



4 Reversing Clausewitz?

War and politics in Foucault, Deleuze–Guattari and Aron

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When discussing war, it is almost compulsory to quote Clausewitz, or at least the maxim that ‘war is merely the continuation of politics by other means’. At the same time, the formulaic symmetry of this well-known adage exposes us to the temptation of reversing its meaning; in other words, it raises the question whether it is perhaps not politics that is the continuation of war with other means. This question has been directly confronted by a range of authors, from Johan Huizinga to Ernst Jünger (Huizinga, 2004: 84–85; Gnoli and Volpi, 1997: 83). One of the earliest proponents of the need to reverse the formula was Erich Ludendorff who reflected upon the matter in the transformed conditions of *Der Totale Krieg* (Ludendorff, 1922: 23). One could mention countless other examples. This chapter, however, does not intend to systematically deal with how Clausewitz’s formula has been challenged or how, through the course of the twentieth century, it has occupied a special place in debates about the interconnections between war and politics, the military and the civilian population, national–international space and the global dimension. Rather, it limits itself to a particular geographical and historical context – France between the 1970s and 1980s – in order to examine the very different theoretical approaches of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari, and Aron.

Michel Foucault

In 1976, Foucault gave a course at the Collège de France entitled *Society Must Be Defended* in which a central aim was to reverse Clausewitz’s well-known assumption (Foucault, 2003). The point of departure for the Foucaultian discourse is the need to re-problematize the concept of ‘power’ by inverting both its sense and scale and, in doing so, break with the models that had been layered up over centuries of philosophical and legal thought (Foucault, 1995, 2000). In such a vision, the key to understanding power needs to be sought not at the level of sovereignty and law but at the molecular level of a ‘microphysics’, which is focused upon exploring the dynamics of power relations that underpin a relationship characterized by some form of asymmetry (Guareschi, 1999).



1 In his research, Foucault seeks to free himself from an economic conception of power relations, which, in varying ways, characterizes both
2 liberal and Marxist perspectives. In the sphere of liberal thought, the
3 dynamics of power are equated with the circulation of goods, as demon-
4 strated by the frequent articulation of private-law categories (such as the
5 contract, the power of attorney or the mandate) within a public-law
6 domain. In contrast, with Marxism, the syntax of power tends to trace
7 itself in the structure of relations of production, which it serves to legiti-
8 mate and stabilize (Foucault, 1995: 13). In order to design an alternative
9 to these 'economistic' paradigms, which instead posits power as an auton-
0 omous element of investigation, Foucault therefore identifies two viable
1 analytical operators: repression and war (ibid.: 16).

2 The use of war as an operator to analyse social peace immediately
3 brings to mind the name of Thomas Hobbes, who commenced from the
4 concept of war in order to work out how to construct an artificial order
5 guaranteed by the Leviathan.¹ Foucault rejects such an association
6 because, in his opinion, war itself does not play any role in Hobbes's
7 theoretical proposition. This observation is based less on the hypothetical
8 character of *bellum omnium contra omnes* than on the fact that, in the
9 state of nature contemplated in *The Leviathan*, violence and the actual
0 enactment of war would never take place. In effect, Hobbes does not
1 discuss war but rather a 'state of war' to indicate the play of mimetic
2 representations and 'infinite diplomacy' on the basis of which each indi-
3 vidual, even the strongest, comes to the conclusion that they are unable
4 to guarantee their security from the attacks of others (Foucault, 1995:
5 92). For Foucault, therefore, Hobbes is far from being the theoretician of
6 the relationship between war and constitution of the political order, but
7 instead assumes the guise of an author determined to eliminate war as
8 the historical reality of the genesis of sovereignty. In this sense, his theo-
9 retical construction is understood by Foucault to be contrary to a histor-
0 ical discourse centred on war and invasion, which was used and
1 appropriated in multifarious ways and had notable currency in revolu-
2 tionary England. Such a discourse refers to Angles, Saxons and the
3 Norman invasion, which established a new sovereign in England, William
4 the Conqueror, and a new aristocracy originating from across the
5 Channel. Stressed in different terms, this account could also function as a
6 discourse that both legitimises royal absolutism on the basis of the right
7 to conquest, but also discloses the usurpatory origins of the royal and
8 aristocratic order, thus evoking the right of resistance that would apper-
9 tain to the descendants of the oppressed Angles and Saxons. It is against
0 such a 'political use' of history that, according to Foucault, the Hobbe-
1 sian attempt to neutralize real wars operates, and hence leads to the con-
2 ceptual antidote of the 'state of war' in order to delineate a condition
3 characterized by the absence of winners and losers, and dominators and
4 dominated.
5

