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HYPOTHESIS ABOUT WAR: LEGITIMISATION SCHEMAS, STRATEGIC ISSUES AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

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Abstract

Current evolutions make it necessary to talk and write about war, both in theoretical and practical terms. Contemporary thought often considers war as something obsolete, no more actual, not just in ethical, but also in technical–political terms; this is on the basis of reasoning about the 'inside' factors (deriving from collateral effects, interest conflicts, lobbying, inaccuracy and inefficiency of weapons, etc.); it is also a question of over-complacency, or possibly of the illusory attitude inspired by the world-wide spread of neoliberal ideology. In fact the lesson of critical geopolitics geophilosophy – eventually opposed to that of the neoliberals – remains actual. The discussion about the essence of power (whether or not it is intrinsically 'bad'), of the state and of politics (if they inevitably have to rely on the use of force) is still actual. Consequently, it is necessary to rethink the method in order to face the risk of conflicts, based on deconstruction of political strategies, that is, of decisions-sequence, in search for 'false' – that is, undesirable – ideas of power, to prevent escalation that can lead humanity anytime to the risk of self-destruction. The recent events (above all military unforeseeable invasions) contradict the neo-illuminist assumptions of the global civil society, re-proposing themes that geographic–political theory seemed to have abandoned for some time. The brutal effect of war seems to re-emerge from a past 'dark-age' that the analytics were thinking is overdue (besides any possible speculation); it is a war without any cover, carried on by unashamed invaders who just declare, their target is merciless destruction, almost seconding a barbarian primitive compulsion to destruction. This is beyond any ideology and any possible justification and eventually manipulated: the invaders seem to be simply motivated by spreading out chaos and suffering, hate in a kind of hate-war that annihilates a millennia of civilisation efforts.

Keywords

war • geopolitics • legitimisation • challenges • deconstruction

1. Introduction

In the original definitions, the idea of life corresponds to the same idea of physical force and natural energy (hence ancient Greek *συναμις*, 'dynamis'): 'human agency' coincides with the same possibility of surviving, which is realised in the absence of recognised pre-existent codes, possibly in spontaneous 'action', then inevitably with the use of force (violence, war, etc.). Those who want to survive are those who reveal themselves capable of stealing from other individuals and groups, from other human or animal 'lives' what is necessary to survive; a vision that assumes the 'other' per definition as an enemy, as a competitor for the scarce vital resources. In those circumstances, as the neo-Darwinian theories emphasise, forms of 'warrior democracies' and 'tout court' of predatory compulsion are affirmed, in which the ability to produce force, both for defence and for obtaining resources and for any function, is the essential element of any relationship (Khazanov 1994).

With the subsequent diffusion of diversified and more efficient forms of life, with specialisation and innovative adaptation, with the various processes of the division of labour and social roles, more complex ways are affirmed; the activities tend to specialise and become territorialised, leading to the elaboration of increasingly complicated and efficient codes (rules, institutions, techniques, languages).

In this way, the populations begin to understand that it is necessary to use existential energy (physical and psychological) in an oriented manner; then, people can acquire the capability of organising themselves into societies, developing innovative methods, creating and multiplying capacities, and accumulating material and cultural wealth, pursuing more productive ways, and ultimately improving the chances of survival.

Thus, similarly, it is spreading the awareness that force is not the only way to obtain what is necessary; furthermore,

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it becomes evident, albeit among many contradictions, that the use of force itself can cause effects of various kinds, often non-desirable, sometimes even harmful compared with a way of life that begins to be based on creation and reproduction of any kind of value (Gobbicchi 2005).

Furthermore, the experience teaches that the use of force, and of the various tools that produce it (weapons, equipment, techniques, structures of coercion, knowledge, ideologies and correspondent justifications), may induce changes in the direction of the originally initiated actions, eventually inducing effects sometimes inconsistent with the established initial purposes (Johnson 2001; Agnew 2005, 444; Hillman 2005).

