perception of a forty years peace period, followed by a conflict-ridden post-bipolar world, must be revised. According to a study, between 1951 and 1985 there have been 174 conflicts, lasting in average five years, with a prevalence of civil wars (but with a sizeable participation of external actors) on inter-State wars (which, according to Holsti, in their classical form have only been 18% of conflicts after 1945). The areas more frequently plagued by war were, in decreasing order, Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Near and Middle East. A further estimate gives, in the whole period after the Second World War,

376 conflicts (Coccia 1988). Studies of the *Center for International Development and Conflict Management* of the University of Maryland for the period 1945-1990, basically supported by researches of other organizations such as Sipri of Stockholm and the University of Heidelberg, have shown that, during the cold war age, the number and intensity of local wars had been increasing, and had reached a climax immediately before the collapse of the Soviet regime. In the Nineties, conflicts gradually diminished.

The distorted perception of almost half century of peace, followed by ten years of conflicts is probably due to the fact that, in the Nineties, war reappeared in Europe, NATO has fired its first shots in anger, and the Armed Forces of countries such as Italy have newly undertaken large scale military operations abroad, whereas previously they had just garrisoned a "Fortezza Bastiani": this being the name of an imaginary fortress from a novel entitled *Il deserto dei Tartari*, where an attack is constantly expected but never takes place until it is too late for the main character to take part in the struggle (Buzzati 1940).

Cold war armies were not engaged in warfare: they only existed as a deterrent. Nowadays, on the contrary, they must be ready to fight in foreign lands, whereas conscript armies for border defence are outdated. Thus the present trend towards building professional armies is irresistible. But, except Yugoslavia, all the rest of Europe has stayed quiet. None of the wars which could reasonably be hypothesized, such as between Rumania and Hungary for the Transilvanian Hungarian minorities, between Greece and Turkey for Cyprus, or an intervention from Moscow in support of Russian minorities, have taken place. At least in the short term, war seems to have disappeared from Europe. Even in the Middle East, after the four Israeli-Arab wars between 1948 and 1973, the escalation from intifada to terrorism and its repression have not triggered a renewed attack upon Israel from the surrounding countries.

The cold war exercised a function of structural control on extant ethnical and sub-national ambitions, which, being no longer repressed, have been able to achieve pride of place. Moreover, the "end of the cold war has finally wiped out the interdependence between local conflicts and the global conflict", which can be a desirable development, but can also lessen the predictability and the opportunity of crisis management (Clark 2001).

The upshot of the rise of new nuclear powers are the object of contrasting evaluations. For some, a higher number of nuclear powers increases the probability of an atomic war. Others, however, in the persuasion that nuclear weapons have preserved peace during the cold war and that the same effect might be obtained nowadays too, maintain that we should applaud nuclear proliferation instead of deploring it, and that, within a nuclear context, States behave more cautiously. Perhaps the relationships between India and Pakistan are under control just because they are both nuclear powers, and perhaps Iraq would not have attacked Iran if Teheran had been a nuclear power. This thesis, however, raises several objections. Even more than during the cold war, nuclear weapons could escape governmental control, by mistake or insubordination. A situation of nuclear inequality between two rivals could induce the opponent, persuaded to enjoy a significant advantage, to unleash a "pre-emptive strike". Furthermore, there is the problem of the "mad tyrant or mad State", giving little heed to the safety of his own society, regarded as "impure", and therefore fearing no disastrous losses (Waltz 1981, Nicholson 2000). It is doubtless difficult to stop the proliferation. As the redefinition of regional geopolitical balances calls for the consent of the American superpower, the medium or small powers are tempted to raise their contractual weight by going nuclear.

