Beyond the Three Traditions: The Philosophy of War and Peace in Historical Perspective

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Beyond the three traditions:  

the philosophy of war and peace  

in historical perspective

PIERRE HASSNER

The following is an edited text of the nineteenth Martin Wight Memorial lecture given by Pierre Hassner at the Royal Institute of International Affairs on 17 March 1994.*

‘Why is there no international relations theory?’

It is to Martin Wight’s everlasting credit that the question he asked several decades ago is still with us. Yet a fresh look at it is made all the more necessary by the puzzling and paradoxical turn which the question of war and peace has taken in our time, particularly in the most recent years since the fall of the Berlin Wall. In concluding his review of the three traditions—the realists, the rationalists and the revolutionists—Martin Wight discerns a dominant trend: the erosion of rationalism and the triumph of realism. Yet, in the world of nuclear deterrence and of social and economic interdependence, one may well argue that, on the one hand, new restraints such as those favoured by the rationalist or Grotian school are imposed, at least upon nuclear power, by the necessity of survival; and that, on the other hand, the power of nation-states to control their societies and to pursue their foreign interests is being hampered by transnational trends which they find more and more difficult to manage, or even to understand. More than a world community, as aimed at by revolutionists, we have a world of rival nation-states; but more than an old-fashioned game of power politics, as described by the realist school, we have a world of turbulence where mass communications, financial networks, popular explosions constantly interfere with the calculations of diplomats and soldiers, a world where ambiguity and unpredictability seem to reign supreme.

What, then, have the three traditions of thought about the relations between states to tell us about such a world? Perhaps their respective teachings are more

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* The text relates to an earlier and longer article entitled ‘Peace and war’ to be included in a dictionary of political philosophy, edited by Philippe Raynaud and Stéphanie Rais, which is to be published by Presses Universitaires de France in 1995.

relevant today, after the end of the Cold War, in the sense that peace and war may be resuming their historical meaning. The formula for the Cold War was 'neither war nor peace'; or, to use Raymond Aron's well-known formulation, dating from 1947 and reconfirmed on the eve of his death in 1983, 'peace impossible, war unlikely'. Real peace was impossible, because of the bipolar ideological antagonism; actual war was unlikely because of the risks of escalation and of mutual nuclear destruction.

Today, peace has become less unlikely, since the disappearance of the Soviet empire and of the global East-West confrontation, but war has become rather less improbable. To put it another way, a Third World War may have become even less likely, but local wars have become not only more likely but more prevalent. The formula for the post-Cold War world may, instead of 'neither war nor peace', rather be 'both war and peace'. Indeed, this formula is illustrated on the European continent itself, where, in the west, people have eliminated the very possibility of war from their daily concerns and yet where, a few hundred miles to the south-east, a genuine bloody war with 200,000 casualties is raging. But this is only one—if perhaps the most significant—of the paradoxical combinations made possible by the end of the Cold War.

On paper, one could distinguish six possible successors to the situation of 'neither war nor peace'. First, there was the hope that the Cold War would be followed by a real peace. It would be based, in one version, upon a change in the structure of the international system: this would be the long-awaited coming of 'collective security' under the label of 'the new international order' or of cooperative security based on the CSCE or on a revival of the United Nations. At about the same time, that is between 1989 and 1991, another version of the advent of peace arose in the form of Fukuyama’s 'end of history' based less on any international mechanism than on the fundamental ideological, social and economic transformation represented by the victory of the market and of liberal democracy.

Fairly soon, international events shifted the trend in thinking in two other directions, having more to do with war, or at least with conflict, than with peace. One was the return to the old world of inter-state rivalries, to the collapse and re-emergence of empires and of nations: from Sarajevo to Sarajevo. The other was a new bipolarity, North against South instead of East against West, or 'the West against the rest'. It could be seen, in Samuel Huntington's terms, as the clash of civilizations. According to him, the nineteenth century witnessed the conflict of nations, the twentieth the conflict of ideologies, the twenty-first will bear the mark of the conflict of civilizations or of religions (the two notions being somehow treated as synonymous).

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Nobody could deny that each of these four visions contains some element of truth. But nobody could claim that any one of them is true to the complexity of the present situation. This is why the two most plausible versions, in my view, return to the mixture of war and peace which characterized the Cold War, but in different combinations.

The first, well expressed in the book by Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky, The real world order, generalizes or extrapolates from the situation I described above for Europe. The world is divided into two parts: one, that of the comparatively free, comparatively prosperous and comparatively peaceful democracies, has become a 'security community' or a 'peace zone', where war is no longer an instrument of politics; the other, consisting of the rest of the world, is hopelessly entangled in war, poverty and disorder resulting either in anarchy or in local or regional hegemonies. This stark opposition has much in common both with Fukuyama's vision (he would say that the first group is experiencing the end of history while the second is still in the midst of it) and with Huntington's (since the 'peace zone' corresponds, roughly, to the West). But Fukuyama would maintain that the rest of the world will eventually follow the lead of the West out of history, and Huntington would stress the conflict between the two worlds and, in particular, the threat which the second, essentially represented by Islamic fundamentalism, raise for the first. By contrast, the point of the Singer-Wildavsky thesis is the relative separation of the two worlds, and the fact that the first should neither feel too threatened by the second nor harbour too many illusions about solving its problems through aid, intervention or peacekeeping. But it is precisely this isolation which seems very hard to maintain in an age of mass communications, of mass migrations, of the free movement of capital, of drugs and of weapons, when the Third World and its rootless, its homeless and its lawless are present in the heart of the cities of the developed world.