These tools also often can 'escape' the control of those who use those same weapons, to the point of configuring side effects and unpredictable and potentially counterproductive ones, which can lead finally to risk of self-destruction (as often happens to several human civilisations indeed). Then, it is arousing the awareness of the need to regulate the use of force and its dual character, which an indiscriminate use can make incompatible with civil developments. So, in particular in the context of conflicts, war, or any violent event, occurs per definition in irreversible destruction and is therefore incompatible with the needs of a society that tends to accumulate and reproduce wealth, and organise itself into stabile structures.

Nevertheless, obviously, the predatory mode continues to characterise various circumstances. It cannot be simply cancelled from the human culture; furthermore, it represents the attitude, and the capability, to defence and to self-defence for individuals and groups from different hazards, both natural and human, that continues to characterise the social experience: it continues to represent something necessary.

Then with the times, and especially in modern times, the use of force was not practiced in an indiscriminate manner, but in a controlled way, possibly covered by some justification – even when fictitious, eventually with the aim of mitigate side effects. It did not remain just a way of life, neither an ideology in itself: the use of the force was considered mainly as a 'means', rather than as an 'end' (a way of life); this, with exceptions of a few extremist or self-declared fascist autocratic regimes that eventually represent groups (or elites individuals) unable to evolve, nor to induce any kind of development.

Indeed, the use of the force in international relations (and in any circumstance indeed) represents increasingly a secondary option (the 'extrema ratio'), once it has been exhausted further alternatives. Some authors (neoliberal) hope it would become progressively obsolete, to the point that it will be *de facto* abandoned. Others (neo-realist) think it is necessary to preserve it in functional terms, in order to preserve a kind of attitude, namely a generalised capability of peoples and apparatuses to hit and to fight – even with a defence motivation. But none would consider war in it self as an ideal way of life, at least not deliberately in these terms.

Just for this reason, it is necessary to elaborate a control of the tools that produce force: a necessity which becomes evident rather early in the history of humanity and which becomes one of the essential functions of the state (defined as the organisation that has to elaborate and implement decisions concerning the collective interest, namely, to take decisions that neither individuals nor the single social factions cannot achieve).

Among these, precisely, that of 'immunising' the violence-production means, that is, of making the violence that characterises any human system controllable, both in internal and external relations.

An evolution that, yesterday as today, represents the social context and which is expressed in multiple ways, from acquisition of the monopoly of the tools to produce force (according to a 'top-down' interpretation) to the elaboration of a 'social contract' (legitimation 'from the bottom', 'bottom-up'), to the development of apparatuses and institutions (the rule of law, the administration of justice), to the various codifications at different scales.

The task of such public institutions would be precisely that of reconverting the natural energy that characterises the human relations at any scale in non-destructive ways, imposing specific rules of competition, 'purifying', through a control system the aspects of the conflict that civilisation progressively evaluates as not acceptable. A complex operation that means the keeping of the social apparatus in a proper tension, preserving a certain level of 'violence' – intended as existential energy - which must not exceed certain thresholds. Otherwise, it risks making society regress to the primordial situation of 'violence that generates more violence', a kind of vicious circle that would feed itself indefinitely.

2. At the Geopolitical Scale

For this to happen, the state – in any form it realises itself in the geographic arena, from primordial tribes to city-states, to nation-states, to empires, to the transnational apparatuses of post-modernity – must demonstrate that it knows how to manage the tensions, and to understand how to take control of these tools (weapons, fortifications, warfare technologies, tools of constraint). This, however, without cancelling or depressing the energy that naturally characterises social actors in their usual activities.

All this is the result of a centuries-old process, and also fraught with contradictions and regressions, which takes place in specific contexts; all this would translate into a transfer of skills (and prerogatives) by the actors of a particular community (individuals, factions, intra- and inter-state organisations) towards a political apparatus. It is the passage that distinguishes the achievement of organised

life status (from primordial tribalism), that is a process of accumulation of power in some 'centre', which takes place, as usual for the formation of a power, assuming different degrees of irreversibility.