The post-bipolar disorder

The West has won the cold war with the USSR, and for ten years has thought that the world was certainly far less peaceful than hoped, but that anyhow there was no new strategic threat. But 11 September 2001 has revealed a new enemy: Islamic terrorism. Truly, an unlucky Secretary General of NATO, Willy Claes, already in February 1995 had pointed out that "Islamic fundamentalism had emerged as perhaps the greatest threat to Western security since the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe", but had been compelled to a diplomatic recantation (Claes 1995). In the same diplomatic mood, NATO and chancery documents now talk of a threat of "international terrorism", without being more precise as to its origin. To defeat Nazism, the Anglo-Americans had supported the Soviets, and Liddell Hart (1950) had wondered whether it was wise for Westerners to help those communist resistance movements, such as that of Tito, which were going to introduce

totalitarianism in their own country. The same question should have been considered by the Americans, who supplied the *mujaheddin* to defeat the Soviets in Afghanistan and supported Iraq to contain Iran.

The conflict between Islam and the West shows analogies and differences with the cold war. The greatest difference concerns the absence, today, of a global military threat of a traditional kind, which, however, was nullified by the fear of a nuclear catastrophe. Nowadays, instead, Islamic terrorists display an archaic death wish and a vocation to suicide-homicide religiously motivated. Ecumenic idle talk cannot hide that fact that Mohammed has been the only founder of a religion who was also a military chieftain and that Islam began immediately to expand by aggressive wars. For a complete military history of the wars between the Christian nations and Islam, from the early Arab conquests of the 7th century to the present, see Leoni (2002). If the strategic dilemmas of the equilibrium of terror are no longer a present concern, we face today a serious threat of mass destruction weapons against our societies. The chief analogy is that West, as during cold war, is again obliged to fight both an outside enemy and an internal one. The Communist parties and their road companions made up then the fifth columns of the enemy, whereas today the fifth column is represented both by non-integrated Islamic masses and, in more ambiguous fashion, tough no less serious, by those who repudiate the Christian religious tradition. Now, as then, the liberal West grants its internal enemies a freedom denied dissenters in the opposite camp.

It must be constantly borne in mind that the cold war was won by the West by no means through "dialogue", "compromise, lay or ecclesiastical *Ostpolitik*. The Helsinki conference of 1975 was but an accolade *de jure* to the *status quo* of the Soviet unrestrained dominion in Central-Eastern Europe, in a climate of resignation to the situation, which in Italy took the form of a deep mistrust in the possibility of opposing the accession of Communists to power. According to some historians, this was compensated by the "third basket" of the Helsinki Conference, that concerning "human rights", which allegedly had a decisive impact in the collapse of USSR. But according to Sergio Romano, "the Soviets cashed the provisions concerning borders and signed with a shrug of the shoulders those on human rights", which became "a mere *banderilla* to be driven from time to time in the back of the Communist bull" (Romano 2001). The Soviet block collapsed when the new

Pope John Paul II swept aside the prudence of *Ostpolitik* and President Reagan launched his military challenge to the "empire of evil". Likewise, on the eve of the attack against the Taliban regime of Afghanistan, many counselled prudence, stressing the hazards of protracted operations, the need to interrupt them during *ramadan* to avoid provoking an Islamic revolt and a crisis of the anti-terrorism coalition, the fear of destabilizing Pakistan and other Muslim States or of unleashing reprisals from terrorists. Nothing of the kind has taken place and firmness has delivered the goods, although the victory has not been decisive so far.

Even refraining from uncritical acceptance of Huntington's (1996) approach, it would be hard to deny that the tensions between the West and Islam generates problems of the highest severity, since both civilizations aim at universality and possess a considerable "aggressive" potential, the West by the explosive power of economic globalization and the Muslim world with its militant and totalitarian faith. In Huntington's view, in order to avoid major wars between civilizations, the core States of each of them must abstain to interfere in the conflicts of the other (abstention rule) and negotiate to contain conflicts between Western and Muslim States (joint mediation rule). The West, moreover, should not seek to meddle in conflicts between other populations when these have no consequences or little consequences" for it, and should accept that Western intervention in the affairs of other civilizations is probably the most dangerous source of instability and potential global conflicts in a world based on plurality of civilizations.