It is only natural, then, that besides the two worlds' model the opposite one should have emerged: that of universal interpenetration, universal anarchy and universal hostility; or, to quote the German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger, a civil war which is both global and molecular. Enzensberger brings together Los Angeles and Sarajevo, xenophobic violence and organized crime, tribal warfare and uncontrolled urban strife. To him, the diffusion of violence may be the price we pay for the decline of inter-state war; conflicts may no longer be ideological, but nationalism and ethnicity, racism and fanaticism are only very thin rationalizations for a raw hatred and violence which is directed against oneself as much as against the foreigner or 'the other' as such. Its ultimate source may have to be sought in the nature of modern society or in that of humankind itself.

What, then, are we to do with these partly conflicting and partly complementary interpretations? Or, to come back to Martin Wight, where are the three

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2 Hans Magnus Enzensberger, Aussichten auf den Bürgenkrieg (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993).
traditions now that we need them? It appears that the exit from the Cold War has made them even harder to apply but that we need even more to look at the prospects for war and peace in the light of some reflection about the nature and history of man and society.

To find a guiding thread in this enquiry, we may do worse than use a classification which complements that of the three traditions: I refer to the ‘three images’ introduced in the literature around the same time by Kenneth Waltz in *Man, the state and war*. Waltz distinguishes between the philosophers from St Augustine to Freud who see the causes of war in the nature of man; those who see them in the nature of the political or of the social and economic regime, for whom war comes from monarchical or military rule or from capitalism, and for whom peace will be brought about by democracy, or by modern commercial or industrial society, or by the end of class struggle; and those for whom the ultimate cause of war lies in the anarchic structure of the international system, in the absence of a world government and the plurality of states which makes war possible even between perfectly peaceful people and societies. I shall start from Waltz’s third image, from the plurality of states, and examine the interplay between their mutual relations and the evolution of domestic and transnational societies. Indeed, it would be hard to do otherwise, for, it seems to me, it is precisely this phenomenon of the plurality of states which constitutes a deeply disturbing puzzle for political philosophers and social reformers alike.

It is probably not by chance that, in the history of philosophy as well as of ideologies, international relations occupy an embarrassingly discreet and modest place. Somehow they always seem to be sacrificed or victims of a hostile fate. Perhaps one would be closer to answering Martin Wight’s question ‘Why is there no international relations theory?’ if one knew why Jean-Jacques Rousseau never wrote the second part of the *Contrat social*, which was supposed to deal with international relations and to contain the key to his whole enterprise; or why Marx never finished *Das Kapital*, whose last book was also supposed to contain the international dimension. In the works of Hobbes and Locke as well as of Plato and Aristotle, international relations figure almost like a postscript or an afterthought, but one which, according to the author himself, is liable to put his whole project into question. For the thinker, the legislator or the statesman who is trying to promote the virtue or the freedom of citizens, the justice or harmony of the city, the external environment raises an ever-recurrent and never quite soluble problem. Whether through the corrupting influence of commerce and of immigration, or through the risk of military invasion and the necessity of defence, the problem is the same for the Platonic republic or for the Stalinist ‘socialism in one country’: ties with foreign lands trouble the unity of the body politic and the exclusive loyalty of its citizens; the needs of defence force a change of priorities concerning not only budgets but also political and social structures, as well as moral and legal rules. The imperatives of survival tend to replace those of the good life; the city risks being dominated by those who

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defend it, or having to imitate those who threaten it and whom it would like to avoid. This is Machiavelli’s problem: can one be good alone in a world where everyone else is bad? In another way, it is the problem Rousseau raises for his Polish friends: should we accept conquest rather than risk losing our identity in the process of defending it? It is the problem of the size of states, raised, after the Greeks, by Montesquieu and, in a more acute form still, by Rousseau: if it is small, a republic risks losing its existence; if it is big, it risks losing its reasons for existing. In one case, it risks becoming the victim of external war; in the other, it risks becoming the victim of domestic discord.

The pursuit of loneliness

There are two solutions, then, in order to be left alone (and virtuous) in peace: either to withdraw from the world or, conversely, to absorb it. These correspond to the isolated community on the one hand and to the universal empire on the other. One may be tempted, in Hegelian fashion, to read into their succession a coincidence of the logical and the chronological order: the Greek city-state would be the thesis, the Roman and medieval empire would be the antithesis and the modern nation-state would be the synthesis. Let us not forget, however, that the temptation of withdrawing into isolation and that of launching a crusade or seeking world domination exist in every period including our own; that American policy has traditionally swung between the wish to escape the rivalries and compromissios of the old continent and the wish to make the world safe for democracy; and that twentieth-century totalitarianism has as often taken the shape of small states seized by the passion for unity and purity, which leads them to withdraw from the world and to turn their frenzy inward (in the Cambodian or Albanian style) as it has that of expansionist empires. The fact remains that, on the level of political philosophy, it is in the dialogue of Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides that the ideal of peace through the closed community has been developed both for their time and for ever. The same goes for Dante and the struggle between the Pope and the Emperor concerning the idea of peace through universal order, and for Montesquieu and Rousseau and for the American dialogue between Federalists and anti-Federalists concerning the dilemmas and compromises of the big modern republics.