A passage that coincides with the affirmation of a set of rules and apparatuses that have to imply an idea of obligation, and specularly of repression and threat of sanctions (eventually imposed by force), but to be applied in a controlled way. Indeed, a citizen, a company, or any public or private association cannot freely decide whether to pay or not taxes, to carry out military service or not, to side with some foreign power, or simply not observe rules and conventions (codified or not). But all this has to be considered as a 'means', not an 'end' of the civil construction, accrediting the idea that the state does not rely inevitably on the use of force (Lepri 1998; Lindemann 2003; McMahan 2004; Jelen et al. 2020).

In recent decades (and regarding Europe, since the end of the 2nd Word War), it seemed that the dilemma had found a solution, and that the use of force at any scale could be diluted and articulated in some 'governance' effect, that is, at an international scale, in a multilateral decisional mechanism. A fact that would have led to the overcoming of an idea that inevitably considers politics as an imposition and to the conviction that war (understood as an ordinary political instrument) had become obsolete.

This is especially the case for increasingly complex societies based on the pursuit of 'open' development (based on market economy, welfare and social redistribution, and technological innovation), for which the very definition of 'use of force' seemed to lose sense. It is simply a matter of functioning: the most advanced functions are based on creative abilities, that is, on the power of individual 'players' to renew behaviours and motivations (therefore to product development, innovation, investments, the evolution of lifestyles, the ability of businesses, consumption of individuals, etc.); all this must by definition take place in contexts of 'freedom' and cannot be simply imposed 'by decree'.

Socially, this transition takes place with the transformation of a population of subjects, or even of 'serfs' and 'proletarians', into a new 'middle class' of conscious citizens. Furthermore, this effect would eventually involve whole systems, and assimilate also tendentially illiberal regimes generally located in the Wallersteinian semi-periphery (e.g. it could be the case today of BRIC countries) and in peripheral 'developing' areas (see *contra* Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1989).

Moreover, this seems to affirm itself even more clearly after the end of the bipolar scenario (which had blocked that functioning on a global scale for half a century), with an alleged liberation of a part of the Third World from a condition of underdevelopment. Think of the amazing progress of states such as China, India and many others representing a large part of the world population, that have been increasingly included in a planet-wide non-violence-dependent commercial and cultural community.

3. The Use of Force as Obsolete – A Tragic Illusion?

At a certain point, the evolution seems to configure a destiny, which contributes to spreading the idea of using force as an instrument of government that is no longer actual, and that is counter-productive. This trend characterises politics at any scale, and also international circumstances, in a scenario characterised by progressive openings corresponding to the affirmation of institutions of globalisation (such as the UN charter seems to envisage, as well as many other multilateral-inspired organisations such as the European Union (EU)).

Not that, of course, violence had disappeared from political practice; nevertheless, a tendency is affirmed that seems to redefine the use of force as something, as well as ethically and humanly undesirable, harmful by definition, as the consequence of 'errors' that a prudent governance could avoid. Furthermore, who uses violence tries to cover and justify it in some way.

In reality, the history of Europe, starting from the 2nd post-World War period, highlights how war, and armed conflict, in general, has sometimes disappeared from the negotiating tables: negotiations selves seem to be recoding themselves into relations of economy, technology and culture. It remains as a residual instrument, characteristic of peripheries to be consolidated, yet able to settle the various issues peacefully.

If, in some circumstances, the use of violence, and also of war remains an actual question, it demonstrates a fundamental double standard with politics split into two, in domestic and in wider spaces. A fact that would be the consequence of a kind of rhetoric degeneration, which affects usually also advanced systems (because of different factors, essentially due to the spread of lobbyism and rent-seeking by consolidated establishment) (Mamadouh 1999).

A kind of involution that, at that point, some innovative geopolitical scholars deem it would be necessary to unmask so that the democratic institutional form does not remain just a cover for a new establishment. It brings to the spread out of a 'critical' approach, inspired by the reflection on the catastrophes caused by the twentieth-century world wars, and of any war indeed, definitively demonstrating how war is an uncontrollable tool, beyond any initial purposes.