Also a French author, Pierre Lellouche (1994), maintains that the great revolution of 1989, far from being a token of victory of the European model at a world scale, points out instead the end of the great European ideological and strategic models which have given this century its imprint: certainly communism, and perhaps European-style democracy. In short, we may have reached the autumn of the white man, on a planet whose population, in the next fifty years, will surge from five to ten billion. A world in which the European, the American, the Russian will have become small minorities, with a proportion of one to ten. In this regard, Paul Kennedy, quoting an Iraqi poster which reads "Beget a son and you will have driven an arrow in the eye of your enemy", identifies the challenge of "how to use the power of technology to meet the demands thrown up by the power of population" (Kennedy 1993). This, after all, is nothing new, because, historically, from the Per-

sian Wars of the 5th century BC onwards, the West has sought to balance the imbalance in numbers by means of a superiority in science, technology, organization and training. The truly new fact is that today the "barbarians" have massively lethal technologies too.

After the Twenties, a further time of great illusions were the Nineties, begun, at the time of the Gulf War, with hopes in a "new world order", bitter disappointments in Somalia, in Yugoslavia and elsewhere, with the Kosovo war in the name of "human rights", a hoped-for prelude to a general triumph of international justice. The use of military force seemed permissible only in operations containing the prefix "peace", or labelled "humanitarian", both reeking of ambiguity. Soldiers had to become something like policemen, social workers, licensed nurses, in a climate of international hypocrisy hiding the hard and classical realities of power politics.

Campaigns for democracy, peacekeeping operations and "humanitarian interventions", which had characterized the Nineties, inevitably lost significance after September 11, not only because military resources cannot be wasted on non vital objectives, and it will be necessary to turn a blind eye on the violations of human rights made by anyone willing to help in the fight against terrorism, but also because, as stressed above, an idealistic diplomacy aiming at exporting Western values is regarded by the other cultures as a form of imperialism which adds to the economic impact of globalization. War and diplomacy must again serve national security in its full meaning, and the hierarchy of world power newly regards military force as its basic reference (Galli della Loggia 2002).

Can we hope to be moving towards a wholesale reduction of the use of force, thanks also to the diffusion of democracy and the free market, as hoped by Bonanate, Armao & Tuccari (1997)? In this regard, we must draw a clear distinction among geopolitical areas. The refusal of war is apparently circumscribed to industrial States having a liberal democratic political system. Such States, *in the relationships with one another*, have phased it out duel, slavery and human sacrifices. This, however, has not taken place in the Third World, whereby a dichotomy arises between two types of worlds living in greatly different ages: on the one hand a cosmopolitan and comparatively peaceful society, on the other static societies in which traditional conflicts, myths and prejudices keep flourishing. Some Third World States still rely on military force to acquire a regional hegem-

ony (Jean 1995a, 1995b, 1996). The nuclear tests of 1998 in India and Pakistan and the ensuing outbreak of enthusiasm among the lower populace of those countries, the war between two extremely poor States such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, but also the desperate efforts of the USSR to keep up in the nuclear power race, and the over three million soldiers of China (disregarding the territorial forces, estimated in 17 million in the early Eighties), are exceedingly significant indicators of the enduring importance attached to military power as a factor for international status.

