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The paradigm of war in the 20th century: an instrument of change?

Section: MILITARY STUDIES

Scientific and technological research article

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El paradigma de la guerra en el siglo XX:
¿instrumento de cambio?

O paradigma da guerra no século XX:
um instrumento de mudança?

Le paradigme de la guerre au XXe siècle :
un instrument de changement?

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Abstract. This article analyzes the evolution of the concept of war in the 20th century from different views. The analysis explores the aspects that have characterized war and the different perceptions it has aroused in the last century, as the changes in these perceptions have, in turn, generated an alteration in the instrumental use of the war conflict. Ultimately, the study seeks to analyze the extent to which war is an instrument of change in societies to the beginning of the 21st century, especially in the fields of psychological perception, state forms, the structure of societies, and international relationships.

Keywords: politics; society; State; twentieth century; war.

Resumen. Este artículo analiza la evolución del concepto de guerra en el siglo XX desde diversas posiciones. El análisis trata de averiguar los aspectos que han caracterizado la guerra y las diferentes percepciones que se han tenido de esta en el siglo pasado, ya que los cambios en tales percepciones han generado a su vez una modificación en el uso instrumental del conflicto bélico. En última instancia, el estudio busca analizar hasta qué punto la guerra es un instrumento de cambio en las sociedades hasta principios del siglo XXI, especialmente, en los ámbitos de la percepción psicológica, las formas de Estado, la estructura de las sociedades y las relaciones internacionales.

Palabras clave: Estado; guerra; política; siglo XX; sociedad.

Resumo. Este artigo analisa a evolução do conceito de guerra no século XX a partir de diferentes posições. A análise tenta descobrir os aspectos que caracterizaram a guerra e as diferentes percepções que se tiveram disso no século passado, já que as mudanças em tais percepções geraram, por sua vez, uma modificação no uso instrumental do conflito bélico. Em última instância, o estudo procura analisar em que medida a guerra é um instrumento de mudança nas sociedades até o início do século XXI, especialmente nos campos da percepção psicológica, das formas estatais, da estrutura das sociedades e as relações internacionais.

Palavras-chave: Estado; guerra; política; século XX; sociedade.

Résumé. Cet article analyse l'évolution du concept de la guerre au XXe siècle à partir de différentes positions. L'analyse tente de découvrir les aspects qui ont caractérisé la guerre et les différentes perceptions qui ont été perçues au cours du siècle dernier, car les changements dans ces perceptions ont entraîné à leur tour une modification de l'utilisation instrumentale du conflit guerrier. En fin de compte, l'étude cherche à analyser dans quelle mesure la guerre est un instrument de changement dans les sociétés jusqu'au début du XXIe siècle, en particulier dans les domaines de la perception psychologique, des formes d'état, de la structure des sociétés et des relations international

Mots-clés : Etat ; la guerre ; la politique ; la société ; 20ème siècle.

Introduction

There is no debating the permanence of war in the development of societies and its persistence throughout the centuries. Its causes, masterfully described by the British polemologist Michael Howard (1983), are so manifold that attempting to unravel them would lead us directly to the very nature of man. Their numbers are practically incalculable. However, recent studies have indicated that some 14,500 major wars have been fought since the fourth-millennium a.c., resulting in approximately 4,000,000,000 casualties (Statistics on violent conflict, 2012). Not only is the number and frequency of wars highly significant in itself but also, the fact that they have taken place in virtually every region of the planet and have affected every civilization equally (Cotta, 1987, pp. 11-37).

The logical and immediate conclusion of this fact is that the phenomenon of war is not linked, in essence, to any political thought, level of development, type of state structure or geographic conditioning but rather, it is an inherent and unique human activity in society. Therefore, it seems that war has and still plays a profound role in “creative destruction” (Franco, 2000, pp. 60-63) beyond its possible causes. In a small but influential study, the historian Arnold Toynbee indicated that war is intimately linked to the positive vision that the so-called “military virtues of the warrior” had for many years, virtues associated to honor, heroism, and personal sacrifice (Toynbee, 1976, pp. 22-33)¹. Seemingly, the old thesis of the relationship between capitalism and war (Sombart, 1943) has also been overcome because although money is indispensable for the exercise of war (*pecunia nervus belli*)², it does not seem to be its leading, much less its only, origin, but another instrument of the game of instrumental violence.

Assuming that human societies are prone to war, as a customary instrument of conflict resolution (the causes of war will not be addressed systematically in this work), a first analysis would bring us to question whether human progress has some relation with the frequency of wars and whether they have any relationship with technical-ideological advancement.