An awareness, which matures following a series of contemporary traumatic events, starting from '60ies civil movements and the various wars of de-colonisation, from the Vietnam wars, to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979; a fact that becomes finally quite evident with the Gulf war (perhaps the last 'oil' war, against Saddam's Iraq, 1991) and the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s, up to the war and the

Western coalition invasion of Afghanistan following the 11.9.2001 attack (Bishara 2011, Flibbert 2003, Guzina 2022). And it is a special case of the Second Gulf War (2003–2011) that was considered until a few months ago among the last conventional wars, deliberately provoked and organised by sovereign states linked in wide-ranging alliances to achieve international political objectives (even if not made legitimate by any UN deliberation). This even when Saddam's attitude towards use of chemical weapons appeared out of discussion, considering perhaps the Halabja massacre in 1988.

These wars obtain contradictory results, and sometimes precisely contrary to those that their initiators propose, that highlight that those same interventions had not led to stability nor to the improvement of international safety. Wars that, indeed, paradoxically, had contributed to further destabilising the scenario; in the case of the Iraqi War (2003–2011), in particular, it happened to the point of leading to the formation of ISIS and other terrorist movements, which are consolidated precisely following the dissolution of the structures of the new armies imposed from the outside.

The same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan (1979–1989), at the time one of the causes that would lead to the dissolution of the USSR itself and to a general destabilisation. Consider that, the same resistance movement will derive what will later become the new enemies of the West (Osama Bin Laden, once anti-Soviet partisan and jihadist terrorism). Events demonstrating in a macroscopic way that producing 'force', and the conducting of a war, risk to create effects opposite to those desired.

From this awareness derives the need for a new doctrine of international politics and of war itself; it proved to be necessary to investigate, in addition to the immanent element attributable to the *casus belli*, further causes that are not evident, which tend to fuel a war in addition to its direct causes (even, the 'insider effects' question) (Jelen, Džajić Uršič, and Indeo 2022).

4. The War in Geopolitical Theories

Various theories on war have spread in an era of modernity, in times of formation of territorial and national states, and of Vestfalian inter-state society. Among these, are those of functionalist and geostrategic inspiration, which claimed themselves as 'mainstream' in the last phases of the modern era, and those of Ratzelian and eventually of neo-Darwinist character.

All of these may be considered as the basis of Western expansion, and ironically both the basis of colonialism and neo-colonialism, as well as the basis of both the western idea of the nation-state (intended as something 'organic' and exclusive, often indeed degenerated in a kind of totalitarian regime) and the western democracy, which opposed the idea of 'organicism' (Mamadouh 1999).

Theories that define a specific area for the use of force, in which war is sometimes aimed at the realisation of some nationalistic ideal, of monopolistic protection of economic activities, and sometimes as just being considered as a usual instrument for pursuing a political target.

Schools that are cited mention the main ones, which relativise the war to certain principles, and which do not consider violence necessarily in itself a value, namely an 'end'; nevertheless, they proved to be inadequate – as seen above – to prevent the 'rhetoric' degeneration, and eventually the disastrous abuse of warfare apparatuses.

Theories to which, starting from 1968, the critical current is added, which among other things, elaborates a new vision of international relations, purposing a new method for recognising and avoiding the risk of manipulation, which criticises both Ratzelian theories and the functionalist neoliberal ones.

Moreover, it attempts to develop a method to prevent war (internal or external) from becoming sometimes an end in itself (instead of being a 'means'), and to prevent that the state which would derive from an original act of force, can anytime degenerate into a sort of machine of hatred, forming and relying on a specific elite made of individuals inclined to systematically and culturally practice violence.

In particular, the critical approach considers insufficient the theoretical structure provided by neoliberal functionalism, which seems to reflect a naive neo-Enlightenment approach inspired by the continuous search for regulations, expedients and diversions, which would progressively reduce the conflict to a minimal element, and which would then become something controllable.

An attitude that assumes an ethical necessity of intervention ('when the neighbor's house burns, it is necessary to intervene, before the fire spreads on our home') and also a fundamental 'goodwill' of the human being who considers the conflicts as essentially 'errors' or consequences of errors. It is the case, for example, of ideological interpretations such as communism, 'Third-Worldism', nationalism and imperialism, which the logic of an open society (of market economics, of multilateralism, of modernist technology, etc.) would lead to overcoming.