To speculate whether an entirely democratic world will phase out wars is an empty intellectual exercise, in view of the extreme unlikeness of the precondition. It is instead of considerable interest to study whether democracies operate internationally in an appreciably different way from other political regimes (1997). It is a fact that democratisation has led to an increase of conflicts in the former Soviet empire, due to the so-called self-determination dilemma. According to Howard (1981), the sole cultural factor seems an absolute precondition for a successful establishment of democracy is a sense of identity or national unity. Therefore, "The only cultural factor that would appear to be an absolute prerequisite for the successful establishment of democracy is a sense of national identity or unity (...) For countries like the Soviet Union or Yugoslavia, then, the process of genuine democratization must be preceded by a period of national separation, which is, and promises to be, a painful and bloody process, give the physical intermingling of peoples" (Fukuyama 1991-92). Countries in transition towards democracy often become more aggressive, and is far from guaranteed that democratic countries will be friendly to the West: Iran, for example, is doubtless more democratic than Saudi Arabia, but is not pro-American (or, unlike the latter, does not pretend to be). On the other hand, the history of the First World War shows that, when a messianic interventionism prevails, whether genuine or hiding power interests, democracies fight to destroy dictatorships, and such "crusades" do no leave space for compromise.

Another widespread opinion needs to be at least partially questioned: that the existence of strong sovereign States is a factor in the outbreak of war. In fact, wars break out nowadays precisely where the State is weak. Strong States are a vital factor in keeping both internal and external peace, whereas a weak State is prey to a vicious circle. The latter does not possess the ability to create legitimacy by providing security and other

services, while it indulges in predatory practices both inside and outside, and therefore all it does to become a strong State in fact just makes it weaker (Holsti 1996). Rousseau correctly maintained that "If one had no sovereign States one would have no wars", but not less correctly Hobbes stressed that in that case we would not have peace either (Howard 1983), and that a world without armies – disciplined, obedient and law-abiding armies – would be uninhabitable (Keegan 2001).

Already before the attacks to the Twin Towers, the only remaining superpower, the United States, regarded the use of military force as a basic component of their foreign policy, although, since the end of the cold war, American forces were reduced comparatively more than the European, and the US defence budget was also reduced proportionally to those of the European States. Even prior to the suicide attacks of 2001, however, the United States, having a gross internal product less than half than of the other G7 countries taken together, spent for defence more than twice as much as the other six countries. Besides being larger, the funds spent for defence in America were differently allocated: 30% of the American defence budget is destined to research and development. In Europe, only Great Britain and France approach this level, while the European average is 10-12%, for a total of 10 billion dollars against 35 spent by the Americans.

In particular, the difference between the European and the American armed forces concerns the C4I sectors (command, control, communication, computers and information) and the strategic transport capability. The British position as a world power in the 19th century was essentially supported by the ubiquitous presence of the Royal Navy, and by the same token, nowadays the United States are the only NATO country capable of deploying and supporting for an extended period sizeable forces far from their territory, while the static forces of continental European countries, largely made up until recently of recruits, appear like "dinosaurs" or, according to the definition of former SACLANT general John J. Sheenan, a constabulary. This gap is a consequence of the cold war, when European armies were expected to provide the mass of troops for the clash on the Central European land front (and at the threshold of Gorizia), and were already close to the potential battlefields, whereas a large part of the American forces had to be ready to reach the frontline as quickly as possible to support their 350,000 comrades-in-arms already deployed in the Old Continent.

Historically, the United States, after the Second World War have been more inclined than Europeans to cut with the sword the tangles of international politics, and this trend became more marked after 1956, a year marking the end of military sovereignty of European powers. However, they have shown a tendency of breaking up the engagement before having achieved a decisive victory as well as a reluctance to deploy land forces, as shown by the wars in Korea, in Vietnam, in the Gulf and by the expeditions in Lebanon, Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo. The reason for this, as pointed out by Edward Luttwak (1994, 1995), is that all post-industrial nations, having a zero population growth, are practically, largely demilitarized and therefore ready to accept only a "post-heroic" type of war. In the case of the Americans this is also linked to the "Vietnam syndrome": By intensive exploitation of high technology, the deployment of land forces and casualties must be kept to a minimum. Consequently, as in 18th century wars, it will be necessary to be content with slow and partial results, when to do more would cost too many American lives, and to do nothing would be damaging for international order and the self-esteem of the United States. Evidently, in the Afghan war, American public opinion was prepared, in the name of a clear national interest, to tolerate higher casualties than in the case of the ambiguous intervention in Kosovo. However, no clear-cut conclusions can be reached on the matter, as the actual task on the ground against the Talibans has been mainly carried out by the *mujaheddins*.