These issues are revealing; they help us make a qualitative leap in the interpretation of the phenomenon of war, especially from the social sciences. They also enable us to approach the social function as a driver of change, as well as to understand the pervasiveness of the positive vision of war throughout history, which has been presumed regenerative and even tinged with a clear nuance of progress (Aznar, 2014, p. 3). At the same time, these perspectives include parameters such as ethics, values for the analysis of group mental behaviors.

1 English edition: Toynbee, A. (1952). *War and Civilization*. London: Oxford University Press.

2 “Money is the sinew of war.”

From this viewpoint, studies on war are dramatically turning towards interpretations of substance, as the quantification of the number of wars or the deaths caused by them only provide repetitive frequencies and establish something that we already know or intuit, that Man has a seemingly natural tendency towards conflict. However, by shifting interpretative analysis towards less tangible aspects, we can establish models to understand war that connect with a social and even philosophical perspective.

Until recently, these models were based on Clausewitz's famous *trinity*, for whom the nature of war (thus, any explanation of it) focused on the imminent hostility existing in a people, the use of violence as a military instrument dominated by chance, and a government's political objective (Fojón 2006, p. 3). Of these three elements, the first one draws us closer to a Hobbesian perception of war, which transfers the mechanism of conflict to the base that sustains it, society. The second refers to the recognized unpredictability of the development of war; even the military cannot establish *scientific* rules to determine the military outcome of a conflict, despite the persistent efforts made (Dupuy, 1990). The last aspect impacts the transcendental decision-making behind entering society and the military into war; that is, in the *political awareness* that the conflict is either inevitable or product of a political need of the State.

War and politics

From the political sciences, wars have been fundamentally linked to political decisions —pragmatic or not— and, in this sense, they could be related to theories of international relations, especially political realism (Barbe, 1987, pp. 152-154). Throughout the twentieth century, a qualitative leap has been observed from the traditional notion of conflict, as a clash of relatively instrumental interests of the members of a society that tend to impose their will through war (Clausewitz, 1831, p. 29), to the notion that national interest —concerning power— represents an objective category of international relations, which inevitably drives States into conflict (Morgenthau, 1990, pp. 45-51).

The idea that politics champions as a dominant force and is, therefore, the path that leads to inevitable conflict, has enjoyed excellent academic health in the 20th century. In this sense, it has been argued that States are the decisive actors in international relations and that they are the ones who focus political interests towards war (Walt, 1998, pp. 29-33). In a natural reaction to this political realism, Doyle (1997) suggested that democratic States ostensibly diminish military friction because the pursuit for consensus, dialogue, and common interests is in their intrinsic nature. Thus arises the traditional dispute between the liberal and realistic school regarding the role of politics in war, its causes, and its objectives. Between the two, Fukuyama's famous work sustained that the end of conflicts,

as well as the *end of history*, was intimately connected with the incontestable success of both political and economic liberal thought, derived, in turn, from the ostensible defeat of its two great political rivals, dictatorship and authoritarianism (fascism, Nazism, and its derivatives), as well as Soviet totalitarianism (Fukuyama, 1992).

While the debate remains open, it seems that the evolution of the phenomenon of war in the twentieth century has followed a political course in which, despite the existence of other complex motivations, war is ultimately placed before political calculation and, thus, to the concrete decision based on a study on the balance of powers (Howard, 1984, pp. 22-23). Therefore, the theories on the phenomenon of war, although they diverge in certain aspects (especially those related to endogenous and psychological factors), are increasingly positioned on the basis that war occurs driven by a calculated game of national interests, the personality of its leaders, the perception of conflict, and empathy with the potential enemy or the skills to sustain the war effort, among other aspects (Blainey, 1988, p.123).

The two central positions regarding an ontological explanation of the phenomenon of war (realism and liberalism) rest—in my view—on different approaches to a single aspect, the political nature of the confrontation and the pursuit of tangible results. Although the version of political realism (neorealism) developed, ignores the human nature of violence (Waltz, 1959) and focuses on the effects of the system of international relations (great powers that seek to survive in the midst of chaos brought about by the lack of regulatory entities), it is impossible to give a detailed explanation without taking into account that, in the twentieth century, war (now an industrial war) relies on society's direct or indirect support, which undoubtedly reflects the political decisions of its leaders. And although liberalism insists on relating the phenomenon of conflict with "other political actors," such as the international monetary systems, the energy system, and ecology, as well as the emerging possibilities of collaboration between liberal (democratic) States and the type of government (Carr, 1942), one should not overlook that, very perceptible political decisions characterize these systems or possibilities in the twentieth century. In fact, democratic states channel their visions of foreign policy and the possibilities of entering or avoiding conflict in a careful political balance of the cost-benefit of their actions, regardless of its government or economic system's proneness to dialogue.