Instead, unlike the functionalist one, the critical approach which matures at the end of modernity is characterised by an 'ideological' skepticism, realising the complexity of the scenario. An attitude that expresses a character of prudence, to mitigate and not provoke – with coarse interventions – further tensions. A philosophy at the basis of a characteristic procedure assumes the nonlinear character of the various conflicts (and of any human action indeed), therefore, considering possible feedback, distortion and manipulations,

and even the 'insider effects' that characterise in general the human agency.
In fact this idea considers the use of violence as something that usually goes soon out of control, creating the premises for escalations: a scenario in which the violence feeds further violence, generating a situation of addiction, cancelling any possibility of rational attitude. In fact war can by itself upset any scenario: it means a lethal risk for entire systems, so that, once exploded, becomes the unique priority, the only preoccupation. Then, it deletes any further motivation – since the priority is the defeat of the enemy, whatever would be the starting position – eventually inverting roles and alliances, changing the same idea of any distinction between the 'good' and the 'evil'.

5. A New Way for Conducting the War

All this characterises the passage to a new epoch, defined in various ways of globalisation or of post-modernism, in a context of 'dematerialisation' of economies, which means a transformation of war methods, and of the whole security and defence chain. A fact that becomes evident in the decades at the end of the second millennium, elaborating a new approach and a new theory of war, changing apparently the logic of international intervention.
It is possible to identify early signs of this trend already at the time of the Yugoslav 1990s wars that evidenced a reluctancy of organising a conventional mass war. In fact the initiator of this war hypothesised a kind of 'perfect war' without (innocent) victims ('we are like God', as asserted by the NATO commander- in-chief in that times, as a journalist source reported), with 'smart' bombs and 'surgical' bombing in a zero-victims war conducted 'from above', essentially relying on intelligence services at ground (information, technology) and on remote aero-naval forces.
Furthermore, the change is evident – assuming a periodisation based on the presidencies of the only superpower that survived the 1900s – in the times of the two Obama mandates, in particular in the second one, and in the Trump subsequent one, beyond some populist proclamations of the latter; and which is particularly evident today with Biden (e.g. withdrawal from Afghanistan, summer 2021, and the 'leading from behind' strategy currently in Ukraine).
The critical moment in this change has been individuated in the reluctancy Obama manifested to participate in bombing in Tripoli of Gaddafi in 2011, which was considered as possibly inopportune or even a mistake made by the French and British air-forces, even considering the possibility of the actual concrete risks of collateral effects manifesting in the context, above all a dangerous geopolitical vacuum (Mullin 2011; Ademmer, Delcour, and Wolczuk 2016; Ambrosio et al. 2020).
Furthermore, the evolution of the practice of war seems to be linked to the overall evolution of technology and culture, and also society and demography; the emerging idea of war, and of international confrontation, seems to want to avoid the direct and 'heavy' war as usually defined.
It is based on different calculations: first the awareness that direct warfare ('material', terrestrial, conducted with armies of conscripts, and extensive use of conventional methods) does not give results and that, on the contrary, it inevitably causes further escalations in terms of humanitarian catastrophes and civilian victims, losing legitimacy in itself. This kind of war in fact inevitably becomes soon 'dirty' or 'hybrid', confusing the front and rear into a single battlefield, and which is instantly reproduced by the 'media' as something ethically unacceptable, as well as fundamentally useless.
An awareness that is also affirmed as a consequence of the spread of compelling mass media, and of their role in instantaneous information. Starting from the reports of the Vietnam War, the chronicles of the 'front line' made by 'embedded' journalists broadcast images of the massacres directly 'in prime time'. A fact that makes the war lose any reminiscence of a 'chivalrous' event, and of any trace of the confrontation that was once exalted in human nature such as courage, daring and so on.
It becomes clear to everyone, and to the fighters themselves (who will be, in a certain sense, the first victims of the war itself, both, whether as causalities on the battlefield, or as 'burn out' veterans, once they return home), that war is more often resolved in a question of ruthlessness and mercilessness: a battlefield in which those who prevail, demonstrate to be meaner, with an absolute lack of scruples; this is simply because it proves operationally impossible to 'isolate' war actions from any more comprehensive scenario, particularly by sparing suffering civilian populations.
Elements combine with further considerations of ideology and contextual opportunities that characterise the transition to post-modernity. This is the case of demographic and human relations, highlighting that, particularly for advanced systems, human resource is the most precious and 'expensive' (this obviously starting from ethical considerations, taking into account further economic and social aspects, training costs, etc.).
This, and for analogous reasons, also considering the maintenance of a compulsory conscription system: the new wars are conducted with advanced technologies, which do not require, if not exceptionally, intervention in the first line of mass of soldiers. Instead of these, they are employed by usually trained and special forces, engaged for particular actions which can avoid the humanly destructive effects that affect troops of conscripts without a specific predisposition.
Further reasons predisposing such change rely on economics trends. This is the case of the same affirmation of a new economic paradigm and of a context of de-materialisation

