

# WAR AND NATIONAL IDENTITY<sup>1</sup>

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In discussing the relation between war and national identity, we must distinguish between two approaches: the explanatory-sociological approach asks why wars take place at all, how their forms have changed in history, how they vary between societies and cultures, and which consequences they can have. The normative approach asks how legitimate war is, which asks if a war can be considered as a "good or as a "bad" thing, if it can be legitimated or not from the viewpoint of universal ethical principles. These two approaches are both essential in understanding the close relationship between nation and war. The latter, the normative approach is not only useful as a moral "weapon" which can be used to condemn war, but also as an instrument for the first explanatory perspective. Human behaviour in general, and a consequential action as war in particular, have always to be legitimized. The easiness of such a legitimation is one among the factors which may lead peoples and their leaders into bloody fights and wars.

In this paper, I would like to discuss the topic in five steps. First, the general hypothesis is summarized; second, the normative aspect of the legitimation of war is discussed; third, the issue of war and national identity is discussed from the sociological-explanatory perspective; here, some general laws regarding violence and war as mechanisms producing national coherence are sketched out and a simple historical-sociological typology of wars connected with national identity is developed; fourth, the normative and the sociological-explanatory aspects are combined to sketch out how a critical analysis of war could be conceived. Here, also some

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perspectives for a future world without the use of violence in international relations are discussed.

### **“Humanization” of the nation state: The general thesis**

I start from the assumption that the long-term changes as well as the concrete, present-day appearance of collective violence and war, related to the nation state and national identity, are determined by two sets of mechanisms: (1) general social-psychological “laws” concerning the formation of nations and national identity and the role of violence and wars therein; (2) long-term changes in social structure, political institutions and values.

As far as the first point of view is concerned, we must be aware, as sociologists, that violence and war carry with them very deep and unique human experiences and gratifications. Without their recognition, we cannot understand their universal existence in human history. Most of these mechanisms are well known and recognized in social science, even if much less so in public discussions.

There is far less agreement concerning the second aspect. Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century theories of history – which have depicted history as a directed, linear succession of stages with a clear direction – have been discredited fundamentally, not the least because of the terrible experiences of two world wars, fascism and genocide. Today, we cannot any more assert that there exists general “laws of history”. I would like to argue, however, that we can nevertheless say that there exists a directed change which is more than just an adaptation to a changing environment, “a natural evolution” of mankind. This change contains two elements: First, changes in social structure and the related conditions of life; second, changes in the relative importance of the values and norms guiding the behaviour of individual men and women and of societies as collective actors. In both regards, social change involves two important aspects, namely, (a) it is directed and (b) it is non-reversible.

There is no doubt, that present-day, developed societies are much richer than any historical society has been; the conditions of life, the health situation and the expectation of living have been improved significantly over the centuries, and in particular so since the rise of industrial-capitalist society. The exponential growth of world population is a clear indicator of this improvement. There is also no doubt that the technological, scientific and socio-economic progress of the last centuries cannot be reversed (except by an apocalyptic catastrophe, such as a world-wide atomic war). However, we can speak of a comparable, directed and irreversible, change also in the areas of values. From antiquity to present times the dignity and the fundamental rights of the individual person have been recognized and extended more and more. Already the Judaeo-Christian, the Hellenic and Roman tradition recognized the dignity and worth of the individual person; however, only a small part of the population was considered as possessing this worth in full. In modern times, the fundamental human rights have been extended not only to all members of a society, but to all humans living on earth, irrespective of status, gender, colour or any other criterion. Also in this realm, we cannot imagine a return to a feudal

society, characterized by the existence of different estates with different rights for their members, not to speak of slave or caste societies where certain social strata have no rights at all.

On the backdrop of these considerations, I can summarize the central thesis of my lecture as follows:

*The close connection between the nation state and violence that we can observe from the mid-nineteenth century till present times, can be considered as a specific and transitory historical stage in terms of changes in social structures, political institutions and values. What is specific for this stage is a contradiction between the general spread of the universal value of the dignity and worth of the individual human person, and the continuation of the application of a similar dignity to the collective unit of the nation state.*

In structural and political-institutional terms, the past two centuries, and the last decades in particular, have brought with them a very strong tendency toward the enforcement of the rights of the individual person *vis-a-vis* collective units such as the community, the church or the state. The process of globalization has weakened in a significant way the role of the nation state. Yet, a change in the corresponding values, a shift from the responsibility of global units to the individual person, has taken place only in part. Especially in the area of nationalism, traditional-collective values have reached a climax and led to the two terrible World Wars in the Twentieth Century. They continue still today to induce violence and wars throughout the world. What we need today has been laid out clearly by the American philosopher and sociologist George H. Mead (1983. [1929.]) seventy years ago: the (First) World War, he wrote, has raised the problem how the international community of nations can become civilised in a way so that conflicts of interests are solved without violence, in the same peaceful way as conflicts of interests within a nation state.

Let us go on to detail this thesis now in more detail, first from the normative, then from the explanatory point of view.