In this regard, the United States and its Western allies' disposition to champion military actions to defend liberal positions after the Second World War is evident, buttressed by the belief that the liberal and democratic model *must be* the predominant form of political action on a universal scale, thereby criminalizing any other form of government. The fight for freedom has been, in this sense, a political, symbolic, and discursive resource to *advance* (develop) civilization led by the West, according to the positive vision of the

political model that, despite its apparent tendency to inclusion and dialogue, has not hesitated to undertake *liberation* wars. In fact, this argument has been qualified, quite correctly, as a conservative vision of freedom and its meaning (Foner, 2010, pp. 482-490).

The relationships between the public and the political, and war —of course— are not exclusive to the 20th century. The collapse of the concept of legitimacy of the private use of violence, which has gradually occurred since the 16th century (birth the *Modern State*), is related to the opening of the concept of power and domination of the private sphere (intermediate powers: nobility and aristocracy) to the State. This notion has evolved, up to the nineteenth century, with the predominance of the ideas of freedom and rationalism (Habermas, 1981, pp. 104-117). However, both of these concepts collided in a changing world with a resurgence of revolutionary violence in the nineteenth century, which by definition is anti-systemic and anti-state. A violence that clashes head-on with politics and the structures of a changing society driven by progress, which that has its downside in the group struggle for the power (again political) of those who refuse to accept the legislation of the period.

The new ideologies of the time (anarchism, socialism) were allegorically postulated as alternatives of power against societies that needed stability (reflex of state violence) to extensively develop their program of economic progress (Second Industrial Revolution). However, paradoxically, while the promise of a new social power shuddered the foundations of the bourgeois elites of progressive Western societies, the nineteenth century set the stage for a rational re-emergence of the war, this time on “objective” bases associated with political interests.

The rule of law and rights made the nineteenth century the foundation of a new era, in which civic-military relations amalgamated on the forefronts of new science. At this point, the measurement of time was altered, as well as the perception of reality. Chemistry commenced its decisive stages, Mendel’s laboratory produced the laws of inheritance, Darwin established the evolutionary principles of humanity, Mendeleev looked at the earth and space through physics, Malthus established the principles of demographic development, Comte transformed our vision of the surrounding world with the birth of sociology (“social physics”), and Lombroso conjectured laws to determine the degree of evil and criminality of a common man using simple physiognomic features. It was the triumph of progress. However, a counterpoint soon emerged, a rejection of the “objectivity” of a peaceful century like the nineteenth century.

Shifting between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Georg Simmel, founder of the sociology of the conflict, interpreted war with a culture-revitalizing theory, which contrasted creation and its interpretation, that thrust the young to the extreme of passion

and the absolute (Simmel, 1955, p. 322), a new Philosophy of Life. The machine and objective reason were rejected, as well as law and its inset into the state machinery; it was the belief in the action against the calculating development of the necessary (Joas, 2005, pp. 96-97). However, Simmel, as did Weber, from a more political perspective, inserted this vision in the State and politics (Vernik, 2011, pp. 3-7).

Despite political calculations' buttressing of the evolution of war, especially during the twentieth century, political factors begin to be determined by other constants, perhaps no less important. There are cultural, anthropological, and ideological elements that decisively influence the behavior of States (governments) inclining towards violent resolutions. In this sense, anthropology has shown that aggressive behavior is as social as it is individual but tends to increase depending on the degree of social and cultural homogeneity. Tracing the pugnacity of solutions in an ascending cultural framework is possible starting with the basic social unit (the family); the degree of homogeneity of a social environment is stressed by the cognitive variable of a global response to conflict.

Families —and in ascending order municipalities, cities, and regions— have a natural tendency to acquire commonly accepted unitary values, interpreted in unison, basically, by the degree of coexistence. The accelerated increase of social and cultural homogeneity since the nineteenth century led to the unitary interpretation of common values to its highest level. Already into the twentieth century, State propaganda and cultural indoctrination, the introduction of national hymns and anthems, and the awareness of a comprehensible common past led societies to accept a higher degree of pugnacity (Malinowski & Ritcher, 1941, p.122). These elements are noteworthy because, as we will discuss ahead, the increase in instrumental violence in the 20th century was underpinned by non-political components (social, cultural, and ideological perceptions) that influenced political decision-making.

If we accept the premises that social characteristics, determined by political objectives and decisions are assumptions inherent in the war conflict, we should immediately question the frequency of conflicts; that is, the degree of distribution of war in history. The issue of frequency is decisive because we know that both elements (sociability of the milieu and political function of war) have always been present in Western European societies, at least since the military revolution, which was fully deployed since the sixteenth century (Parker, 1990).