Aristotle criticizes Plato’s excessive insistence upon domestic unity and external isolation; but the basic idea that the end of the city is virtue and that what makes it a city, beyond the reciprocity of interests, is philia, friendship or trust among citizens, still points to a city of reduced size which should live for peace but give a central, even though not supreme, place in the education of its citizens to the preparation for war.

Hence there is a double-sided problem, which will reappear with Rousseau. On the one hand, in terms of political education, the dream of philosophers, from the Republic to The government of Poland, seems to be to create a kind of chauvinistic Robinson Crusoe: the citizens should live in isolated cities, should have no external ambitions and should not have to fight, but their sense of
citizenship and their patriotic virtue, which are indispensable for their individual perfection and for the interior order of the city, should imply a belief in the latter's superiority and some hostility towards foreigners, even though this hostility and these martial virtues would not in fact find occasion to be applied. The superiority of peace would find its expression in that of philosophic life, but political life would be that of warriors without war.

The other side of the coin is that precisely these warlike virtues always end up by finding a role in spite of themselves, for the isolation of the city can never be either total or perpetual. Whether through communications or commerce, through migrations or through war, it will always tend to be reabsorbed by the environment from which it has tried to get away. Of course, this absorption, in turn, is not necessarily complete or final. The example of Poland and, more generally, the perpetual rebirth of ethnic or national identities despite the weakness both of their material and of their historical bases, shows that the need for affirming their continuity and their difference can enable communities to survive against all odds. Besides, there is a principle (invoked ever since the Greeks and emphasized by Montesquieu and Rousseau as much as by today's federalists) which would enable city-states to resist empires or small states to defend their existence in front of big ones: this is the notion of federations or confederations, which would combine the inner cohesion of small communities and the external (at least defensive) power of big states. But there is always the danger of sliding either into anarchy or into centralization. Federations and confederations can survive only within an unstable and moving equilibrium which is constantly faced with the problems of plurality, with its conflicts and compromises, which the separate community was precisely supposed to avoid.

There are analogous difficulties in the opposite direction, that of universal empire. For Augustine, it is the city of God which is one because it is the city of real peace, based on order and justice. The earthly city is that of passions and discord, hence of war. The world of states seems to alternate between the two; but its justice is relative and formal, its peace is inseparable from war and from sin. The just wars of which St Augustine is the first theoretician, the human peace he envisages, are based on the multiplicity of political units. The separation of the spiritual and the secular realms, even though attenuated by later Christian thinkers, dominates the middle ages with the conflict of the Pope and the Emperor. But it is combined, within the secular realm itself, with the separation between nations or states. Even Dante's Imperium Mundi is a communitas communibatum: the emperor would exercise his authority over principalities and republics, not upon their subjects directly. Even more clearly, later legal and theological constructions, such as those of Vittoria and Suarez, combine the idea of the community of all people, of civitas maxima or societas humana, with the plurality of states which have to be regulated and brought together in exceptional cases.

Neither the unity of Christendom nor the appeal to natural law as a basis for jus gentium can ignore multiplicity: there is no cosmopolitanism without inter-
state relations, hence without rivalry or conflict. With the Reformation, secession is introduced within the spiritual realm itself and it is, on the contrary, the secular realm with the emergence of the secular and sovereign state which appears as *defensor pacis*, to use Marsilius of Padova’s expression, and puts an end to religious wars. But the sovereign state, while a defender of domestic peace, is at the same time an international warmonger, since the appeasement of civil strife through state sovereignty and territorial division legitimizes, by the same token, external rivalries and inter-state conflicts.

We are back, then, with this ‘mixed state’ which was to be denounced by Rousseau and from which the dreams of community, whether isolated or universal, had vainly tried to escape. The period between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, between Hobbes and Hegel, is the one when it was made a central theme of political thought through the opposition between the civil, or legal, state within states and the state of nature among them.