## **THE LEGITIMATION OF WAR BY NATIONAL INTERESTS: THE NORMATIVE ASPECT**

The normative aspect is of central importance in any discussion about war. War involves a behaviour – to kill other people – which in principle is considered as being one of the greatest crimes a man can commit, and which is forbidden by any system of ethics. Yet, war is one of the few exceptions where this fundamental principle is put out of force. Any war – in history as at present – has to be legitimized therefore in some way by reference to other, possibly more important ethical principles. There are two issues in the problem of the normative legitimization of war for purposes of the defence of national identity: its general legitimacy and the concrete situational conditions of this legitimacy.

## The congruence principle as a general legitimation of the use of violence for the defence of national identity and interests

Now, the idea of “nation” has been, and still is, one of the most forceful principles called upon to legitimate the use of violence and arms. But this idea cannot legitimate war in any situation, or the use of all kinds of violence and war. The question under which circumstances a war in the name of a nation can be legitimized, has to be posed by sociology as well as normative disciplines such as theology, moral and political philosophy or jurisprudence.

In the discussion of the normative underpinnings of war we have to make clear the general significance of ethical principles. The argument is widespread that there are no universal values, that most, if not all values are valid only in a certain historical or societal context. I think that this is misleading. The fact that certain institutions, such as slavery, have been considered as legitimate in earlier times, but are considered as illegitimate today, does not prove relativism. Rather, it shows only that the *search* for and the *recognition* of universal values is historical, not the values themselves (Popper, 1973.). Here, I am following the Weberian approach (Weber, 1973.; Boudon, 1999.; Haller, 1999.) which assumes that there are *axiological truths*, that is, truths related to values whose validity is evident to us as are statements about facts or as scientific theories. There are three elements inherent in such axiological truths: (1) any reasonable person is convinced about their validity; we know that there exist “good” and “bad” actions, our consciousness makes us very clear before and after an act how it has to be evaluated; the convictions are *rational reasons*. (2) We consider an act as good or bad not because of its consequences, but because we confront it with an abstract ethical principle, such as the *principle of fairness* or *congruence*: contribution and retribution should correspond to each other. (3) Relevant actors in the establishment of norms and values do not only involve persons and groups interested in the outcomes, but also disinterested third parties, *external observers* or impartial spectators. The aggregation of the position of these observers, *public opinion*, constitutes – at least in the long run – an important force in putting through universal values against particular interests.

The role of universal values and norms in the relation between war and national identity is directly related to these issues. “Nation” is one of the most basic and large human “communities” and it could be easily seen as an instance where values are relative, bound to the unity within which they are endorsed. Yet, we have to note here, that there is also a “dark face of community”, the fact that a community is egocentric. The legitimation of war by national interests, thus, must be qualified on this grounds. We could reformulate the fairness principle as follows: Violence and military aggression and response to the aggression should correspond to each other! A nation or another collective (ethnic, religious, regional) group aspiring to become a nation has no universal right to use violence, but can use it only in correspondence to the degree of suppression from within or of threat from outside that he himself has experienced.

## Two sociological perspectives for the critical investigation of the legitimacy of political violence

A concretisation of the outlined general normative principle in sociological terms must consider at least two aspects: (a) the general justification of the use of violence and the proportionality of the means employed; and (b) the relations between the elites and the populations at large.

When can the “political” use of violence and war be considered as being a legitimate means of a nation state or a group aspiring to become a nation? There exists a straightforward answer to this question. It is the same as that to be given when it should be allowed for an individual to use violence with potential deadly consequences for another person. In this case, the use of violence is legitimate to the degree that it is necessary to defend the integrity of our life, to refute a dangerous, life-threatening attack from another person. In the same vein, also violence in the interest of a nation can be legitimized only in this sense: it can be considered as being legitimate in the case that a nation is endangered in its existence itself. This is the case, for instance, if a foreign power invades the territory of a nation, or if the government of a state suppresses a minority with violent means.

Why are the relations between the elites and the populations at large – my second point – of crucial importance in the consideration about the legitimacy of wars carried through in the name of the nation (see also Haller, 1992., 1996.)? A declaration of war, more than any other far-reaching political decision, usually is made by a tiny group of elites, very often by a single leader. Here, the problem becomes most acute with which any democracy has to cope with, namely the fact that there is always a potential split between the interests of the population at large and their political elites and leaders. A state can only work effectively if decision power is concentrated; this fact, however, places a high responsibility on the leaders not to misuse their powers. “Democratic elite theory” (Etzioni-Halevy, 1993.) starts exactly from this problem and states that it is a central task of democratic institutions to provide checks and balances on this power of the elites. Turning to the issue of national identity and wars, the problem becomes most acute: as I will outline below, one of the general sociological laws in this regard is that a threat or attack from outside can create an strong feeling of community. This feeling is often used in an instrumental way by political leaders: in order to direct attention away from other, unresolved internal problems, in order to increase their popularity and power, they can (and regularly do) invent apparent or enlarge real existing foreign threats, and they can declare wars in order to reach these goals unchallenged by public opinion. A situation of threat (irrespective of the fact if it is real or invented) creates a readiness of the population to consent to any counter-measures, and a high internal pressure on anybody to consent with these measures; the publication of dissenting opinions in such a situation usually is stigmatized as a threat to national unity and security, their proponents as traitors of the nation. More generally, we could say that elites and leaders can use (and manipulate) any information in this regard in a strategic way; in some phases, they may also be prone to suppress information