For Foucault, identifying the polemical target of Hobbes coincides with underlining a typology of discourse, defined historical-political, which begins to assert itself from the seventeenth century onwards and in which he identifies an alternative to legal and philosophical models centred on sovereignty, representation and the contract. The theme of conflict between races plays a central role in this discourse and serves to stabilize a dichotomous and discordant vision of society, permanently traversed by an irreducible conflict induced by conquest and the asymmetry ushered in by the outcome of a historically situated battle. In such a perspective, therefore, war is neverending but continues as a permanent social condition under the semblance of peace. Or, put another way: peace as the continuation of war with other means.

In short, the theoretical scenario in which Foucault sets the inversion of Clausewitz's formula is marked by the need to elaborate a general frame in which to ensure coherency to an analysis of power removed from the burden of economic and substantialist perspectives. War, as an analytical operator, is thus called upon to play an analogous role to that reserved to the contract in political philosophy (Duso, 1993). Reversing the formula, for Foucault, therefore means, first and foremost, asserting the fact that power relations are based on a relationship of force crystallized at a specific moment in time and from the outcome of a war. Therefore, the peace that follows is a condition that revolves not around overcoming but rather the institutionalization of the determining effects of the 'last battle'. On the basis of this hypothesis, 'the role of political power is perpetually to use a sort of silent war to reinscribe that relationship of force, and to reinscribe it in institutions, economic inequalities, languages, and even the bodies of the individuals' (Foucault, 1995: 15–16). The second significance of the reversal consists in the hermeneutic assumption according to which the conflict that permeates a political system, 'these political struggles, these clashes over or with power', should be interpreted as the continuation of war during peace (ibid.: 16). The third implication, which in some ways closes the circle, underlines how, once such a logic is assumed, only the resumption of war can bring about a resolution to the conflictual tension that accompanies peace.

Hereupon, Foucault invites a shift in perspective, proposing to read the famous maxim as itself the result of the reversal of a pre-existing formula. According to Foucault, Clausewitz had in fact simply inverted a pre-existing formula, according to which politics was none other than the continuation of war (ibid.: 48). The reference, obviously, is to the historical-political discourse that is developed in the 1975–1976 course. Special attention is paid to the constitutional context, and particularly to the military dimension, in which its genesis is located. Foucault concisely traces the changes during the medieval and early modern eras that gave rise to the monopolization of war by the monarchy. From an oligopolistic instrument wielded by a military aristocracy, and prone to be transversally

used by different ranks of power within the realm or empire (Brunner, 1939), war would later transform into a function reserved to the sovereign. It is the sovereign who guarantees internal peace within the realm. At the same time, the violation of law becomes a criminal deed and consigned to the courts, while war finds itself projected outwards onto disputes between states, which in doing so establishes the *jus ad bellum* of international European society (Schmitt, 2003; Bull, 1977). Foucault stresses how the ‘statalization’ of an act of war implies that ‘the immediate effect of this state monopoly was that what might be called day-to-day warfare, and what was actually called “private warfare”, was eradicated from the social body and from relations among men and relations among groups’ (Foucault, 1995: 48). It is in the context of the statalization of war and its exclusive projection over interstate competition that, according to Foucault, a contrary historical-political discourse arises, centred around the permanence of war and the establishment of peace within the borders of the royal state, which acts as the ‘ineradicable basis of all relations and institutions of power’ (ibid.: 49). Hence, in contrast to the monism of the theory of sovereignty, in which the dimension of war is displaced from the infrastate space only to re-emerge in the ‘state of nature’ of international anarchy, there instead exists a binary vision of social reality, marked by the incessant struggle, manifested in different forms, between two fronts for which war has never ended.