The author who has expressed most eloquently the central consequence for human life and for political philosophy of this opposition is Rousseau:

The first thing I notice, in considering the condition of the human species, is an open contradiction in its constitution, which causes it to vacillate incessantly. As individual men, we live in a civil state subject to law, as people we each enjoy a national liberty; this makes our position fundamentally worse than if these distinctions were unknown. For living simultaneously in the social order and in the state of nature, we are subjected to the inconvenience of both, without finding security in either: in the mixed condition in which we find ourselves, whichever system we prefer, making too much or too little of it, we have achieved nothing and are in the worst state of all. That, it seems to me, is the true origin of public disasters.8

How, asks Rousseau, can the philosopher or the citizen rest satisfied with the peace and justice established by the civil order, when, lifting his eyes, he sees everywhere the face of death and agony. So this is the fruit of these peaceful institutions. Pity and indignation rise from the bottom of my heart. Barbarous philosopher! Come and read us your book on the field of battle!9

What, then, should the philosopher do, as he is caught in the middle of this virtual or real battlefield of the international environment? Three directions are possible. The first consists in, so to speak, settling down on the battlefield and basing his thinking not on peace but on war, not on the idea of the good society but on the reality of the struggle for power. The second consists in trying to beautify the battlefield, to transform the battle into a rite, a game or a sport, by submitting it to rules and to limits through law and through voluntary and reciprocal cooperation between states. The third consists in hoping that the ‘old

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9 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ibid., p. 43.
mole' of history will, so to speak, dig a tunnel under the battlefield. It tries to overcome the conflicts of states neither by suppressing their plurality nor by trying to convince them to adopt other rules of behaviour, but by shifting the ground of their rivalry through social, technological, cultural or even anthropological change, uncovered by the philosophy of history.

From war to international politics

The first direction is illustrated by the three greatest thinkers on war, none of whom is a philosopher in the technical or classical sense: Thucydides, Machiavelli and Clausewitz. All three start not from the problem of order but from that of action.

Thucydides' narration is based on the polarity of movement and rest: it is centred on the former but its melancholic tone indicates a preference for moderation, always in danger of being overwhelmed by passions or by chance. By contrast, Machiavelli delights in emphasizing the primacy of movement over rest, of the extreme case over the normal one, of daring over prudence, of virtue over fortuna. By showing the violent origins hidden behind peaceful laws and orders, he does not praise violence and war as such but he decontextualizes all the barriers which might disqualify them as paths towards the most powerful and noble passion: the desire for individual or collective domination and glory.

Clausewitz's thought is dominated more by the tension between violence and reason, between war and politics, both in theory and in practice. Two things are certain. First, as Raymond Aron has forcefully demonstrated, Clausewitzian thought is just the opposite of militarism and bellicism, since it emphasizes the primacy of politics over war. But, on the other hand, his definition of politics itself does not go beyond 'the intelligence of the personified state' and the importance of 'moral forces'. It is set within the framework of the competition (whether peaceful or violent) between states; it does not go beyond in order to raise the question of the legitimate domestic or international order, or to question the institution of war itself.

This same ambiguity and this same prudence are to be found in the European tradition of reason of state, or of Realpolitik, or in the American realist school. They disappear when the Clausewitzian formula is turned on its head, and politics becomes the continuation of war by other means, when, with Treitschke and the German nineteenth-century tradition, one proclaims the primacy of foreign policy, or, with the American social Darwinists, the primacy of the struggle for life and the 'survival of the fittest'. But even then the idea of regulating the struggle through balance and reciprocity is not necessarily thrown overboard.
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From power politics to international society

This regulation is, by contrast, at the centre of the second way out of the battle, that of what Martin Wight called the rationalist school, which emphasizes the notion of international society. Of course, this points not to a world community but to a society of states, which accept a number of rules in their mutual relations and collaborate in the functioning of a number of institutions aimed, in particular, at the limitation of war. The sources of the conventions aiming at limiting war are manifold. One could mention the Christian doctrine of the ‘just war’, with its imperatives of discrimination and proportionality. Its trace is still present in Grotius, as well as that of the other side of traditional doctrine, that of ‘just cause’; war may be aimed at punishing the guilty party in a conflict, in the name of a universal duty of solidarity. But with Pufendorf, Wolff or Vattel, the centre of conceptions such as international society and the limitation of war moves from the idea of justice towards the notions of balance and reciprocity, from the Christian or human community towards the sovereignty of states, from the cause towards the means, from the jus ad bellum towards the jus in bello. War becomes a juridical state which occupies a place in the international system symbolized by the Treaty of Westphalia and based on the territoriality and sovereignty of states. Order becomes synonymous with equilibrium; the codification and limitation of war are based on its legitimation.

But this order and this equilibrium are precisely what is being derided by philosophers like Rousseau, Kant and Hegel. In spite of their differences, they are united in their ironical stance towards the theorists of international law and diplomacy. In addition, Rousseau and Kant, as distinct from Hegel, are indignant about the legitimation bestowed by international law on an immoral institution like war. If, on the other hand, as Hegel admits, international law is based only on the will of states whose nature and duty command them to respect their commitments only as far as they correspond to their interests, if there is no universal law and no umpire who can guarantee it by sanctioning its violators, what is the function of international lawyers besides offering legal alibis for the calculations of the powerful and for a situation which is the very negation of law? Of course, Kant himself delineates the principle of a law of war; but for him it is based precisely on the obligation of abandoning the state of war in order to institute the state of peace.

In reality, for Rousseau, for Kant and for Hegel, international law, and in particular the law of war, is problematical both regarding its basis and regarding its application. Rousseau and Kant accuse the jurists of concluding from the ‘is’ to the ‘ought’; Hegel, conversely, accuses international law of remaining ‘on the mode of the “ought”’. All three appeal to a tribunal which they see as more fundamental or more far-reaching than law, namely their philosophy of man, society and history.