about threats from outside.<sup>2</sup> This fact makes it also understandable why issues of foreign policy and security are usually treated as “highly confidential”, as a matter of *Geheimdiplomatie* not to be communicated to the public at large.

Now, it is evident that elites and leaders have a very different attitude toward war than the population at large: For the leader, a war will usually strengthen his position and power in a way which cannot be attained by any other strategy.<sup>3</sup> For the population at large, the situation looks quite different. For many of them – in particular young men eligible for military service and their families, but also for the civilian population at large which more and more becomes a victim of military and para-military operations – war brings only the potential danger of the threat of life, of the loss of kinsmen, devastation of buildings, devaluation of savings and so forth. Political and military leaders, on the contrary, very seldom are participating in a war at the frontline. Even military generals usually operate far behind the front in secure headquarters and – even if they lose the battle or their whole army – are at most brought some time into (a usually comfortable) prison but very seldom are their lives threatened.

We have to consider here also a second, indirect consequence of the use of violence and war in the name of national identity. This is the fact that “violence bears violence”. Such “*spirals of violence*” makes it nearly impossible to solve some of the most old and deep-seeded conflicts in Europe and other parts of the world today, such as that between Israelis and Palestinians. War itself leads to a brutalization of mores among soldiers and the population at large. War can be carried through for a considerable amount of time only if there are enough reserves in terms of young recruits, of money and of weapons. In this way, a new *war economy* comes into being, and among its participants a lifestyle related only to violence and war. This is connected with so many advantages that a return to a civilian way of life becomes more and more impossible (Waldmann, 1985.).

There is one further important point concerning the potential consequences of processes of national mobilisation. Many national independence movements certainly do not consider the use of violence at the outset but aspire to become independent through a process of “civilized” negotiations. Yet, an aspiration of a subregion or a national subgroup to become an independent nation through secession must arouse feelings of resentment and counter-reactions from the side of the existing nation state. Thus, any responsible leader of an independent movement must be aware that a call for independence will arouse strong counter-reactions in the main state, or may also lead to comparable movements among other national subgroups. The

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<sup>2</sup> An extreme and deadly example of such a neglect of a foreign threat was Stalin’s belief that Hitler would not attack the Soviet Union – in spite of the fact, that from the East Sea till the Balkans along the Eastern borders of the German Reich one of the largest deployments of troops of history was taking place.

<sup>3</sup> Certainly, also the risk of being dethroned as a consequence of a lost war exists. But especially in modern, “national” wars, even a lost war can strengthen the internal position and power of a leader. (Recent examples were Milošević in Yugoslavia and Saddam Hussein in Iraq).

latter fact has probably been one of the main reasons for the inability of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy to reform itself; it was feared rightly that the granting of political autonomy to the Czechs (which, as the most developed non-German subgroup in the Austrian part of the monarchy, strongly called for such an autonomy) would have induced similar calls among many other nationalities. In this sense, it must have been known also to the Croats and Slovenes in the seventies and eighties that their striving for secession from Yugoslavia would lead to similar movements among other provinces and – eventually – to violence and war.

## **VIOLENCE AND WAR IN THE BUILDING AND ACTIONS OF THE NATION STATE. THE SOCIOLOGICAL-EXPLANATORY PERSPECTIVE**

In this part, I will focus on the sociological-explanatory question why nation state and violence are so closely related together. I will proceed in three steps: first, some general social “laws” concerning the social meaning and use of violence are sketched out; then I will ask why violence and wars related so closely to the nation; third, a typology is developed which allows to establish a connection between the normative and the explanatory approach.

### **The welding together of communities. General social and political functions of threat, violence and war**

There is widespread agreement in social science that violent collective conflicts and war have a series of significant social functions (see Schelling, 1973.; Keegan, 1993.; Scheff, 1994.; Kelman, 1997.; Doubt, 2000.; Joas, 2000.; Hondrich, 2002.; Holert/Tscherkessidis, 2002.). Only by considering these functions can we understand why they play such a big role throughout human history till the present day, despite their highly destructive effects. To say that wars fulfil such functions, is neither to legitimate it, nor to say that war is something “innate” to human nature. This question may never be answered. I assume, however, that there are always some degrees of freedom in the decision to use violence and war or not. As rational human beings, we must know these laws, however, since they are among the external conditions or pressures under which decisions are taking place.

I will only summarize these functions here in the following eight theses.