Significantly, the Foucaultian genealogical inquiry interprets various nineteenth- and twentieth-century perspectives, especially Marxism and racism, as derivations of the historical-political discourse, which, in opposition to the liberal vision of the contract and the composition of individual and collective interests, propose a representation of social reality in terms of latent war, zero sum games, or, to use a concept of Clausewitz, ‘polarity’ between classes and races. As such, it is no coincidence that the temptation arises, explicitly or implicitly, to invert the formula. Take, for example, the rival positions of Ludendorff and Lenin. For the former, the dimension of total war ousts the primacy of politics and puts it at the service of war. For the latter, on the other hand, it is the exclusive positioning of war in the space of interstate relations that enters into crisis. Indeed, a far more radical fault line intersects the various fronts of the inter-imperialist war and cuts across the geography of state borders: that of class conflict.

The reference to Marxism brings us back to one of the principal subtexts of the archaeological digressions in *Society Must Be Defended*. As confirmation of this reading, one could cite the various declarations contained in ‘minor’ texts written around the year 1976, in which Foucault criticizes the traditional Marxist approach to the concept of ‘class struggle’ for privileging ‘class’ and overlooking questions connected with struggle. This, he argued, had led Marxism to seek solutions in the sociology of social class or to rely on the optimism of the philosophy of history and dialectics (Foucault, 1994: 268, 310–311). In this context, reversing

Clausewitz means, first of all, reacting to the neutralization of ‘internal’ conflict implicit in the projection of war over international space. Politics, over and above the adjectives that might be used to describe it, is the continuation of war with other means, to the extent that every relation of power rests on an agonal basis and on the exertion of a local power relationship. A study that might appear little more than an erudite exercise ultimately reveals a political *intentio* directly linked to the contemporary situation. This same dispute – more with Marxism than with Marx himself – resonates with the political and ideological climate of the 1970s, and the events and debates that directly involved Foucault as a militant, from the foundation of the university at Vincennes to the Prison Information Group (GIP) (Eribon, 1991: 214–313). Set against such a backdrop, the re-problematization of the concept of power, then at the centre of Foucault’s theoretical engagement, acquires not only an intellectual but also a practical value, in the prospect of a renewal of the scenarios of political action. As a result, one returns to the question of the analysis of power. It is from here that Foucault had embarked to arrive at the theme of war, and the study of an ‘antecedent’ alternative to the contract as the cipher to an approach to power that is irreducible to models of sovereignty. Such a perspective was then abandoned. Over the following years, other questions, in particular the government of others and of the self, would become the privileged objects of research. A determining role in this shift was, without doubt, the new direction in Foucault’s militant politics. Remaining at a theoretical level, however, Vincenzo Sorrentino is right to point out how the assumption of the paradigm of war in the analysis of power relations actually leads to an impasse, about which Foucault appears to be clearly mindful (Sorrentino, 2008: 76–86). While connecting every kind of power relationship with war was surely suggestive as a theoretical gesture, this was evidently exposed to the risk of simplification, which was unable to fully comprehend the multiple ways in which power relations are manifested; subsequently compressing violent coercion and government, intersubjectivity and institutional relations, politics and war onto a single register.

Deleuze and Guattari

The underlying project that runs through *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus* is to make world history delirious (Deleuze and Guattari, 1977, 1987). Deleuze and Guattari’s discourse develops along a wide set of time scales, where the national–international order, the sole focus of the Foucaultian analysis, constitutes just one element among others. The places and times in which the reversal of Clausewitz’s formula is ‘set’ are consequently very different. The ‘plot’ has two principal protagonists: the apparatus of capture (or state) and the nomadic war machine, two different concatenations caught in the intrinsic instability of their relations.

1 For Deleuze and Guattari, the war machine – a composition of men, arms
 2 and animals – is an invention of nomads. The state, as such, does not possess
 3 war among its functions. This it must subtract from the nomads; capturing
 4 their machines and transforming them into something quite different: an
 5 army and a military function. The great kingdoms that had appeared to
 6 emerge from almost nowhere at the dawn of history in Egypt, Mesopotamia,
 7 Crete and India were overwhelmed by the sudden invasion of hordes armed
 8 with longbows and chariots – the Hyksos, Hurrians, Kassites, Hittites,
 9 Aryans, Mycenaean and Scythians – against whom the kingdoms and
 0 empires proved powerless. Learning the lesson, they assimilated the nomads’
 1 innovations so as to in turn equip themselves with a military potential.