Regardless of these societies' degree of psychological perception of war, it seems that, from the beginning of modern times, the Military Revolution combined a permanent and profound change that from the military affected the technological, organizational, economic, and social levels (Toffler, 1993, p 32). This transformation blurred the differ-

ences between the civil and the military existing in the previous era (Moskos, Williams, and Segal, 2000, p.11), transferring military interests to spheres of greater social understanding and making its political objectives and desires compatible with its evolution. These elements could explain the high frequency of war from the sixteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, we know that between the Congress of Vienna in 1815, which ended the cycle of Napoleonic wars, and the First World War, which after 1914 began the cycle of postmodern wars, the western geopolitical sphere did not experience major wars or clashes between alliances of political power involving the great powers of the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, if we accept that the degree of sociopolitical progress was relatively homogeneous at the turn of the mentioned century and that the basic and elementary components that sustain the causes of war remain largely embedded in society, we are quickly assailed by question of why the twentieth century saw a spectacular quantitative and qualitative upturn in war (Figure 1).

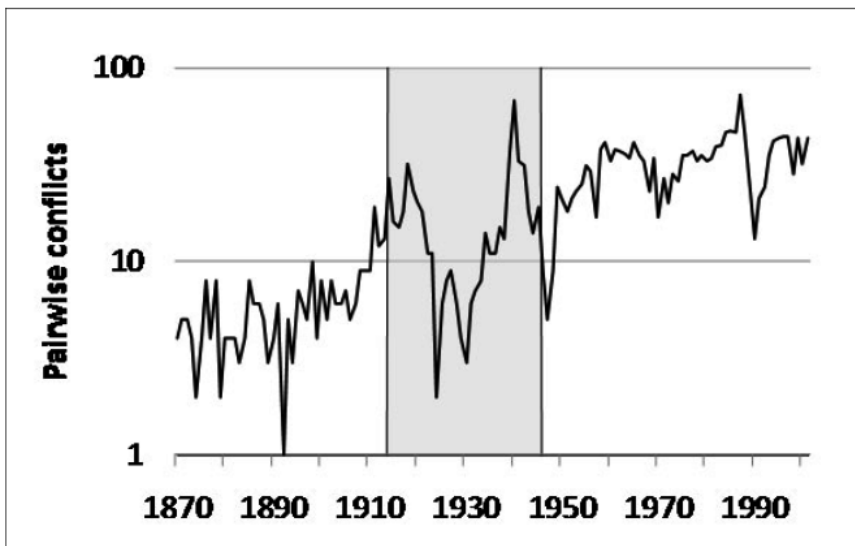


Figure 1. Increase in military conflicts after the turn of the century.

Source: Martin, Mayer, and Thoenig (2008) cited in Harrison (2009, p. 2).

Figure 1 demonstrates that the twentieth century brought with it a spectacular increase in the number of wars and, in particular, their impact on human lives and social and political consequences. Paradoxically, economic growth and the proliferation of borders were decisive factors for this new war cycle. During this period, more than 200 armed

conflicts occurred, resulting in approximately 231 million deaths (Leitenberg, 2006, p.1). These conflicts were characterized by a spree of deaths never before seen in the history of humanity, deaths resulting from a changing world in terms of the use of military technology and the specific objectives of conflict.

The First World War was the last Great War in which merely military interests marked the general objectives of the campaigns. No less than 9,450,000 soldiers died in this war (Stevenson, 2013, p. 700). Added to this, the damages caused to the civilian population, which, although not the direct target of military operations, suffered the effects of invasions, indiscriminate bombing, famine, and diseases. The calculations, though difficult, indicate that no less than 6.5 million civilians were killed between 1914 and 1918 (Clodfelter, 2002, p.479).

The new wars of the 20th century

Why did this happen? At the beginning of the 20th century, the world at the end of the most extended cycle without major wars in its history. The perception of state violence seemed to have slowly evaporated from human minds to a large extent, as a consequence of the decrease in social violence (Muchembled, 2010, pp. 248-279). This perception, however, had a paradox. The rise in education and the need for order and law to continue progress (especially for the triumphant bourgeoisie) numbed the individual and appeased his propensity for social conflict. Since the dawn of the 20th century, an increase in the intention to resolve conflicts without resorting to violence can be seen at a rural and urban level. In this sense, the State became the principal guarantor of this perception, promoting the prohibition of duels, increasing security in the streets, and imposing laws against crime and private violence.