From balance to history

The eighteenth-century philosophers who were, implicitly or explicitly, pinning their hopes on the pacification of international society were not relying primarily either on international equilibrium or international law. For Locke and Montesquieu, the obstacle to the spirit of domination and of conquest, among states as well as among individuals, was the spirit of acquisition and of commerce.

Interests were supposed to replace passions, economics to replace politics; the social ties of mutual sympathy, stressed by the Scottish Enlightenment and of mutual advantage between individuals, were supposed to replace the glory of princes and of states. For Rousseau, on the other hand, the main sources of war and oppression are precisely luxury and civilization, because acquisition breeds competition, because it creates the opposition between the poor and the rich which law serves to sanctify, and because it encourages ‘amour-propre’, this ‘urge for self-comparison’ which is the source of all evils. Only an unlikely return to the simplicity and the unity of small, austere and homogeneous units, perhaps protected by their alliance into federations, can bring back domestic peace and push back external war.

The decisive transformation brought about by the philosophy of history with Kant and, each in his own way, by Hegel and Marx, consists in accepting the Rousseauist reversal but in reversing it in turn. Passions and vices, discord and war are indeed the stuff out of which culture and history are made; but it is also these things which, in the long run, are opening the road to morality, to concord and to peace.

Thanks are due to nature for man’s quarrelsomeness, his enviously competitive vanity and for his insatiable desire to possess and to rule, without them all the excellent natural faculties of mankind would forever remain undeveloped. Man wants concord but nature knows better what is good for his kind, nature wants discord ... All wars are therefore so many attempts (not in the intention of men but in the intention of nature) to bring about new relations among the states and to form new bodies by the break-up of the old states to the point where they no longer maintain themselves alongside each other and must therefore suffer revolutions until finally, partly through the best arrangement of the civic constitution internally, and partly through the common agreement and legislation externally, there is created a state which, like a civic Commonwealth, can maintain itself automatically.\(^{11}\)

For the time being, ‘at the degree of education reached by the human race, war is an indispensable means to better it further; and it is only after the completion (God knows when) of this education that an eternal peace would be beneficial for us and peace would become possible’.\(^{12}\) Now, if it is possible,

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peace is necessary; or, rather, it is possible because it is morally necessary: 'Morally practical reason proclaims in us its irresistible veto: there should be no war. We must act as if the thing which perhaps will never be were to come about and establish the constitution (perhaps the republicanism of each and all states) which seems most capable of leading us there.'

Kant's political doctrine is above all a philosophy of war and peace because it is a juridical philosophy based on a philosophy of morality and supported by a philosophy of history. But the articulation of these three dimensions raises serious difficulties.

The treaty on eternal peace consists of three articles: (1) the civil constitution in each state should be republican; (2) the law of nations should be based upon a federation of free states; (3) the cosmopolitan or world law shall be limited to conditions of universal hospitality.

Each of these raises a difficult problem concerning the nature of the change from the present situation. In particular, Kant falls short of advocating not only a world state, which would risk being tyrannical and ineffective, but even a federation which risks being resisted by the existing sovereign states. He seems to be content, as a lesser evil, with a very loose alliance of states against war. This alliance would lack coercive power: would it suffice, then, to bring states from the state of nature to the civil state? Cosmopolitan law, based on the fact that 'more or less close relations between all peoples of earth have spread universally to such an extent that a violation of law on one point of the earth is being felt everywhere', contains the promise, beyond civil and international law, of a 'public law of men in general' (third definitive article) thanks to which no individual would any longer be in the state of nature, or, as Hannah Arendt was to say, deprived of 'the right to have rights'. But in practice it does not go beyond the right to communication and to hospitality.

Indeed, one does not know whether what Kant envisages in order to go beyond, both at inter-state and at the cosmopolitan level, is an asymptotic progress from war to peace or a brutal reversal due to the costs and horrors of war and to the loss of its unifying function. Above all, if peace is possible 'even for a people of devils provided it has a good constitution', this organization does not yet amount to genuine peace. The latter can only come from a moral revolution which can only be prepared by culture and law and whose idea can only be suggested by history in certain circumstances, when the signs of a moral disposition of humanity are being shown, as for instance in the enthusiasm with which the French Revolution was greeted. 'An agreement which has been extracted pathologically for the purpose of establishing a society can be converted into a moral whole'; but it is, precisely, a conversion. The most essential step still has to be taken.