2 In Deleuze and Guattari, the capture of the war machine and its military
 3 institutionalization, however, did not proceed in a linear way or acquire a
 4 complete and definite form, but turned out to be an open and reversible
 5 process that was continually traversed by tensions. This was because the war
 6 machine and the apparatus of capture depended upon different sets of logic.
 7 The war machine was an invention of nomads: it was their way of occupy-
 8 ing the space of the desert and did not necessarily have anything to do with
 9 war. Or better, it was correlated in exclusive terms to war only when it was
 0 appropriated by a state apparatus. The war machine is therefore not defined
 1 by war (which it instead encounters the moment its movement clashes with
 2 the striations that sedentary peoples have placed in its path), but by the
 3 means in which the nomads are distributed and structured in the smooth
 4 space of the desert (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 417). To understand the
 5 sense of the discourse developed by Deleuze and Guattari around this
 6 matter, it is perhaps useful to recall a well-known passage of *Vom Kriege* in
 7 which Clausewitz underlines, in rigid sequential order, how the decision of
 8 war rests with the defender and not the attacker because the latter would be
 9 more than glad not to meet with any resistance and sweep straight towards
 0 the realization of its goals (Clausewitz, 1976: 377).

1 The incorporation of the war function by the state, which can take on
 2 different forms (the recourse to mercenaries or a territorial militia, con-
 3 scription or a professional army), proceeds from a specific operation that
 4 denaturalizes the war machine – originally aimed at occupying the space of
 5 the desert and encountering combat only through chance contact with the
 6 striations that block its path – by making war its exclusive objective. In the
 7 words of Deleuze and Guattari:

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 9 It is precisely after the war machine has been appropriated by the state
 0 [...] that it tends to take war for its direct and primary objective, for
 1 its ‘analytic’ object (and that war tends to take battle for its objective).
 2 In short, it is at one and the same time that the state apparatus appro-
 3 priates a war machine, that the war machine takes war as its objective,
 4 and war becomes subjugated to the purposes of the state.

5 (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 418)

According to Clausewitz's choice of language, this would be seen to be the subjugation of war to politics, which establishes the objectives and confides their accomplishment to military action. This introduces one of the most controversial themes of the Prussian general's thought: namely the concept of absolute war, an act of force performed without a solution of continuity until the accomplishment of the objective that, according to the 'logic of the concept', should characterize the activity of war (Clausewitz, 1976: 579–581). The critical literature has dwelt widely on this question, starting with the often inconsistent observations made by Clausewitz himself, which oscillate between depicting absolute war as a logical-theoretical hypothesis, whose practical realization is impeded by the pressure of material and political circumstances and seeing it as an extreme case that can nevertheless materialize, as his references to the Napoleonic campaign demonstrate. Deleuze and Guattari, for their part, consider this problem in light of the structural differences between the war machine and the regulation of war according to the political objectives of the state:

The distinction between absolute war as idea and real war seems to us to be of great importance, but only if a different criterion than that of Clausewitz is applied. The pure idea is not that of the abstract elimination of the adversary but that of a war machine that does not have war as its objective and that only entertains a potential or supplementary synthetic relation with war. Thus the nomad war machine does not appear to us to be one case of real war among others, as in Clausewitz, but on the contrary the content adequate to the idea.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 420)

Thus, the Clausewitzian maxim according to which 'war is merely the continuation of politics by other means' should be read less as a statement than as a normative assumption about the means by which the war machine is incorporated into the state apparatus, with politics forming the frame in which military action takes place. From a similar point of view, it is significant that Clausewitz should identify in the people's war of Napoleon, and in an army that assumed the features of a machine able to sustain itself on the 'fuel of nationalism', the element of rupture that seemed to lead the logical-deductive scheme of 'absolute war' (Clausewitz, 1976: 579–581) to its concrete realization (De Landa, 1991). War would, therefore, appear to represent a flow that states are only partially able to appropriate; subjugating its objectives and the destruction of the adversary to the aims of their political project.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, however, 'when total war becomes the objective of the appropriated war machine [...] the objective and the aim enter in new relations that can reach the point of contradiction' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 421). From here derives the ambivalent

attitude of the author of *Vom Krieg* towards absolute war and its possible realization during the Napoleonic wars:

This explains Clausewitz's vacillations when he asserts at one point that total war remains a war conditioned by the political aim of state, and at another that it tends to effectuate the idea of unconditioned war. In effect, the aims remain essentially political and determined as such by the state, but the objective itself has become unlimited. We could say that the appropriation had changed direction, or rather that states tend to unleash, reconstitute, an immense war machine of which they are no longer anything more than the opposable or apposed parts.