However, these measures, characteristic of triumphant modernity, created a *contained tension* in society, which lay in wait to surface forcefully. Hence, the increase in education, the decrease of illiteracy, and propagation of literature aroused in the world populace, from the lower levels of society, a sensation of the *decadence* of the prevailing values, bringing about the yearning to rescue the heroic values of war.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the concept of progress emerged as a central dilemma. Bureaucracy and technology became part of the law of progress (Herman, 1998, p.44). Man acquired the transforming notion of society, more so from the State, from power. Pluralism and freedom became weapons of integration (or disintegration) of entire societies (Goldhagen, 2010, pp. 38-39), allowing war to be not only far more destructive but also, the preferred political option.

Western society had been bombarded with the pessimistic idea of decadence and social deterioration for decades by both the Anglo-Saxon liberalism and the European authoritarianism. From Brooks Adams, Max Nordau, and Gustav Le Bon to Ernst Haeckel, Oswald Spengler, and Henri Bergson, a long list of intellectuals, scholars, academics, thinkers, historians, and philosophers focused in one way or another on Western decadence as a mental breakdown (Herman, 1998, pp. 226-277); even diametrically opposed ideological positions coincided with this idea.

For the Marxist School of Frankfurt, led by Adorno and Horkheimer, there was a plot by capitalist society to move the vital forces from nature towards the powerful actions orchestrated by bourgeois capitalism (Aschheim, 1992, pp. 185-186). The nefarious effects of bourgeois ideology on the proletarian class elevated the concept of totality to the category of axiom (Lukács, 1971, p.27), making the solution to Western society's degeneration be perceived as a head-on clash and, therefore, violent. Conflictingly, from the heart of the booming liberalism, Toynbee based his criticism on the lack of traditional, political, and, at the same time, cultural values of an industrial democracy that had motivated turbulent times (Plant & Vincent, 1984, p.35).

The world, from 1914 to 1918, was not only prepared for war but also yearned for it as a liberating mechanism of the powerful energies compressed during at least two generations. The European states dogmatized the use of war as a device to rebalance colonial world politics and pronounced the preservation of peace as an extension of the imperialist model. In other words, because Western civilization believed itself to be the bearer of the highest standards of social values, the extension of the model through war was accepted as reasonable, a war that, at this point, had two essential elements that allowed it to be carried out at a scale never before seen. On the one hand, the intellectual and political elites considered the decline of the Western model as another phase of industrial progress, which the liberating force of war would readjust. On the other hand, the populace felt increasingly inclined to firmly believe in the vital force of their communities and nations; books and press extended the idea that the only escape of the alleged decadence was to impose, through war, its system, which clearly gathered the best of a past that was believed to be glorious. Therefore, war became a redefinition of the conflict, which, for Carl Schmitt, is a confrontation between criminals and custodians of the planet (Joas, 2005, p.59).

The European generation, which fought through the mud and mire since 1914, articulated a "swan song" against the war's regenerative posit, at least at the lower levels of society. At the high (political) levels, a different idea of the human tragedy of the industrial war began to be forged. The American president Wilson and the thinker Dewey introduced a different logic; they believed that social regeneration would be possible with

the political disappearance of the authoritarian regimes, which, according to them, were the cause of the Great War.

Dewey argued that the *tragedy of the German soul* was rejecting the purposes of democracy, whose cultural and civilizing splendor was the basis of an idea of progress (Dewey, 1916, pp. 305-309). In his view, they seemed to have forgotten that a good part of the non-political criticism of the dominant society was based on arguments on decadence, racial regeneration, and eugenics in Anglo-Saxon spheres —as in the English (Galton, 1904) or North American (Davenport, 1911) cases. To him, they aimed to explain the extreme violence on the battlefield from a political stand, forgetting the undeniable influence of group psychology in combat, taught for decades by philosophy and the media (Bourke 2008, p. 101-103). He believed that the *perfidious* Germans showed unusual cruelty because the authoritarian nature of their regimes mentally predisposed them to acts of impiety.

However, everything changed after 1918. If the Great War had demonstrated the new voraciousness of war and its undeniable destructive influence, the desire for regeneration by war was even higher during this stage. Societies had not understood the significance of war's role. After 1918, the mass society, now strongly technological, was decisively influenced by the political and ideological powers to face-off once again. The political symbolism remained rooted in the problematic juncture of the interwar period (Mosse, 2007, pp. 15-39) not only in Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union but also in the other European states tending toward authoritarianism (more so in resurgent Japan). The democratic societies instigated a yearning in their populations to defend the values of liberalism, democracy, and the free market. In this way, the new confrontation was tinged with an immense clash of political-ideological identities, a new definitive apocalypse.

While historiography has tended to focus on Nazi Germany as the model of absolute racial warfare begun in 1939, maintaining that the rest of Western societies were alien to this concept and did not, to a greater or lesser extent, share it is challenging. Sociobiology (Social Darwinism), influenced by both the Anglo-Saxon and the Germanic, had had many decades to prepare the way. Though it is true that, in the Anglo-Saxon universe, the defense of its political models was based on the idea of cultural and moral superiority over authoritarianism and European dictatorship, it is no less accurate that a similar idea was hidden under the curtain.