New wars?

The Nineties were characterized, for the Westerners, by peace-imposing and peace-keeping operations in ethnic conflicts and by the "humanitarian" intervention in Kosovo.

Ethnic conflicts and civil wars are no immediate and direct threats to the security and interests of the West, but rather postponed and indirect. According to a pragmatic view of international society, an intervention should be attempted only if there are risks for international security, bearing in mind that no one is prepared to sustain heavy costs or casualties merely to uphold values and that the use of military force can be far from decisive. According to Jean (1995a, 1995b, 1996), there are no military solutions to an ethnic conflict or a civil war. Force can only bring about the preconditions making a political solution possible. It can do some things but not others: for instance

it can separate two ethnic groups, but cannot oblige them to live together. Conditions for successful peace enforcement operations are: "Clear and achievable political goals; political will to enforce the ceasefire; commitment to contribute substantial forces; assignment of all troops to an integrated command structure; international legitimization of the intervention; political support for the use of force when national interests are not at stake" (Mazarr 1993). But the West lacks the necessary tools, i.e. the rough infantries who conquered its empires in the past, essential for the success of operations of this kind, of low intensity and long duration, during which Western technological superiority cannot be easily brought into play (Jean 1995b).

The case of Bosnia has shown on the contrary that UN soldiers have been unable to secure peace, being devoid of the credit of NATO troops, whose military force is a precondition of humanitarian intervention.

Evaluation of the Kosovo war is highly controversial, and likewise controversial is the concept of "humanitarian interference" (De Leonardis 2001). One declared goal of NATO military action was to prevent a "humanitarian catastrophe", but this has become far more serious just after the onset of bombardments (according to the OECD, on March 23, 1999 there were 69,500 Kosovar refugees, but they had soared to 862,979 on June 9). The other goal was to oblige the Yugoslav government to accept the solution of a broad autonomy for Kosovo. The outcome is self-evident: the utter impossibility to persuade the two ethnic groups of the region to live together, and a drive to an independence which no one said to be prepared to foster. In general, the display of a new international engagement in favour of human rights and against repressive actions by governments seems to have missed the target. On the contrary, the attack autonomously decided by NATO has legitimized unilateral intervention by powers which, due to their importance and the availability of nuclear weapons, do not fear American interference, and in fact Moscow, in entirely reasonable fashion in terms of *Realpolitik*, has carried out a harsh repression in Chechnya, while the West acquiesced uneasily. on the one hand, a feeling of insecurity has been fostered among leaders fearing external intervention, and this could lead to an escalation of military expenses, including those for nuclear hardware. On the other hand, by claiming that action in Kosovo and not elsewhere was due to the fact that this is a European region, has lessened the credibility of intervention in other continents, where dictators could therefore feel secure.

At the press conference of April 25, 1999, concluding the NATO summit in Washington, Mrs. Albright, in reply to a question on the risk of an escalation with other ethnic minorities of former Yugoslavia, beginning with the Hungarians of Vojvodina, entering the struggle to achieve autonomy, replied: "I think we should see that dealing with these issues in a military way, or by use of force or violence, is not the way to solve anything. It just adds to the problems." (Press briefing concluding the NATO 50th Anniversary and Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council Meetings, Washington, April 25, 1999, http://www.usia.gov/topical/pol/eap/alberg25.htm). A humanitarian war risks to raise dangerous expectations, as the world is full of potential ethnic wars, which could be stirred up by the example of Kosovo.