(Ibid.)

And so the state, after having seized control of the war machine, finds itself facing a sort of return effect that sees it submit to the object which it had appropriated and which, exceeding the function assigned to it, takes on the form of total war, considered not simply as a war of annihilation but as a conflict that transcends military decisions and the rules of the game to involve the whole of society. In order to identify the decisive shifts that mark the appropriation of the state by the war machine, Deleuze and Guattari focus their attention on historic forms of fascism and the Cold War. In the case of fascism, they underline how war, even when nominally subjugated to political purposes of an imperial nature, assumes 'an unlimited movement with no other aim than itself' (ibid.). Another key moment is represented by the bipolar order of the Cold War, in which a planetary war machine pursues the peace of 'survival' and 'terror' as its objective. In considering the balance of *mutual destruction*, Deleuze and Guattari tend not to dramatize the contending elements between the two blocks so as to underline the functional convergence which leads to the seizure of a single war machine over the entire globe.

To summarize, the state appropriates the war machine, to which it attributes the exclusive ends of war, subjugating this to its own political purposes. And so here we encounter Clausewitz's formula: 'War is merely the continuation of politics by other means.' Napoleon and the people's war through patriotic and nationalist mobilization remains within such a paradigm, even if the consistency with which the objective (*Ziel*) is pursued short-circuits the prescriptive and command function of the political aim (*Zweck*). Albeit with some hesitations, Clausewitz hence speaks of absolute war. The increasing integration between war and economy, which in the following century leads to 'materialized war', marks a deep shift in the dimension of war. We are in the arena of total war and mobilization, which instigate an overall reorganization, starting from military needs, social, political and economic relations:

The various factors that tended to make a ‘total war’, most notably the fascist factor, marked the beginning of an inversion of the movement: as though the states, through the war they waged against one another, had after a long period of appropriation reconstituted an autonomous war machine.

(Ibid.: 466–467)

Up to this point, however, the Clausewitzian maxim seems to conserve a minimum of descriptive capacity, because ‘fascist war still fell under Clausewitz’s formula “the continuation of politics by other means” even though those other means had become exclusive, in other words, the political purpose had entered into contradiction with the ends’ (ibid.: 467). Out of this arises the concept of ‘suicide state’, coined by Paul Virilio in reference to the Nazi experience (Virilio, 2006). In contrast, it is possible to speak of a true inversion of the formula in the situation that arises following the end of the Second World War, with the balance between terror and deterrence. The objective of the war machine at this point is no longer war but peace, whereby it absorbs, in keeping with the terminology of the Prussian general, the aim (*Zweck*), or rather, the component of political command:

This is where the inversion of Clausewitz’s formula comes in: it is politics that becomes the continuation of war; it is peace that technologically frees the unlimited material process of total war. War ceases to be the materialization of the war machine; the war machine itself becomes materialized war.

(Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 645)

According to Deleuze and Guattari, in the bipolar world order the war machine is reorganized so as to assume, over and above the oppositions between the two sides, the entire globe as a smooth space. The flow of absolute war which had been appropriated by states and subjugated to political aims seeps out from the limits assigned to it as a military function – the subjugation of the objectives to the aims – and is reconstructed as a war machine:

The war machine reforms a smooth space that now claims to control, to surround the entire earth. Total war itself is surpassed, toward a form of peace more terrifying still. The war machine has taken charge of the aim, worldwide order, and the states are now no more than objects or means adapted to that machine. This is the point at which Clausewitz’s formula is effectively reversed; to be entitled to say that politics is the continuation of war by other means, it is not enough to invert the order of the words as if they could be spoken in either direction; it is necessary to follow the real movement at the conclusion of

1 which the states, having appropriated a war machine, and having
 2 adapted it to their aims, reimpart a war machine that takes charge of
 3 the aim, appropriated the states, and assumes increasingly wider polit-
 4 ical functions.

(Ibid.: 421)

7 Evidently, many of these reflections not only appear to refer to the recent
 3 past but can in many ways also be extended to the unipolar context, in
 3 both its soft and hard phases, which characterizes the change in scenario
 3 that occurred following the end of the Cold War. What appears even more
 0 topical are the observations about the materialization of a system of organ-
 1 ized insecurity and the figure of ‘the common enemy’ who, having emerged
 2 during the previous geopolitical configuration, seems today to establish its
 3 functionality with ever greater clarity (ibid.: 422).