At the beginning of the 20th century, The WASP (White, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant) America, idealized by the political elite, played a prominent role in state education (Collins, 1971, pp. 1011-1013) and had its moment of maximum expression during the “happy twenties.” Therefore, by the arrival of the thirties, the Anglo-Saxon

world was as prepared, from a political, sociocultural, and ethnic position, as the rest of the world to face the new challenge. The idea was pronounced from the political and state level but rested on a strong social base. In this sense, at the time, the Anglo-Saxon society was not very different from the European. Authoritarian Europe saw the decadence of the West as a mixture of lost racial values, tainted national identity, and ancestral political idealism. Differently, the Anglo-Saxon democratic world focused the same decadence on a belief of sociopolitical superiority (liberalism and democracy), dressed with an imposing notion of the universal mission of the model that rested, ultimately, in a collective vision of inevitable confrontation.

The peoples' principle of self-determination (also democratic in its original postulate) generated unexpected rejection and resentment in the Old Continent, as the populace recognized a small detail, those who had advocated it were only willing to fulfill it by playing with the territories of the defeated. This repugnance of an apparently egalitarian and democratic principle, that was only carried out over the heads of the defeated and in favor of the political interests of the triumphant Anglo-Saxon world, paved the way for the resented peoples to understand the message of the recomposition of tainted honor. It was no coincidence that Günter Grass's *Trilogy* (which became a *best-seller*): *The Tin Drum*, *Cat and Mouse*, and *Dog Years* dealt with Danzig (Ferguson, 2007, p 244) and the disappointment of an arbitrarily divided Germany.

The military network also helped to prepare a path, which would carry through the same principles into 1945. However, during the interwar period, it was probably the military hierarchy of the western world that best assumed the ideals of a *definitive* contest. In fact, the preoccupation of the military, as servants of the public power, exerted a notable influence on events because they wanted power in action and not latent power (Huntington, 1995, pp. 78-79). The political powers relied on the officer corps and the military industry as different means of achieving the same goal, the triumph of state values.

In the liberal theory, pacifism is acceptable as long as it is conjugated with the safeguarding of the interests of the idea of progress. However, it will not hesitate to resort to war in the event that it is combined with the global objective of imposing the liberal political and economic model. In the 1930s, the United States turned the wheel of military resources when it saw the possibility that the confrontation would benefit a liberal world under the commercial and political interests of the prevailing liberalism. Fascism and authoritarianism, on the other hand, were trying to impose a model that they *believed* was naturally superior and focused on war as an end in and of itself (Huntington, 1995, pp. 101-102). Lastly, Marxism defended the idea of an ideological

people's army that would serve the interests of *classes* solely as an instrument to reach the end of history, which is none other than the communist society; it is the negation of the traditional State-Army union.

From 1914, the second military revolution supported the desire to obtain complete victories in wars, victories capable of promoting an enduring new international equilibrium in the hands of the most technologically advanced. After all, we cannot disregard the relationship between military technology, level of social mobilization, and ultimate success that was (and still is) preeminent in the 20th century. The revitalizing driving forces of the military-technological machinery, product (sometimes cause) of the growing industrialization, placed the indiscriminate use of all military power in the hands of those who supported imperialist visions (Headrick, 2010, pp. 241-249). However, the technological revolution and the increased interest of the State to expand the possibilities of its policy outwards resulted in the renewal of administration and the reordering of the systems of control, as well as the management and distribution of industrial and military complexes.

Between 1914 and 1939, it would have been impossible to increase the destructive force of the State without new forms of more efficient organization. The creation of specific instruments for the management of war, the slow but inexorable incorporation of women in the labor market, the state control of unions, the expansion of military subcontractors, and the bureaucratic professionalization of civic-military logistics produced an administrative metamorphosis that was relentless until after 1918 (McNeill, 1989, pp. 353-367). On the other hand, these events helped to face the coming war on truly effective bases, where the maximization of resources was almost as important as the belief in the ultimate objective.

The result of this confrontation (the Second World War, 1939-1945) left more than 60 million dead. The maelstrom of mass industrial destruction reached a global scale, which cannot be explained as a mere accident of history. The chronic economic instability, the unconcluded assimilation processes in European societies, the border conflicts, and the idea of racial superiority (Ferguson, 2007, p.72) are merely some of its elements. In this stage, the transformative power of the modern State allowed the concept of regeneration through war to reach its maximum expression. Although the elation of the beginning of the war disappeared in 1939, the level of group cohesion became so significant that the political vision of the positive perception of the war ultimately prevailed.