The credibility of the military instrument has been undermined by the abuse of a caricature of Churchill's rhetoric, whereby Clinton has misused the term "genocide", describing for instance the Kosovo conflict as "a great battle between the forces of integration and those of disintegration; between the forces of globalism and those of tribalism", and above all the misuse of the concept of "vital interests", which usually points to something which could not be renounced, something essential for national security, which, if threatened, must be defended in full strength of arms. By defining "vital" the intervention in the Balkans, the Clinton administration has devalued the term. By showing from the very earliest day an obsessive preoccupation to avoid casualties among its own soldiers, it has deprived of any credibility its own statements or, worse, has given a clear sign of being unprepared to risk a "great battle", for a "vital question". By fighting a conflict in which casualties have been almost entirely among civilians, overturning the traditional logic of war and a relapse from the rules laboriously worked out over the centuries, the prestige of the military institution has been undermined and strengthened the arguments of pacifists and antimilitarists. An intolerable asymmetry has emerged between the well sheltered soldiers of the alliance and the infinitely vulnerable civilians whom the expedition was supposed to save (Alan Finkielkraut, interviewed in *Corriere della Sera*, May 29, 1999). Zbigniew Brzezinski (*Corriere della Sera*, June 16, 1999) has admitted that to the rest of the world the war American-style smacks of high tech racism. Its hidden precondition is that the life of one of our soldiers is more worth than those of thousands of Kosovars.

In fact the American government did not even dare to call things with their proper name. The secretary of State Albright refused in the Senate to reply to the question whether that was a war. The Secretary of Defence Cohen stated that the American troops were engaged in hostilities, in an armed conflict, but, defying ridicule, has declared himself "unqualified" to say whether this falls within the traditional definition of war. The oxymoron "humanitarian war" is only one of the examples of the neolanguage of an Orwellian hue (Manning 1999), whose origins date back to the age of the First World War. This neolanguage has run rampant particularly in Italy: the *Centro Alti Studi Militari* (Centre for Higher Military Studies) has become *Centro Alti Studi Difesa* (Centre for Higher Studies on Defence), the *Istituto di Guerra Marittima* (Institute for War at Sea) had changed name into *Istituto di Studi Militari Marittimi* (Institute of Maritime Military Studies) to avoid annoying the hypersensitivity of the left-wing municipal administration of Venice. A "policy of armaments" is no longer to be mentioned, but "policy of defence materials" is politically correct instead, and so on in such priggish way. The author listened with some bewilderment a prestigious "pacifist" political scientist harangue the officials of the *Scuola di Applicazione dell'Esercito* (Army Application School) in Turin saying that their institute was not a school for preparation to war, but a place where a culture of peace and democracy was to be built to avoid war. One might well ask where should our officials learn to avoid being killed (and therefore sometimes, unavoidably, to kill the enemy) when the government sends them to Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and so forth. Perhaps they should demand that the prestigious political scientist be sent in their stead.

The hypocritical *langue de bois* has also infected the increasingly long-winded documents of NATO. The Strategic Concept of 1999 reads that the forces of the Alliance must anyway be able "– in case of conflict – [to] conclude the war rapidly obliging the enemy to reconsider its own decision, to suspend the attack and withdraw", avoiding to state simply that it is necessary "to defeat the enemy" or "win the war". Quite correctly, Admiral James O. Ellis Jr., Commander in Chief of NATO for Southern Europe (CINCSOUTH) and Commander of the Sixth American Fleet, in the message for the Navy feast of October 13, 1999, used instead a far more warlike language: "America will continue to need a navy capable to sail anywhere, fight when necessary and in this case win unhesitatingly" (cit. in *Panorama*, October 10, 1999).

After September 2001, anyway, such hypocrisy is utterly outdated. Whereas the "new" characters of wars brought little worries in the Nineties, as the West could stay out of conflicts which did not threaten it directly (one had only to switch off the television set to avoid seeing the victims), nowadays these entail a deadly challenge to our society: the prospects of an attack by means of WMD against a Western city are surely less apocalyptic but are perhaps more likely than those of a nuclear holocaust of the cold war age. "The probability that a missile armed with WMD would be used against US forces or interests is higher today than during most of the cold war and will continue to grow", according to a CIA report (2000).