6 Raymond Aron

8 In 1976, the same year in which Foucault gave his course *Society Must Be*
 9 *Defended*, Aron’s two volumes of *Penser la guerre: Clausewitz* (in English,
 0 *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War*) were published with the respective titles
 1 *L’Âge européenne* and *l’Âge planétaire*. In them, Aron engages in a herme-
 2 neutic bout with Clausewitz’s text and, in particular, with the interpreta-
 3 tions of the Prussian general’s work over the subsequent course of history.
 4 This inevitably leads him to question the meaning of the ‘formula’ and,
 5 obviously, the possibility and/or necessity of reversing it. For his part, Aron
 6 is absolutely categorical in opposing any reversal. There are two reasons
 7 for this. To start with, if the Clausewitzian conceptual framework is faith-
 8 fully followed and correctly understood, then there can be no room to
 9 attest the reversibility of the two terms of the formula. War is an instru-
 0 ment of politics, which it uses to achieve its own aims. In contrast, politics
 1 can never be at the service of war in so much as the objective cannot in any
 2 way be subordinate to the means. The other reason why Aron is particu-
 3 larly critical about the periodic practice of inverting the formula goes far
 4 beyond the realm of philology and links with the desire of arriving at an
 5 adequate understanding of current political events and the relations
 6 between states.

7 Aron reiterates the need to clearly discriminate between war and peace,
 8 and particularly disputes those positions that would see the Cold War as
 9 representing a sort of intermediate situation between the two terms.
 0 However, despite his efforts, the formulation of clear and unequivocal cri-
 1 teria to distinguish war from peace proves to be very problematic. The
 2 resort to violence organized through the armed forces against another state
 3 is identified as the distinction that, once crossed, makes it legitimate to talk
 4 about war. For such a principle to be confirmed, it is necessary first of all
 5 to take a position regarding the claim that violence cannot be limited to

the sphere of physical coercion. On this regard, Aron critically considers the concept of 'symbolic violence' proposed by Pierre Bourdieu, which he sums up as follows:

It consists of imposing conceptual frameworks and moral norms, arbitrary because they vary from society to society, on members of society and particularly on the very young. To impose ideas, beliefs, and ways of living and acting that are called habitus ('ethos' in Weber's terminology) is said to be violence.

(Aron, 1983: 393; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970)

Such a perspective is judged by Aron to be unacceptable in that it compromises the possibility of distinguishing between socialization, which inevitably refers to the influence of the group upon the individual, 'and the constraint, which presupposes conscious or other kinds of resistance by those in power' (Aron, 1983: 393). In the same way, theories invariably defined as sociological are criticized for their tendency to read all asymmetric relations, at both an infrastate and an international level and including those of an economic or cultural character, in terms of violence, so as to allow for a distinction between the dominated and the dominant. For Aron, such broad interpretations empty the concept of violence of any specificity, rendering it *de facto* applicable to any type of reality: 'If we regard as 'violent' any social order which we call inequitable or against which part of the dominated element revolts, violence cannot then be conceptually grasped by virtue of its ubiquity' (*ibid.*: 395). At this point, the 'inversion of the Formula is thus made out to be self-evident' (*ibid.*). Against this position, Aron leans decisively towards a definition of violence that refers solely to the dimension of physical coercion and, it could be added, to the organized form of its military projection in an international dimension. As such, he emphasizes the need not to equate conflict with war, as tends to happen in the strategic thinking of the United States. Various dynamics of conflict can exist between states without this signifying the move to a situation of war. However, Aron does not say anything precise about the distinction that allows one to talk about war, besides recourse to stock phrases such as the 'military use of force' or the implicit reference to conventions that authorize the beginning and the end of hostilities. Rather, he limits himself to underlining how the boundary that distinguishes war and peace has demonstrated a degree of mobility over the course of time, as have the means through which states seek to exert pressure on one another also during times of peace (*ibid.*: 389). On the basis of such an approach, Aron cannot but assert that there is no war in progress between the United States and the Soviet Union. Certainly, conflict exists between the superpowers in a number of areas, although these are accompanied by convergences in other spheres – for example, the prevention of nuclear conflict. Therefore, the resort to propaganda and covert actions as well as proxy wars fought in peripheral zones, besides representing nothing

new with respect, for example, to the forms of military command that have historically underpinned the European balance of power, also denies the very idea that the United States and the Soviet Union are at war or engaged in a condition that is 'different from peace'.