The peoples did not clash dramatically in a total war with the hope that this would be an amusing game of honor, as in 1914; they did so, believing that they represented the definitive attempt to regenerate society on the basis of a political belief long-forged into their minds for decades. The apparent mercilessness of those who perpetrated the

genocide between 1939 and 1945 leads us to believe that, more than the technical possibilities of mass murder, what was behind this was a devaluation of human life. Neither the Germans in Auschwitz, nor the Soviet political police, nor the Anglo-Saxon leaders of the indiscriminate bombing of the European civilian populations questioned the motivation; it was simply a question of exercising a model of instrumental violence that, from political power, had turned violence into another element of complete regeneration.

War as an instrument of change T2

While regional wars diminished after 1945, the same did not happen with the concepts of war, conflict, and violence. The human, economic, and material tragedy of the Second World War did, in fact, regenerate the world, although, it did so not on the basis of intangible premises (cultural, rational, and national superiority) but on an ideological-political basis. The bipolar world that emerged immediately after 1945 did not confront the United States and the Soviet Union, rather, two mental perceptions that struggled for a teleological view of history. The transition from a multipolar to a bipolar world has not left behind the importance of the State as a constructor of the idea of war and social cohesion; on the contrary, it has conceivably increased it.

Between 1945 and 1989, the existence of two powerful world leaders who dominated vast areas of the planet resulted in a decrease in major confrontations. Not even in the two most important wars after 1945 (Korea and Vietnam) were the great powers able to confront each other directly, although, in theory, these comprised propitious fields of ideological and structural debate. The main cause, no doubt, was the fear of *losing everything*. A nuclear war, even the distant possibility of a conventional war in which neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would have dared to use their arsenal of weapons of mass destruction (the ideal battlefield would have been Central Europe) would have seized either's ideological-military leadership in their areas of influence. Consequently, the strategy became the transfer of conflict towards tertiary scenarios in which the political consequences of a possible defeat were less tangible and, thus, acceptable for the internal consumption of their societies.

Paradoxically, the result has been the revitalization of the concept of State, even among the lower powers. These powers in the West have been channeling their forces in an internal rebalancing to counteract the United States' military leadership. The creation of the European Economic Community and the European Union were the answers to the decline not of the West, but of Old Europe, in the face of the unquestionable leadership of the United States after 1945. To that date, decision-making on a global scale had been determined by the European states, which boasted technological and cultural superiority to the outside world. But the *conqueror of peace*, in 1945, was not the group of allies, but

the United States in the West. The latter led the new reason of the State on the basis of having been the *arsenal of democracy* and the true champion of democratic liberalism. France, then, was plunged into political chaos, resolutely opposing the decolonization process. Britain not only lost its Empire but also, the structural basis of its dominance, the control of the seas. Italy and Germany had to atone for their faults for more than two decades. Meanwhile, beyond the Iron Curtain, the communist enemy loomed. The peace of 1919 to 1939 had created a *problem*, which had been resolved by war through the political supremacy of the United States (Simmel, 1955, p.98).

The idealization of the State as guarantor of social cohesion, given its control of the military machinery, allowed the two great powers to survive the permanent internal economic tension for four decades. In fact, the nature of the war of 1939 to 1945 determined that the military-industrial complexes and the permanent tension of *undeclared war* included a multitude of external actors in the business of the war. In this sense, the extension of the privatization of military industry in the United States has its best-known pattern. Begun in the 1960s, private contracts and the increasing use of private armies (especially after the fall of the Soviet Union) turned the perception of war, on the social scale, into a State necessity. Although Singer (2003, p.18) argues that this option should be understood as a cession of state sovereignty, we believe that, being determined by and for the political function of the State, not only does it not result in a cession, but rather well in a strengthening of the public function itself, since it is this that determines the type, level, and structure of the privatization of the exercise of war.

To mask the nature of the conflict after 1945, the sociology of war has created a new nomenclature that aims to indicate that war has not disappeared from the international scene it has merely changed its appearance. Thus, conflicts are now evaluated according to the number of casualties in a given year; a “minor conflict” is indicated between 25 and 999 casualties, more than 1,000 indicates a “war” (García, 2008, p 96). According to this new and, apparently, scientific way of quantifying instrumental violence, between 1946 and 2000 no less than 1,166 minor conflicts and 516 wars have broken out (UCDP & PRIO, 2010). These conflicts’ frequency and number are immersed, to a large extent, in the confrontational nature of the Cold War, in which the translation of the ideological struggle was engrafted in the developing countries or disguised in the form of conflicts of sociopolitical nature, but that really contained the emerging chaos after the dissolution of the world order dominated by the West until 1945. Not even the disappearance of the Soviet Union as a counterweight to the ideological hegemony of the United States has ostensibly declined war. An explanation to this could be that the current unipolar world cannot, paradoxically, regenerate a balance of forces in which, after forty years of increased

state power, it now enjoys a freer exercise to impose order in a world of chaos. In other words, political realism, which feeds off international chaos, has revitalized its theoretical position given the data, which speaks for itself.