21 Kant, *Ideas for a universal history*, fourth proposition, ibid., p. 120.
Hegel’s approach is both parallel to and sharply contrasting with Kant’s. For him, as for Kant, history is being made by its negative side, which, even more than for Kant, must lead to reconciliation. Even more than for Kant, war fulfills an essential mission, that of unifying human races, but, as for Kant, it tends to lose this historical function. For him too, as for Rousseau and for Kant, war tends to become impossible in Europe, because of the great cultural commonality and of the interdependence of interests. It still has a role in relations with non-civilized peoples, or in regions like America, where the rational, bureaucratic and prosaic state is not yet fully developed. Like Kant, Hegel seems, in the Phenomenology of mind, to be attracted by the idea of a world state; but, more than Kant, whose pacifist and universalist illusions he denounces, he rallies to the necessary plurality of states, since an alliance or a confederation of states must necessarily be provisional and give birth to disagreements which can only be solved by war.\(^{15}\)

More important still, war is not only made possible by the plurality of states, it fulfills a much more central and permanent positive function than for Kant. On the one hand, it alone can “much better than any moralizing sermon,” remind man of the vanity of earthly possessions and make him face the risk of violent death which constitutes his humanity and which, through the struggle of the master and the slave, is the source of society. On the other hand, only war can restore the unity of the state, by allowing its individuality to manifest itself in opposition to other states and, above all, by shaking the inertia into which individuals are sinking through the primacy of private or economic life. Much more than Kant, Hegel reacts negatively to the selfishness and prosaic heartlessness of modern society and tries, without abandoning it, to recover the sense of community, of authority and of action which lay at the heart of politics as lived by the ancients. But at the same time, he does not hide his pessimism as to the result: the modern individual’s only relation to the state is through taxes and military service; virtue is reduced to the work ethic and to the chastity of women; war itself, since the invention of firearms, has become impersonal and abstract.\(^{17}\)

Modern society is indeed dominated by prose. Heroic individuals and the literary form dedicated to singing their praises, the epic, can only, according to Hegel, find a provisional haven in America.

The synthesis of the ancient and the modern world, of the public and the private dimension, thanks to the Napoleonic or Prussian citizen–soldier looks as distant and exceptional as Kant’s moral conversion. In the last analysis, war, in Hegel’s perspective, was supposed to fulfill the same task as morality for Kant, the philosopher of peace: to lift man above himself, i.e. above the primacy of needs and of calculations. And yet, it is still the society of political economy, it is still the world of commerce and industry, defended by the English thinkers of the


seventeenth and eighteenth century and by French liberals from Montesquieu to
Constant and Guizot; it is the primacy of the private over the public, of the
individual over the state, of security over glory, which progresses through the
imposing constructions of German idealism, in spite of the latter’s appeals to
moral or political heroism.

From universal history to modern society

Does not, then, the very outcome of the philosophy of history bring us back to
the dimension which Raymond Aron had chosen as being the most significant
for analysing the phenomenon of war: that of industrial society and of its great
nineteenth century interpreters? One can, indeed, agree with his statement:

Humanity has experienced, during the last century, a kind of revolution, perhaps one
should say a mutation, whose first phases predate the nineteenth century and whose
pace has quickened during the last decades. Every generation, every thinker since the
beginning of the last century has tried to define this historical innovation. Saint-Simon
and Auguste Comte have spoken of an industrial society, Alexis de Tocqueville of
democratic society, Karl Marx of capitalist society.\(^8\)

Aron stresses above all the replacement of military society by industrial society
thanks to science and technology, but he consciously adopts Tocqueville’s tone
when he speaks of the ‘intellectual, technical, economic revolution which, like
a cosmic force, carries humanity towards an unknown future’. He wonders,
however, why, contrary to the predictions of Saint-Simon and Auguste Comte
(to whom one could add Herbert Spencer), this future was not peaceful. There
are four possible answers to this question.

The first answer is Marx’s: industrial society leads to contradictions and crises
which in turn produce revolutions and wars, as long as society is based on
exploitation. This interpretation has seemed to be confirmed in the short term
but long-term events have disproved it. At any rate, it is a more complicated
version of Saint-Simonian optimism.

The second answer, that of Schumpeter and Veblen, which Aron has
examined in *War and industrial society*,\(^9\) attributes the wars of the twentieth
century less to capitalism, whose spirit, according to them, is essentially
peaceful, than to its fusion with pre-capitalist values and groups, particularly in
the case of Germany and Japan.

Aron himself proposes a third answer which can be seen as a version of the
second. It is based upon the duality of the process and the drama: ‘on the one
hand the necessity of progress, on the other history as usual, and the drama of
empires, of armies and of heroes’.\(^10\) Aron recognizes that one cannot leave the

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matter at this point with the juxtaposition of technological progress and the permanence of politics: all the more so if, at the philosophical level, one adds the opposition between the Kantian perspective of human reconciliation and the Thucydidian vision of history as tragedy. He knows that politics and technology are bound to meet one way or the other. 'In a sense, this is where “history as usual” and historical necessity meet: are knowledge and power the tools of power politics or are they, as Auguste Comte thought, the harbingers of the end of power politics, so that a unified humanity may pursue the only valid struggle, for mastery over nature and the well-being of all men?" He points out that Germany and Japan have answered by putting technology in the service of power; he proclaims his ignorance of the future but he also confesses a kind of timid optimism based on the nature of modern armaments and economy and on the improved awareness of these realities in our societies.