Aron contemplates the prospect of a possible restoration of international society and a system characterized by a threshold of homogeneity that, following the turmoil of the twentieth century, is able to guarantee the mutual recognition of the unanimity and effectiveness of distinctions between, for instance, inside and outside, war and peace, military and civilian. Over and above the philological approach to Clausewitz's work or the critical observations regarding the broad use of the concept of violence and the equation between war and conflict, we need to understand Aron's steadfast opposition to 'reversing the formula' as reflecting his insistence to safeguard a formal setting that establishes the possible conditions of differentiating between war and peace and between internal politics and foreign policy. The aim is certainly not to remove war from the relations between states but rather, at least at an implicit level, to suggest a possible restoration, under new conditions, of a *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. The fact that war is monopolized by units (i.e. states) that mutually recognize each other and do not manifest any designs to annihilate one other, and which enter into conflict for limited political stakes against a background of a common interest of maintaining an international system of shared rules, is considered an element of order that not only provides the basis for clear and evident distinctions but also limits the ubiquitous distribution of violence through it being 'turned into form'.

Within the context of the Cold War, Aron strives, as we have seen, to reaffirm the irreversibility of the relationship between politics and war. This presupposes a clear distinction between internal and external dimensions, the delimitation of subjects entitled to *jus ad bellum*, and the possibility of establishing a parallel between 'war as action' and 'war as state' (to draw on the concepts of Carl Schmitt); that is, on the one hand, between the materiality of the forms of combat and the distribution of violence and, on the other, the normative framework that fixes war spatially and temporally and defines the means of establishing peace (Schmitt, 2007: 195–203). This is what is at stake when we reverse the formula. Do new weapons (in particular nuclear arsenal), the spread of irregular forms of combat, the dissemination of ideological fault lines beyond the borders of the nation-state and the development of supranational organizations generate a 'war as action' that can be brought within the parameters of a 'war as state'? Aron is convinced that this is the case, demonstrated by the resoluteness with which he opposes all attempts to reverse the 'formula'. However, when it comes to delineating the features that distinguish war from other forms of violence, Aron's discourse becomes uncertain, and his reference to the evident state of things, far from fulfilling this objective, indicates the inevitable problems of projecting pre-twentieth-century models of international society onto a changed historical context.

Reversing Clausewitz?

In answer to the question whether it is legitimate, or opportune, to reverse the formula of Clausewitz, which sees war to be the continuation of politics by other means, the positions of the thinkers examined here can be swiftly summarized as follows: Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari both respond affirmatively, while Aron is adamantly opposed.

Foucault confronts the formula in a research project that aims to identify, within the tradition of modernity, a means of thinking about political order that provides an alternative to the one centred on the neutralization of conflict, which Foucault considers typical of traditional 'legal-philosophical' solutions. Reversing Clausewitz, in this context, implies insisting on the warlike character of power relations, seeing in the watermark of peace the signs of a war that has never ended, and recognizing that politics operates according to other means by affixing the real dynamics of submission and subjugation in the apparent neutrality of institutions and procedures. In such a perspective, inverting Clausewitz means first and foremost shifting the Prussian general's maxim from the interstate context in which it was originally situated to an internal dimension, and to locate the basis of power relations and the centre of gravity of political action in conflict and not in its neutralization.

In contrast, for Deleuze and Guattari, Clausewitz is not a pretext but a privileged interlocutor. The explicit and implicit references to *Vom Kriege* signal counterpoints to the parts of *Thousand Plateaus* dedicated to the war machine and the apparatus of capture. Inverting Clausewitz means projecting the models of the Prussian general, obviously reinterpreted in the light of their 'radical' theoretical hypotheses, onto world history up until the political, social and technological developments of the twentieth century. In this perspective, the war machine appears to take on the form of a concatenation which passes through centuries and millennia, becoming interconnected in different and instable forms with the state apparatuses. Such a formulation proves to be decidedly less conditioned by references to the forms, spatiality and oppositions (internal-external, military-civil, etc.) of political modernity than the one adopted by Foucault. This is the 'prophetic' character of Deleuze and Guattari's analysis with respect to the contemporary era: for while it is calibrated to the preceding context of the Cold War, it is nevertheless able to capture, beneath the continuity of old forms, the effectiveness of powerful processes of integration, the redesign of planetary orders and new combinations of smooth and striated spaces.