Threats from outside lead to an approaching of the members of a group or a society and produce a closely-knit community, welded together against the aggressor. The most important fact about the external threat is the *perception*, not the objective degree of dangerousness. In the extreme, such dangers can also be invented.

The strong emotions and feelings which develop in such a community – closeness with members, hostility toward others defined as “enemies” – more and more overrule



rational considerations concerning the objective degree of threat.<sup>4</sup> Internal dissenters soon are blemished, stigmatized and beard down on.

Communication with the outside world, and in particular with the aggressive enemy, is reduced to a minimum. Since the same occurs from the other side, systematic disinformation is produced, and a spiral of mutual mis-informations comes into being.<sup>5</sup>

The threatened community needs and usually soon “produces” political and military leaders ready to respond to the external threats. These on their side are easily able to influence and manipulate the collective mind of their groups and fellow citizens. The position of authoritarian or dictatorial regimes is massively enforced when a country is attacked from outside.<sup>6</sup>

The process of the formation of a closed group is massively enforced (since it can now be based to a considerable degree on factual experiences) when collective violence comes into play. Violence itself is used to demoralize the enemy and to strengthen cohesion within the aggressors by making all jointly responsible.<sup>7</sup>

For many active participants in collective violence and war, this constitutes an exceptional personal experience. Though it is painful and ambivalent in many regards, it is often also strongly rewarding by providing a thrill accessible in no ordinary humdrum situation, confirming personal strength and power, and providing an exceptional sense of unity and comradeship with the fellow fighters.<sup>8</sup>

The use of violence, the outbreak and the carrying through of a war induce a spiral of violence and counter-violence, and – in the longer term – a war-dependent group life, society and economy. Violence begins to turn into a protracted conflict which is less and less amenable to efforts at cessation and reconciliation.

The mechanisms outlined here may be considered as being generally true for any society or historical epoch. Now we have to ask how these mechanisms realize themselves in the last centuries and today, when collective violence and war became associated more and more with the modern nation state.

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<sup>4</sup> This point has already been made by A. Smith, (1973.); see also Kurz, 1991., and – as a powerful social-psychological approach – Tajfel, 1981.

<sup>5</sup> During the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, professional public relations agencies were charged with the construction of positive “we” and negative “other” images of the enemies (Calic, 1995.; see also Doubt, 2000.).

<sup>6</sup> Examples include the terror regime of Stalin after the attack on the USSR by Hitler’s Germany; the consolidation of the Islamic Republic in Iran after the attack by Saddam Hussein’s Iran (Sharif, 1991.:163) and many others.

<sup>7</sup> See Al-Hammadi, (1995.) for the case of the Iraqi in Kuwait 1991 and Doubt, (2000.) for the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

<sup>8</sup> An excellent description of these experiences has been provided in Arthur Koestler’s narrative “A Spanish Testament” from the Spanish Civil War 1936-39. For the Vietnam war see Holert/Terkessidis, 2002.:34ff.



## The connection between the nation state and war

Why has nationalism and national identity become so strong a force, that people are ready to sacrifice their lives for it? The historic apex of "nationalism" – we may call it "high nationalism" – has been the first half of the Twentieth Century (1914-1945). How was it possible that men and women welcomed First World War which would bring death to over twenty millions of people, hunger and starvation to whole countries? The Austrian novelist Stefan Zweig has described impressively in his collections of stories *"Sternstunden der Menschheit"*, that alien people in the streets of Vienna embraced themselves when the news about the declaration of war against Serbia came out; there are many pictures showing the soldiers going by trains to the front, saying optimistically, with happy and proud faces, good-by to their parents, wives and friends.

I would like to put forward here the following thesis: high nationalism was only a transient stage in the political development of the last centuries; it marked a transition period between Absolutism and democracy. In 1914, Europe was still reigned – with few exceptions – by monarchies. Even if industrial society was developing fast everywhere, and some forms of limited democratic participation had been introduced, the main structure of the European states was still absolutist: Nobility was the leading political class, and the monarch on its top was the uncontested head of the states. Political power was legitimized by the idea that the ultimate foundation of the power of the monarch was transcendental- religious, by divine right. The ideology of nationalism now made a decisive turning point but retained one essential element of this political ideology: Instead of the monarch, the legitimation of power was conceived as being with the people, but the idea that the state was something transcendental, even "holy", was retained. Thus, in the nationalist age "societies worship themselves brazenly and openly" (Gellner, 1983.:56). This decisive step was made during the French revolution. The revolutionary armies were so successful in their advance to other states just because they were inspired by this new republican spirit of sacrifice for nation ideals (Keegan, 1997.:492ff.). The original revolutionary ideals were antimilitaristic. Since, however, the republic became threatened from many sides, soon the citizens armed themselves to protect the new order. From now on, the ideal of the nation state required that every young man had to defend the revolution and the republic. The armies formed under these rules followed wholly new military tactics: they were larger than most armies before had been; they were soon filled also by ardent fighters from non-French territories occupied by foreign powers; and they neglected traditional rules of military tactic by by-passing massive fortifications, and infiltrating fast and deep into the neighbour's territories.