The traditional relationships of State sovereignty with the monopoly of force and territorial rootedness have slackened in the last ten years. Terrorists and criminals "often command large arsenals previously affordable only to tax-raising governments, [but] they do not obey the rules that sovereign governments observe" (Keegan 2001). Forcefully comes to the fore a new kind of organized violence, which blurs the traditional difference among internal and external conflicts and transnational wars, between wars waged by "legitimate actors" and private wars on the brink of organized crime, between external aggressions and uprisings, between legitimate repression of violent groups and large scale violations of human rights. The fighters of these conflicts, besides regular armies, are paramilitary units of local warlords, mercenary groups, criminal bands, police forces, units detached from regular armies. Differences between legitimate and non legitimate fighters become blurred, as well as between fighters and civilians, and among soldiers, policemen and criminals. Moreover, irregular fighters have advanced technologies at their disposal, such as non-identifiable landmines, light weight user-friendly weapons which can be used even by children, cellular phones; they finance themselves with plunder, black market, external assistance, such as aids by ethnic and religious diasporas, "taxation" imposed upon humanitarian assistance, support by neighbouring governments, illegal commerce of weapons, smuggling of drugs or highly valued goods such as oil and diamonds. Each of these financing sources requires a continued support of violence. Nuclei of war economies exist in the Balkans, in the Caucasus, Central Asia, the Horn of Africa, Central and West Africa.

There is growing trend of civilians becoming the main victims of armed conflicts. At the beginning of the 20th century, the ratio between mili-

tary and civilian victims was eight to one; already in the Second World War the two scores were alike; nowadays the ratio is one soldier to eight civilians. This statistics is to be compared to another one according to which, in the 20th century, 119 million casualties have been caused by infra-State conflicts and 36 by inter-State ones (Roche 2000). The latter, as already pointed out, are decreasing and involve mostly small and medium powers outside the West (but India and Pakistan are far from small). It is obvious that the prevalence of infra-State conflicts leads to an increase of civilian victims. Until a short time ago, the inhabitants of the West, could feel secure, as their countries seem to have abolished both interState and civil wars. Moreover, after the end of the cold war, all armed forces are becoming professional and the States do not any longer ask their citizens to shed their blood. But nowadays the menace of terrorism hangs on our heads and Western civilians are under the threat of death too.

The "new" wars have prompted attempts at taxonomy building, definitions, strategic thinking. Already during the cold war, in the United States the definition "low intensity conflict" had been coined to indicate la guerrilla or terrorism (Cecchini 1990). In the Nineties, such terms were concocted as "informal wars", "privatized wars", "post-modern wars", "third kind wars" (the first type being the limited wars of the ancien régime and the second the wholesale wars of the 20th century). The term "wars of the peoples" was also used. The panoply of modern conflicts includes military operations other than war, operations by armed forces carried out in absence of a state of war, which is no longer formally declared, non military war operations, or the hostile use of every human activity, such as the attack by hackers to computer systems, the unethical use of the mass media, financial wars aiming at the destruction of the economy of a country. The result is the nearly wholesale elimination of any delimitation between what is war and what is not, between the military and the non military sphere. War has disappeared, because it has no longer any limit: everything is "war". In spite of that, strictly military factors preserve their specific characters, while peace as such has utterly disappeared.

Some have thought to uncover a new phenomenon: "asymmetrical wars". Actually "the asymmetrical threat is as old as military strategy and it arises when one of the contending parties, too weak to fight on a level, chooses behaviours and tactics other than open fighting. There are three types of asymmetrical threat: guerrilla i.e. partisan war, including urban terrorism, the use, or threat to

use weapons of mass destruction, or cyberterrorism (Rapetto & Di Nunzio 2001), i.e. all actions acting on the vulnerability of society and its institutions, increasingly dependant on computer networks. Asymmetrical war, including these three categories, has always existed, though in different forms, but only in the global village has it become a mortal threat.