Aron, for his part, tackles the formula in an extensive study that is specifically dedicated to Clausewitz. The assertion that politics is the continuation of war with other means is a theoretical move that is deemed by Aron to be both philologically incorrect and politically dangerous. In his opinion, entertaining such a proposition means jeopardizing a whole regulatory spatiality – that of an international society centred on states – to which he sees no possible alternative or, at least, one that is desirable. If the formula is reversed

1 according to the position of Lenin, thus following a path in many ways anal-
 2 ogous to the one sketched out by Foucault, and the root of infrastate politics
 3 is to be found in war itself and not in the overcoming of war, then it is 'the
 4 national unity' that disappears (Aron, 1983: 270), or better, the idea of a
 5 pacified space within specific borders characterized by the sovereign authori-
 6 ty's monopoly over the exercise of legitimate violence. The relations between
 7 different states, in contrast, are specifically characterized by the fact that – to
 8 adopt a formula from *Peace and War. A Theory of International Relations* –
 9 'they take place within the shadow of war' (Aron, 1966: 6). However, Aron
 0 adds immediately afterwards that 'to use a most rigorous expression, rela-
 1 tions among states involve, in essence, the alternative of war and peace'
 2 (ibid.), as demonstrated by the fact that at international level the figure of the
 3 soldier is flanked by that of the diplomat. It is here that Aron guards us
 4 against a second approach to reversing the formula; namely, the elimination
 5 of every distinction between war and peace whereby the latter is merely seen
 6 to be 'war conducted by other means' and interstate relations are represented
 7 exclusively in agonistic terms. This method of 'reversal' possesses various
 8 inflections. For example, in the position that leads from Ludendorff to Hitler,
 9 'the relationship between states is defined by hostility even when it is not
 0 expressed through the taking up of arms' (Aron, 1983: 278). In a different
 1 register, the theoreticians of the United States' policy of deterrence are also
 2 accused of dissolving the distinction between war and peace by the way in
 3 which their complex theoretical dispositives lead to a proliferation of inter-
 4 mediate grades between the two terms.

5 Aron's categorical opposition to any reversal of the formula therefore
 6 brings the discussion back to the need to preserve some key distinctions –
 7 internal–external, peace–war, political–military – considered fundamental
 8 to contain and rationalize the distribution of violence, through the restora-
 9 tion of an international society. Such an endeavour could be accused of
 0 indulging in nostalgia. It is easy to recognize the theoretical difficulties that
 1 it comes up against, the moment that it has to pass from criticism to posi-
 2 tively setting forth the parameters in which to establish, for example, the
 3 distinction between war and peace. The developments that have occurred
 4 in the decades following Aron's work only seem to further accentuate the
 5 anachronistic nature of his formulations. This said, it is striking how many
 6 attempts are still made to rekindle categories and distinctions that have
 7 long been considered unable to account for the dynamics of the present; as
 8 if it were impossible to do away with them, even if this perhaps means
 9 reframing them in negative terms.

Translation by Nick Dines.

Note

1 For a discussion of war in Hobbes, see Y.C. Zarka (2001: 127–145).



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Conflict, Security and the Reshaping of Society

This book is an examination of the effect of contemporary wars (such as the ‘War on Terror’) on civil life at a global level.

Contemporary literature on war is mainly devoted to recent changes in the theory and practice of warfare, particularly those in which terrorists or insurgents are involved (for example, the ‘revolution in military affairs’, ‘small wars’, and so on). On the other hand, today’s research on security is focused, among other themes, on the effects of the war on terrorism, and on civil liberties and social control. This volume connects these two fields of research, showing how ‘war’ and ‘security’ tend to exchange targets and forms of action as well as personnel (for instance, the spreading use of private contractors in wars and of military experts in the ‘struggle for security’) in modern society. This shows how, contrary to Clausewitz’s belief that war should be conceived of as a ‘continuation of politics by other means’, the opposite statement is also true: that politics, insofar as it concerns security, can be defined as the ‘continuation of war by other means’.

This book will be of much interest to students of critical security studies, war and conflict studies, terrorism studies, sociology and international relations in general.

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