Thus, the general assertion made here is that war always played a fundamental role in the establishment of the modern nation state. This fact is overlooked in much of contemporary writing on nation and nationalism. While the catchword of "culture" occupies a central place in any text about "nation", even in recognized works on the topic (e.g. Gellner, 1983.; Anderson, 1991.; McCrone, 1998.), we find

the entry “war” neither in the contents nor the index (exceptions are Smith 1991.; Mann, 1993.; James, 1996.). My view of the relation between the nation state and war, however, diverges significantly also from that of Giddens, (1985.:116ff.) who devoted a whole book on the topic (see also the extensive critique in James, 1996.). Giddens sees nationalism primarily as a psychological phenomenon, but hardly recognizes the element of ideology. However, nation and nationalism were the most forceful of all 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century political ideologies, as historians of nationalism have pointed out (Kohn 1955; Lemberg 1964; Rejai 1991). Therefore, the normative aspect becomes central, also concerning the legitimation given for entering into a war. In fact, a central concomitant of the ideology of nationalism is also a new understanding of war, and a fundamental change of the meaning of military service and combat. It changed from that of an (often) hatred obligation for a prince, to a moral duty of every male citizen. To die in war, from now on, was not only an unavoidable destiny but the greatest sacrifice one could make for the nation. This fact gave revolutionary armies their penetrating power.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we find rolls of honour for the dead of the Two World Wars throughout Europe. Things have changed, however, since World War II. In order to understand the connection between nation and war today, we have to look more closely at the forms under which the new wars in the name of the nation state were (and still are) carried out.

### **A typology of “national wars” and their persistence to the present day**

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the period of “high nationalism” is over. In order to understand the close relation between the nation state and war, which still exists today, we have to distinguish between different types of war. Following historical works on nationalism (Kohn, 1955.; Lemberg, 1964.; Rejai, 1991.; Hobsbawm, 1993.; Kaser, 2001.), I assume that there are three different types of war related to nation and national identity, namely: (1) wars for national independence, (2) “total” national wars or wars for the national existence, and (3) wars for the safeguarding, the rounding off or the enlargement of national territories. There are significant differences in the legitimation of these three kinds of war, in the tactics employed, and in the time periods when each type was dominant.

*Wars for national independence* – based on the ideology of “*liberation nationalism*” (McCrone, 1998.:102ff.) – include internal insurgences of ethnic-national subgroups against the central state in order to attain more autonomy within or secession from the state; wars of (usually smaller) nation states which had been invaded and are dominated by other states. The legitimation of such insurgences and wars seems to be straightforward: the right to defend one’s own country against an invader, or

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<sup>9</sup> For Clausewitz (1963.), peoples’ and soldiers’ support was one among the three decisive factors for a victory (the other two being abilities of the generals and of the soldiers).

to fight for independence if a national subgroup is suppressed, seems evident. Yet, we have to ask also in this case if the use of violence is justified. Also here, the general principle outlined in the first section has to be applied: Violence can only be legitimized if a country is directly attacked, or if there is no other possibility to protect or attain independence.

Empirical data show that in the second half of the Twentieth Century (1946-2001), not less than 225 armed conflicts took place, and 34 were active in the year 2001 (Gleditsch et al., 2002.). Most of these conflicts occurred within a single state, as fights of internal minorities for more autonomy or national independence. They exist on nearly all continents. It is evident, however, that many of these modern fights for independence have changed into a kind of civil wars where self proclaimed "liberation groups" carry a war which attacks not only the government but terrorizes also the population which they assert to liberate. This is proved by the fact that, for instance, in Ireland and the Basque province, again and again large demonstrations are taking place against the actions of terrorist groups. In many less developed countries, political oppression and violence and social and economic harm result directly and indirectly from decade-long fights between "liberation groups" and governmental armies.

It seems that the second type – "*total national wars*" – was existing only in the limited period of the first half of the Twentieth Century. In earlier periods of history and non-Western cultures (such as China or the Islamic world), warfare was often guided by the principle of mitigation and containment. The two World Wars in fact were unique in history, involving not only all the larger advanced societies, but also constituting "*total wars*" in the sense that the human, material and economic resources of the involved nations were exhausted till the extreme. It is a fact that the outbreak of the 1st World War was connected with the feeling of an existential threat, especially at the side of Germany, whose emperor Wilhelm II. felt – not without ground – that France and Russia had entered into a conspiracy against Germany (Scheff, 1994.). Today, the bloody conflict between Israelis and Palestinians certainly does involve a similar feeling of an existential threat. No other motive can explain fully the desperate suicide assassinations of dozens young Palestinians on the civilian Israelian population, but just as little the indiscriminate military attacks of the Israelian army on Palestinian towns and buildings.