In fact, during the anti-Western guerrillas (in many of which communism and anticolonialism were tightly linked) several characters of "asymmetrical wars" had come to the fore. In Vietnam one saw the concurrence of "technological illusion" and moral weakness which brought the Americans to defeat. Western military thinking has come so far as to conceive the utopia of a war fought almost entirely by robots, with just a handful of men to service them. Already in Algeria and Indochina, in the Fifties and Sixties, there had been a crisis of infantries, traditionally the backbone of all armies, due to the lack, among the Western peoples, of the ability to face fatigue, sacrifice and finally death, which is typical, instead, of preindustrial societies (Galli della Loggia 1982), so that the French and the Americans had to rely on special corps, the Foreign Legion or Green Berets. In Vietnam, American hyperfed and hyperequipped soldiers, napalm bombings, sensors placed in the forests, did not succeed to do away with the Vietcong, who subsisted on a handful of rice, infiltrated through the "Ho Chi Minh path" and, unlike the Americans, were persuaded to fight for a just cause.

Thus it became evident the huge dichotomy between the technological war of the West, seeking to minimize risks for its men, and the "dirty" wars of tribes, ethnic, political and religious groups of the "other world" (which could also be in Europe, see Bosnia and Kosovo!), where human life is of little value and is spent easily. The anti-personnel mine, the Kalashnikov or even the *machete* (which in Rwanda and Burundi has caused a number of casualties five times higher than those of the Hiroshima bomb) still rule the battlefield. It would be for the West a serious mistake, already made in Vietnam, to give for granted an easy victory of its way of fighting on the other. However, against the guerrillas following the Second World War, the British achieved many successes (Pimlott 1984), the most important in Malaysia, following a politico-military strategy based on co-operation with indigenous conservative leaders, strictest respect for local cultures and traditions, economic help and administrative support to do away with discontent, training of friendly regular

forces, limited use of warplanes and artillery to avoid casualties among the civilians whose support was sought, high fighting spirit of special forces operating in close touch with the local people, aggressive patrolling of frontier areas to prevent guerrilla fighters to receive supplies or to escape. The imperial experience of London is still precious in operations against terrorists and the States supporting them.

One has to face the problem of a possible "uselessness of the 'Western way of warfare' when confronted by an opponent who refuses to share its cultural assumption", because "war embraces much more than politics: (...) it is always an expression of culture, often a determinant of cultural forms, in some societies the culture itself". Differences in the conception of war is one of the most striking unlikenesses between Western civilization and Islam. While the West, beginning with Medieval Christianity, century after century, has worked out comprehensive rules to "civilize" war, under Islamic law, for example, "women and children might be spared unless they fought against the Muslims (...) The elderly, lunatic, blind, handicapped, sick and so forth (...) might be killed or spared (...) The prisoners who become converted after capture might be spared – but not necessarily" (Piacentini Fiorani 1996). Allah has never been a pacifist neither has become so today, whereas many Christians are loath to use weapons even in self-defence.

In conclusion, we are bound, unfortunately, to point out, turning to the sentence by Sir Henry Maine quoted at the outset, that peace is an invention still in great need of improvement. Nowadays Luttwak has even come to overturn the slogan of American pacifists of the Sixties and Seventies, *give peace a chance*, maintaining that sometimes it is necessary to "give war a chance", meaning that military operations postponed or not carried out to the end do not solve crises, and even worsen them, or lay the basis for new conflicts. In this line, the Bush administration has formulated the concept of "preventive war", which nowadays is a shock to many, but is not very different from what *anti-appeasers* maintained against Hitler. Today, for sure, no responsible statesman could plan military budgets on the basis of the *ten years rule* (no war foreseen for at least ten years), adopted in 1919 upon urging from Churchill, and which the British military commands abandoned only after the accession of the *Führer* to power.

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