and de-territorialisation: the new paradigm suggests how it is now not 'profitable' to conduct pseudo-colonial wars to obtain material resources, which can be obtained in non-violent ways. In other words, the very fact that the possibility of quickly securing a 'booty' (as remuneration for the war itself, e.g., oil, water, arable land or 'contracts' to exploit deposits of some resource) is no longer necessary itself to wage war.

All this until recent events seems to demonstrate how the regression to war as a policy tool – and 'tout court' the regression to conventional warfare in Europe – is again a dramatic reality: the events connected to the invasion of Ukraine, which one state deliberately conducts against another state, without any 'civil' concern (of causing innocent victims, large-scale destruction, systemic children kidnapping, terrorist use of chemical weapon) seems to suggest that that way of thinking was misleading and illusory.

At the same time technological, social and geopolitical evolution draws a new scenario, and perhaps an epochal change, with the end of a feeling of 'fake' security that would have characterised three or four Western generations starting from the 2nd World War. A fact that meant a widespread sense of over-complacency, in reality, the symbol for an entire generation raised in the context of the 'triumphant' neoliberal globalism in the time of late modernity. It seems to delude itself that 'goodwill' is enough to induce even the worse enemies, progressively, to an integration policy (or betting on the fact that everyone can understand, even our worst enemies, precisely, that war is not convenient for anyone, a loss–loss scenario).

This situation meant generations of Westerners believed that lifestyle and civil achievements were acquired forever. A sort of 'comfort' or 'laziness' effect that seems to contaminate whole societies to create paradoxical situations, disguised neocolonial exploitation (oil, gas, row material, but also in terms of real estate 'bubble', tourist destinations, transmission of cultural models, etc.), or dependence on dictatorial regimes that use those same resources to consolidate themselves and to repress entire societies.

In fact, by consuming oil and other 'commodities', Westerners have subsidised and continue to support dictatorial regimes, that is, the lobbies that have appropriated Libya, Russia, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia and Iran, transforming them to a 'rentier' state without a future; finally, they end up falling into a sort of blackmail, financing those who will become enemies – and who instead naively hoped to assimilate to their lifestyle.

The reality of the recent years shows that 'goodwill' or 'good faith' cannot be considered as 'taken for granted', and that the method of deconstruction and identification of 'insider' factors (characteristic of critical theory, such as identified above) turns out to be not applicable in various circumstances. And that, in other words, some actors continue to think they can get more out of a situation of chaos and 'systemic' conflict, instead of pursuing peace and collaboration.

A particular situation had seldom never been considered in any of the 'war games' or any theories cited (indeed few had considered the option of Russia's aggression to Ukraine, as well as the Twin Towers attack and Saddam's use of chemical weapons against civilians in Halabja). But this is only one of the contradictions that characterise the scenario of the cited war, that will evidently be the crucial theoretical and practical scientific question for the next future geopolitical thinking.

The central contradiction, however, concerns the effect of (guilty) surprise that affects the whole democratic open-society world (as is typical for societies that have had the opportunity to enjoy long periods of peace, almost addicted to that privileged condition): entire populations and entire apparatuses appear dismayed in the face of the current war invasion that indiscriminately uses instruments of mass destruction.