As a sub-variant of this type, we may see the *defensive national war* which is waged on one's own territory after the invasion by a foreign power. In this case, the existential threat is real and this fact often awards unimagined force to a nation. Several big power have had to learn this when their large armies had been defeated in the occupied territories, from Napoleon and Hitler in Russia, till the United States in Vietnam.<sup>10</sup> I think that even the outbreak of the war in Yugoslavia must be

<sup>10</sup> In the war between Iraq and Iran, this mechanism showed up quite clearly. When Saddam Hussein's troops invaded the territory of Iran, the morale of the Iranian soldiers increased massively; but later on, when Iran entered Iraq, the same happened on the side of the troops of Iraq (Sharif, 1991.:162ff.)

explained, at least in part, with reference to this motive. First, the Slovenes and Croats more and more felt threatened by the Serbian dominated central government and army after the enforced removal of the autonomy of the province of Kosovo; second, the Serbian population in Croatia and Bosnia feared to become suppressed minorities in the emerging new nation states;<sup>11</sup> finally, even Serbian leaders felt that Serbia was encircled by internal and external enemies, threatening the existence of the state of Yugoslavia.

Also the third type of national wars – wars for the safeguarding, the rounding off and the *enlargement of national territories* – has been existing since the days of the French revolution. This revolutionary war itself soon turned into aggressive expansionary military campaigns, especially when leadership was taken over by Napoleon. Practically never before such a series of long and bloody wars had been experienced in Europe before. Expansionist wars of this type are an ever-recurring characteristic of history since that time: It began with the expansion of Prussia in the second half of the Nineteenth century which involved not only the reunification of the German territories, but also the conquest and assimilation of parts of Poland and France (Alsace). At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Germany of Wilhelm II. also pursued imperialistic aims, visible in the massive military build-up and the drawing up of the *Schlieffen-Plan* in order to conquest the mining and industrial French province of Lorraine for Germany (Fischer, 1991.).<sup>12</sup> But also the outbreak of war in former Yugoslavia must be seen from this point of view. Ever since Slobodan Milošević came to power, he propagated the idea to create a “Greater Serbia”; in this aim, he was supported by influential groups of intellectual elites.<sup>13</sup>

Today, I would argue that also the extremely high military budgets of the United States<sup>14</sup> and its military presence through the world cannot be understood without reference to this motive, namely, to confirm and enlarge the strength of the nation.

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<sup>11</sup> The former president of the Serbian Republic in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Biljana Plavšić, who admitted the war crimes of her comrades in the war 1992-52 before the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague, also stated that “pure fear” was a main motive for the Serbian war crimes in that region.

<sup>12</sup> Also the entrance of Italy into the First World War – which was motivated by the wish to win the provinces of Trentino-South Tyrol and Istria was motivated by expansionist motives. Even the entrance of the United States into the First World War – while legitimated in public by the fight for “democracy” – must be seen from this point of view; as one of the emerging largest and economically most powerful nation states in the world, the United States might have felt that they could not stay apart from this world-wide matching of forces. The same was true for Japan before and during Second World War.

<sup>13</sup> A historical landmark in this regard was in 1986 the publication in a newspaper of the Manifesto of the Serbian Academy of Science where Croats and Slovenes were attacked strongly to undermine Yugoslav unity and to the detriment of Serbia, out of their national self-interest (Libal, 1991.:122ff):

<sup>14</sup> The strength of the American military today is as much as that of the next two-dozen states combined (see also P. Kennedy in Talbott/Chanda, 2002.:66).

Neither the reference to the aim of defending democracy, nor that of combating terrorism, nor that of securing economic interests in the Gulf (the provision of the West with crude oil)<sup>15</sup> alone can provide adequate motives for the military operations of the United States in less developed regions and continents all over the world. Thus, the appeal to national unity and strength plays a central role also in the "State of the Union Address" by US-president George W. Bush Jr., delivered on January 28, 2003, dedicated to the danger from and the measures against terrorism and Iraq. In this speech, Bush uses 63 times words like "our country", "our nation", "we Americans", "all Americans" and the like. In his view, the world consists of "good" and "evil" states while America is the "right country", the "blessed country", which is "to make the world better"; therefore the government must take "unprecedented measures to protect our people and defend our homeland", and even "the hopes of all mankind" against the "outlaw regimes." The appeal to the unity of the American people given the threat from terrorism is supplemented by the announcement of significant economic and humanitarian measures both for people within and outside of the United States.<sup>16</sup> After enumerating at long the threats from Saddam Hussein's Iraq, he makes clear that America will use his "military might", directed only against the dictator, but not the "brave and oppressed people of Iraq". Bush also employs a parallel between terrorist groups and terrorist political regimes: "Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, small groups of men seized control of great nations, built armies and arsenals, and set out to dominate the weak and intimidate the world. ... In each case, the ambitions of Hitlerism, militarism, and communism were defeated by the free will of peoples..." This equation is significant since it legitimises Bush to speak of a "war against terrorism" and to attack whole countries instead of combating terrorism with more adequate measures as they have been laid in international treaties on terrorism (see the critical remarks of the American professor of international law, F. A. Boyle in Bilek, 2002.<sup>17</sup> It is evident, however, that there exists a massive disproportion between the very simple technical means used in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, and the massive military apparatus of the United States. American security experts argue that this apparatus does not suffice today to provide security States (Talbot/Chanda, 2002.).