The reason for this chaos, in the first place, is the absence of balancing powers. To date, the United States holds the undisputed primacy in the military field. Far from defending the export of its liberal democratic model, this American giant feels free to interfere in the internal affairs of different states, unless, obviously, they directly affect their global interests. The United States has freed itself from the heavy burden of leadership by moving disputes to different areas under the (now) fragile notion of not interfering in internal affairs. In return, Americans can expand their technological gap with the other powers of the world (none yet at a global scale) by transferring part of their fiscal and budgetary burden on the private fabric of their military industry. The second is the absence of a supranational body to effectively and objectively monitor and mediate in world conflicts; this tends to perpetuate the escalation and intensity of conflicts. The UN cannot play that role, as its internal structure and, especially, the area that can indeed act on an international scale (Security Council) is headed by the United States.

In the last decades, the result of this new military cycle has been the decrease of interstate violence, with only 112 conflicts or wars between 1946 and 2000 (García, 2008, p.101), at the cost of an authentic explosion of internal conflicts and asymmetrical wars. The States, with a *clear* awareness of the risks of a direct confrontation, now assume a vigilant role in the war because they consider that the internal tension promoted by the permanent military surveillance of their interests is much more effective (and less expensive) than playing the war card. Moreover, most of the industrialized states have closed their cycle of border demands and have buried the popular-national bellicose language that was so successful between 1900 and 1945. In parallel, official violence has disappeared from the pugnacity between democratic states, suggesting an apparent relationship between peace and democracy. But, is that really so?

The works by Rummel's have shown that democratic regimes are less bound to conflict with *each other* (Rummel, 1995); this suggests a relationship between liberalism and pacifism. However, it also encompasses a different approach. Democratic leaders feel a moral (and legal) obligation to be accountable to their voters; society is, after all, their greatest guarantor. Therefore, they are more focused on selecting the conflicts in which to interfere (Anderson & Souva, 2010); the perception of war is now far from favorable acceptability in regimes that comprise a strong internal cohesion based on peace and stability. Furthermore, the interconnection of data and information in capitalist societies reflects the direct impact on public opinion; therefore, they extend their effects much

faster and to more people than a few decades ago. However, the fact that democracies do not confront each other is not the same as not influencing (by action or omission) in the extension of conflicts or their durability decisively. Let us consider that the great arms exporters continue being perfectly assimilable areas to the concept of democracy, the United States, and Western Europe. Therefore, if we accept the rather obvious premise that conflicts cannot be initiated or maintained without weapons and that they are in the permanent market thanks to the efforts of the governmental (and private) complexes of democratic societies, indicating that what is hidden behind is really the interest of these democracies to keep conflict away from their societies (criticisms in general with violence), while sustaining a low intensity violence on a global level, is unnecessary.

Conclusion

In the twentieth century, as today, war has been a very tangible reality. The trauma of the two world wars only showed the deep political need for regeneration and reorganization of powers based on an idea of decadence or the recovery of a superior and prevailing model. However, the drama of the conflict exposed that societies are bound to conflict in function of conjunctures that are very easily manipulated. Mass society, bureaucratic changes, and the media, as well as the strengthening of the idea of a state or latent nationalism, have been and are preferential objectives of the political power to establish permanent geostrategic rearrangements.

Although the number of casualties in conflicts after the Second World War has been far less than that of the first part of the century, the continued aggression of humanity for ethnic-cultural reasons or ideological-political disputes (Goldhagen, 2011) has shown that the nature of conflict remains unchanged, despite political decisions (which are vital). We are satisfied with knowing that military technology is capable of diminishing collateral damage or that the democratic governments tend to eliminate the civilian population from their objectives, to sell in their society the idea that the damage caused to the enemy is intimately related to political ends and not to carnage.

As a matter of fact, Morris has recently shown that the wars of the twentieth century have inherently tended to generate stability in the States, as well as economic growth and, at the same time, a non-negative view of military power in contemporary societies (Morris, 2017, pp. 441-454). The previous because these societies understand that the fear of an annihilating confrontation of the human species forces the States to political dialogue and other forms of confrontation; therefore, they observe an arms race that annuls the risk of generalized conflict with benevolence. War has not only changed people's perception but also, altered the parameter of the political options concerning the risk of the conflict.

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