It means the regression to this systematic practice of war, with an army that manages to send an entire generation of 'cutthroats' who have no qualms about bombing civilian settlements, murdering defenceless people, killing, raping, plundering and looting. The geopolitical representation helps to understand the imperialist design and motivations the Russian government intends to pursue. The various actions that Putin sought with different weapons had already hinted at a characteristic *modus operandi* for a couple of decades in different scenarios: naive, anachronistic and inefficient, but 'real'.

These are tiles that, projected on the cartography, draw a 'mosaic' of sensitive areas (Central and Northern Africa, Eastern Libya, Syria and Eastern Mediterranean, Caucasus, and of course, South-Eastern Europe and Ukraine), with the evident intention of creating a continental 'grip' effect against the Western block. This is to induce 'chaos' on the main trade routes, to prevent the structuring and simple operation of energy resource channels, to obtain a conditioning effect on supply relationships, using special operations companies (perhaps with the 'Wagner agency'), and a set of 'oligarchs' at the head of 'multinationals' linked to the Kremlin by private and personalist relations.

Such various operations would cause destabilisation on sensitive scenarios, with the consequent manipulation of international flows, hydrocarbon quotations, as well as of refugee mass flows; finally, acquisition of monopoly positions in sectors such as energy which, in a context of globalisation, allow manipulation effects to be carried out for essential resources. All this within the framework of blackmail-type influence policies, of a 'rentier-state' policy, which lives parasitically by exploiting Western supposed 'weaknesses' (i.e. the addiction to a 'consumerist' way of life, and the parallel arising of a perception of un-vulnerability).

The geographical representations make apparent such manoeuvres and the attempt that Putin has been pursuing

for years by affirming facade justifications (e.g. that it is a question of 'international division of labour', proposing a 'guided democracy', asserting nationalistic or 'anti-imperialist' motivations); manoeuvres to which the West responds by accelerating specific policies, in particular the energy transition (to focus on liquefied gas, and on renewable sources), menacing the key rent of such dictatorships.

6. Conclusion

All of this considered, it is difficult to say that the war in Ukraine presents (a) a new case study, (b) a case that brings us back to the battle of the past, to the era of the primitive and predatory war, (c) or, on the contrary, a war that proposes a case of 'hate' as an instrument on which to base ideologically an entire political system, or (d) a 'unicum' namely the case of the nuclear superpower blackmailing the rest of the world.

It appears as an apparatus and a new generation of fighters – possibly manipulated – which takes hatred as an instrument of domination, which must precisely reproduce itself to avoid 'complacency' effects or collapsing at any moment. A situation in which the hatred must be deliberately cultivated and maintained to perpetuate impacts, which must somehow be channeled and fed by new violence, which then can become an instrument of 'governance'.

There can be various answers to these questions. Indeed, the 'dead end' in which today's Russia finds itself demonstrates that autocracy inevitably leads to war, and this is for several reasons: because it is otherwise unable to control the complexity of the economic/development machine, because the leader's autocrats always need new forms of legitimation, to induce a state of war as a pretext and apply repressive policies and for many other reasons. Namely, demonstrating the incapability of pursuing the way of growth of both, society and economics.

A lesson that teaches again that the unique possibility of growth is that of insisting in democratisation efforts: it is the unique parameter that can demonstrate that a politics is reliable, is following an inclusive development path, reassuring that that apparatus is capable of maintaining the internal capability of control in diverse dimensions – political, technical, ethical, eventually on nukes and WMD – this in order to be able to accept instructions from diverse sources (bottom-up, top-down, from outside, namely form the multinational society), assuring a pluralist attitude, and avoiding any irreversible concentration of power.

All of these are not just slogans, but elements to be considered necessary to assure equilibrated progress: any other possibility has to be considered bounded, that is, limited in procedure, and therefore dangerous. The only judgement parameter is the possibility of a reliable confrontation in the world multipolar arena; otherwise, the governance practice risks any moment to undertake a path that can bring it to a dramatic regression.

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