<sup>15</sup> It has been estimated that the costs of the US military presence in the Gulf region are far greater than the economic gains the United States draw from that region.

<sup>16</sup> Als before and during the 1st and 2nd World Wars, government conceded significant social rights and payments to the working classes in order to win their approval of warfare measures.

<sup>17</sup> It is astonishing that social scientists adopt this terminology and write that the principle of reciprocity dictates a military counter-strike after the terrorist attacks on the United States (Hondrich, 2000.:26)

## **OUTLOOK: PERSPECTIVES FOR A MORE PEACEFUL WORLD ORDER**

What are the perspectives for a world order in which wars not more are seen as “a continuation of politics with other means”, to use the famous dictum by Clausewitz? Given the world-destroying potential of modern ABC-weapons, the need for such an order is evident more than ever before in history. Let us firstly look again at the different developments in Europe and America, and then ask which measures could contribute to a more peaceful world.

One world macro-region where we could see the emergence of much more peaceful international relations is Europe. How was it possible on this continent, which through centuries was shaken by bloody wars? A first factor were the terrible experiences of countries like Germany, Italy and Japan through their aberration into fascist-totalitarian states. These have led to emergence of a stronger rejection of militarism both in the general public and among political elites than in most other parts of the world. Throughout Western Europe, however, less and less people are ready to fight for their country and to sacrifice their life for the nation (Dogan, 1994.). A related trend is the abolition of the obligatory military service, one of the central elements of the former nation state, which is now underway in many countries of Western Europe. Two further factors have contributed to this change. One was the abandoning of the old hostilities between the nation states of Europe; beginning with the reconciliation between France and Germany, many other, century-old enmities have been abandoned, such as that between Austria and Italy or Germany and Poland. European economic integration and the development of the European Union provided a decisive institutional backing of this trend. A further factor which has contributed to this long-term process of “pacification” (Elias, 1978.) in Europe (but also in Japan) was the rise of the United States (and, till the early Nineties, also of the Soviet Union) to an unchallenged world power with a military apparatus as large as that of the next two dozen countries together. In such a situation, it makes not more any sense for the European “middle powers” to continue with their old enmities. Another factor, connected with this trend was the gaining of independence of the former colonies all over the world; quarrels about the division of the colonial territories had been among the reasons for the outbreak of the First World War. Finally, we must also recognize the importance of the unprecedented period of economic growth in post-war Europe, which brought high levels of prosperity and security to the population.

The European pathway toward a new order, which in some ways may be called “postnational”, may be contrasted with that of the United States of America. Why did this nation, the oldest large democracy of the world, develop into a highly militarised and often aggressive world power, whose military forces are present today on all continents of the world, and who often intervened – secretly or openly – in the internal affairs of other states, especially in Latin America and the Near and Far East, even if they had democratically elected governments (Chomsky, 1993.; Ali, 2002.:255ff.)

The US came into existence by a war of liberation; in the history of the US, internal and external violence and wars (wars of extermination against Indians, war against Mexico, Civil war) played a significant role (Ali, 2002.:255ff.);<sup>18</sup> in the Twentieth Century, the United States became the strongest economic power, which aims at defending its real or imagined interests throughout the world.<sup>19</sup> The United States is leading in the advanced world today, as far as internal violence and terrorism are concerned; many of these perpetrators are veterans from military operations of the U.S. forces around the world, especially in Vietnam (Vidal, 2002.). Today, the ideology and rhetoric of aggressive nationalism plays a significant role also for the United States, especially after the terroristic attacks of September 11, 2001. However, this is a nationalism quite distinct from that of European nationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. It is a *big-power nationalism* or an *ultra-imperialism* (Ali, 2002.:277): The openly declared aim is to pursue the enemies of democracy and terrorists; the hidden agenda is to demonstrate all over the world that challenges of the American hegemonic rule are not tolerated. More and more, however, public opinion around the world, but especially so in the Third World and the Arab-Islamic countries, disapproves strongly their unilateral actions (Talbot/Chanda, 2002.; Pew Research Center, 2002.). The disapproval has its base also in the fact that the U.S. secret services often use means which must clearly be classified as terrorist by themselves.<sup>20</sup> The new ideology and strategy of war corresponds to this fundamental change: No longer is participation in the army seen as an obligation of any (male) citizen; rather, a highly-trained professional army, equipped with the most advanced military apparatus, is aims at destroying the bases of the enemy with minimal losses of one's own. It seems evident that many of the terrorist attacks of the last decades have to be understood as counter-reactions to this new US-militarism but not as attacks on "Western" values, institutions and states in general.