There is a fourth answer, however: this is Nietzsche's. For him, the result of modern society, of the movement towards equality and peace, is the decadence of man. It is the victory of the slave over the master, the advent of a humanity whose reconciliation is that of Zarathustra's 'last man' for whom fighting is bad for the stomach: 'One herd and no shepherd'. "This perspective is implicit in Hegel's idea of the end of history as the victory of prosaic, individualistic rationality. But Nietzsche's point is that history does not stop there. The peace of decadence can bring about in return the revolt of the masters, of the superior, creative human beings, who would attempt to revive war and, through it, to impose a planetary aristocracy. As opposed to the predictions of peace we have mentioned, Nietzsche prophesies that the twentieth century will be the century of war, of a struggle for world domination waged in the name of philosophic principles. According to the German philosophic historian E. Nolte, fascism is, precisely, the expression of the revolt of the hierarchical and warlike community against the modern movement of universalization and against the transcending of differences which, as Nietzsche saw, was common to Christianity and democracy, to capitalism and socialism."

It should be obvious that the twentieth century, with its two world wars and its two totalitarian imperialisms, has amply confirmed Nietzsche's prophecy. But the successive crumbling of the two total ideologies and of their conquering empires; the resulting victory of liberal democracy, left alone on a battlefield deserted by its opponents; the replacement of the threat of a Third World War by the balance of deterrence and then by dialogue and cooperation among adversaries; and finally, and perhaps most importantly, the fact that not only war but the use of its threat has become totally inconceivable in the mutual relations of Western countries, brings the idea of peace through interdependence and democracy back into fashion. Certainly an extremely important development..."
has taken place in the West, a development whose source is as debatable as that of the nineteenth-century revolution mentioned by Aron (industrial society? democracy? capitalism? individualism? economic and demographic evolution?), but whose reality is not: relations between liberal developed countries can no longer be understood in the light of the definition of international relations as a state of nature, characterized by the possibility of resorting to force. Neither the constraints nor the priorities of the modern state can be thought through satisfactorily on the basis of its classical attributes such as sovereignty and territoriality; even less, on the basis of the extreme case, on that of war.

But where does the ‘unknown future’ towards which the ‘cosmic force’ invoked by Tocqueville and Aron is dragging us lie? Is it to be found ‘beyond the nation-state’ or in a return to an earlier reality? In the direction of ‘cosmopolitan law’ or in that of the state of nature of individuals and of sub- and trans-state groups? And will this new state of nature be made more moderate by its complexity or more unmanageable by its turbulence?

From modern society to human nature

These questions agitate, nowadays, a public opinion disoriented by the novelty of the situation and the collapse of the century’s ideological answers. The trend is towards rediscovering older answers, by going back to Kant and Hegel or even, to some extent, to Grotius or to medieval law in order to understand our own time.

Two young American scholars have tried, in the 1980s, to show that history had proved either Kant or Hegel right.

For Michael Doyle, the three articles of the Treatise for Perpetual Peace either have become reality or are about to do so. First, republican states do not wage war on each other. According to Doyle’s empirical enquiry, in essence confirmed by others, no real armed conflict has placed in opposition two modern democracies since the nineteenth century. Second, their mutual relations within Western organizations correspond to this ‘alliance of free peoples who have decided not to wage war on each other’ which was foreseen by the second article. The G7 and the UN Security Council can be seen as a potentially universal concert of powers. The idea of international organization itself, based on Kantian principles, has been given a new lease of life by the hopes associated with the United Nations and CSCE.

Finally, the aspect of the Kantian project which appears as the most prophetic today is the cosmopolitan dimension. The revolution of communications lends a concrete reality to the idea that ‘a violation of right on one point of the planet is being felt everywhere’; a planetary consciousness of sorts is expressed on issues such as human rights and the environment, and gives birth to transnational movements and non-governmental organizations. This common

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responsibility is given a partial reality by what could be called the triad of 
conscience, experts, concert'. It does coexist, however, as Kant acknowledged, 
with the multiplicity of states. Power still lies mainly with the latter, but its 
meaning and scope are submitted to increasingly stringent constraints.

What about the sources of this situation? Here too the Kantian analysis seems 
to be confirmed in some unexpected ways. Nuclear deterrence and the 
abandonment of the strategic arms race by an exhausted Soviet Union seem to 
illustrate two major sources of peace: the unbearable cost of the preparation for 
war and the suicidal character of war itself. Beyond this negative peace, the 
transition from deterrence to détente and cooperation through the 
institutionalization of dialogue and negotiation seems to illustrate the Kantian 
notion of a 'pathologically extracted agreement' which may lead to a 'moral 
whole'.

Besides nuclear deterrence, the other great force for peace, manifested in the 
breakdown of the Soviet Union, seems indeed to be the one indicated by Kant's 
eighth proposition of the idea for a universal history with cosmopolitan intent: 
violations of the citizens' freedom harm the economic power of the state and its 
foreign relations; on the other hand, 'the effect of each impact of a government 
upon other governments in our continent, where the states have become so 
very much linked through commerce, will become so noticeable that the other 
states, compelled by their own danger, even when lacking a legal basis, will offer 
themselves as arbiters'.