Given this present-day world situation, one could conclude that in all ages and epochs, politics in the last instance are decided by power. I don't think that this is true. In concluding, let us look, therefore, at some of the forces which could contribute to the emergence of a more peaceful world. We can mention at least five factors in this regard.

The first concerns the strengthening of the principles of democracy and peaceful international relations throughout the world. Democratic governments are much

<sup>18</sup> Hölbling (1987.) shows how the American war history is reflected in a large number of literary works.

<sup>19</sup> Often the real economic gains may be much smaller than assumed, even by critics of the politics of the United States. The American historian Chalmers Johnston (quoted in Ali, 2002.:277) has been estimated that the military investment of the US in the Gulf region (\$ 50 billion out of the annual defence budget) is far higher than costs of the imported oil from that region.

<sup>20</sup> Collaborators of the CIA and the White House sold illegally weapons to the Iran, and supported the Contras in Nicaragua by the money they got for them (Talbot/Chanda, 2002.:160; see also von Aretin/Wannenmacher, 2002.).



less prone to consider violence and wars as means for the solution of international conflicts than autocratic or dictatorial regimes. The issue of the strengthening of democracy is relevant also within the Western world. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, the quality of democratic life has been undermined significantly in the United States; under the legitimizing umbrella of the "fight against terrorism", civilian rights have been restricted severely, and institutions and expenses of surveillance and control have been massively enforced. In this way, the aforementioned terrorist attacks have increased also the influence of right-wing, radical political forces in America, if these have not even participated in some way in those attacks (see Chomsky, 1993., Ch.XI; von Aretin/Wannenmacher, 2002.). It is the task of international authorities and NGO's to provide a strong voice to the principle of political morale which dictates the exhaustion of all possibilities for a peaceful solution of conflicts before using the means of violence.

A second factor is to grant unconditional support to peacefully minded, democratic political personalities, and to discriminate against aggressive-authoritarian leaders everywhere in the world. I have argued that political personalities can have a decisive impact on the course of history and the outbreak or prevention of violent conflicts and wars. There are many instances where Western countries have supported authoritarian leaders directly or indirectly (even Saddam Hussein got armaments from the US and Western Europe during his war with Iran!), but democratically-minded leaders have been left out in the rain. The recent history of Yugoslavia provides an excellent example for the importance of political leaders. It was the outstanding personality of the long-live president Tito which contributed essentially to the dynamic, independent development of Yugoslavia in the three post-war decades. Due to his prestige stemming from his leadership in the liberation war, and his strictly neutral position in the ethnic-national conflicts, he was certainly a charismatic leader (Auti, 1972.; Dijlas, 1980.). Political personalities were also decisive for the rise of national tensions during the later of Tito and after. Both the Croat and Bosnian leaders Franjo Tudjman and Alia Izetbegović advocated the idea of an independent, ethnically homogeneous state for their country already long before the outbreak of violent conflicts (Tudjman 1981; on Izetbegović see Calic 1995). The most decisive personalities among all, however, certainly was Slobodan Milošević whose open advocacy of a "Greater Serbia" was the decisive step toward the coming catastrophe. In fact, the main motive for secession of the Slovenes and Croats was not their feeling of being so different from the Serbs, but the feeling of becoming more and more threatened in their position as autonomous and emerging democratic nations. I believe that Yugoslavia might exist if a personality like Mikhail Gorbachev would have been elected to president of Serbia after Tito's death!

A third factor which can contribute to the emergence of a more peaceful world order is public opinion around the world, the emergence of non-governmental associations and the enforcement of international peacekeeping institutions and forces. In the era of worldwide television networks, Internet communication, the actions of single states are monitored and eventually criticized by internal and external observers; also NGO's become more and more influential in international affairs.

International institutions, like the War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague demonstrate that effective peace-keeping institutions are coming into existence. What is much needed in this regard, is also the enforcement of the United Nations peacekeeping forces which at present are toothless instruments whose powerlessness sometimes has done more harm than good.

A fourth factor concerns the international arms trade. This is one of the most fateful facts in this regard since it has – especially in Third-World countries – two negative effects at once: A drawing off of much needed resources from basic social and cultural investments, and an increase of the inclination to violent actions against internal minorities and other nations. We must also recognize that one of the main sources of international arms trade lies in the publicly supported, extensive arms production in the Western democracies (including the European states); this is particularly so in the United States where the huge “military-industrial complex” (a term invented by former president Eisenhower) exerts massive influence on political life. A shifting of public investments from military to civilian areas, on its side, will also strengthen democratic movements in less developed countries and thus contribute to a more peaceful world.

A fifth factor which is indispensable for a peaceful world is the socio-economic development of the poor and underdeveloped countries of the Third World. As long as massive inequalities, and many forms of open or hidden exploitation persist between the rich West and the regions before his front doors, in Middle and South America, North Africa and Asia, as long as large parts of the budgets of poor countries go to the purchasing of weapons instead of investments in education, health and other basic social necessities, unrest and violence will persist within and between those nations.

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