For Francis Fukuyama, the victory of liberal democracy and the elimination 
of the threat of a world war represent the fulfilment of the Hegelian 'end of 
history'. He stresses more particularly the influence of the ideas of universality 
and equality, thereby identifying the generalization of liberal democracy with 
the coming of the 'universal and homogeneous state' which, according to 
Alexandre Kojève's interpretation, represents the final goal of history in Hegel's 
perspective. But the main point is the end of negativity and hence of wars and 
revolutions, or at least of their meaningful historical role.

Finally, in a more diffuse way, the theme of the 'new middle ages' or, more 
om modestly, of the return to jus gentium as opposed to international law, has 
emerged as a consequence of a number of developments: the decline of 
territoriality; the re-emergence, both in political discourse and in common 
consciousness, of the idea of humanity which brings back the notion of world 
(and not only international) society, the idea of a duty to intervene (droit 
d'ingérence) in favour of human rights which recalls the jus gentium intra se of the 
Spanish theologians and law teachers; the multiplication of types of actors and 
legitimacy, the growing importance of European law which takes precedence 
over the domestic law of states without being rooted in popular sovereignty. All 
this points not to the return of the spiritual unity of Christendom or the secular 
unity of empire, but, as indicated by Ole Waever, to a hybrid phase which would 
combine a universal natural right, a multiplicity of levels and, nevertheless, a

\[ 53 \] Fukuyama, The end of history.
political primacy of states and state-based organizations. But this is precisely what makes a thinker like Grotius relevant today, since his doctrine is essentially linked to a period of transition.

But transition towards what? Towards a return to the pre-modern situation or towards a new world order? For each of the considerations above, which motivated the return to the great doctrines of the past, there is another side of the coin. Let us look first at the Kantian legacy. Michael Doyle himself points out that while Western democracies have managed their mutual relations in a peaceful and, on balance, positive manner, they signal failed to do so in their relations with totalitarian as well as with colonial and formerly colonial countries. Of course, one may argue that both will, in the long run, be included in the liberal 'peace zone'; but this assumes that the many objective economic, demographic and cultural difficulties which stand in the way of this harmonious outcome will be overcome. Even in that case, there inevitably remains a period of transition which has to deal with a fundamentally heterogeneous world, as far as attitudes towards war and peace are concerned.

Far from overcoming this heterogeneity, the collapse of communism has rather increased it. Hence arises a fundamental and unsolved problem: upon what common code or what means of pressure and defence can an essentially modern, civilian, secular, economic and peaceful national or international society rely when faced with a minority of citizens or countries which remain faithful to the old code and attached to territory or to glory?

A second reason for scepticism lies in the fact that the emerging elements of international organization and world solidarity are devoid of constraining power, and are likely to remain so unless they slide into a return to empire which seems to go against the grain of our societies. This explains the acute embarrassment of the European Union and of the United Nations in the face of conflicts which they cannot ignore but which they cannot solve by force as they might have attempted to do in other times.

The third point concerns nuclear weapons. They play a positive, stabilizing role as long as deterrence works. Indeed, mutual deterrence, whether bipolar or multilateral, is an extreme illustration of the rationalist idea of the inter-state balance of international society. Already during the Cold War, however, one could speculate whether the possible failure of deterrence and hence the possibility of nuclear war and of the self-destruction of the human race were not raising fundamental problems about the meaning of history and about man's position in the world which would challenge the very basis of any philosophical optimism. But today, the problem has taken a new turn. Nuclear weapons are seen less from the point of view of deterrence than from that of proliferation, which is inextricably linked to the arms trade, to the disintegration of empires, to the world economic crisis, to the role of private mafias and terrorist states, to the joint dangers of anarchy and fanaticism. They become, then, the most

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extreme example not of order but of the gap between the global and diffuse character of problems and the partial and specialized character of the institutions which are supposed to manage or to control them.

Finally, social and economic interdependence cuts both ways. It threatens the autarky desired by totalitarian regimes, but also the comfortable stability of democratic societies, if only because of the fear provoked by migrations and of the resulting reactions of self-closure and rejection. The common fate, in the short term, of all modern societies, is destabilization through opening.

The return to Hegel is fraught with similar ambiguities. Francis Fukuyama recognizes that the Hegelian/Kojevian ‘end of history’ is not so distant from the Nietzschean ‘last man’. The possibility therefore arises that the undifferentiated boredom of universal society should lead to a revolt of ‘Thymos’, of that part of the soul which, according to Plato, has to do with courage and pride, with power and glory. But it is clear that the modern state is not able to satisfy it while controlling it, as Hegel had wished. Hence the danger of a nihilistic, unpredictable and explosive violence.

This same danger of violent anarchy may also be the darker face of ‘neo-medievalism’. Among its defenders, some look forward to a plurality of communities and allegiances, whose partial and multiple character would make for balance and tolerance. But others, particularly Italian authors such as Umberto Eco, see, in the return to the middle ages of which they are talking, rather a world of feudal hierarchies without a central power or common rules, which would be plagued by the very arbitrariness, private violence and civil or religious wars to which the institution of the modern state aimed to put an end. The clear and distinct divisions of the classical age are gone; but the fluid and shifting world which seems to be rising, a world of new wandering crowds, new pirates, new sects, would, in this view, be a world of fragmentation and insecurity rather than of order and peace.

We have reached, then, the ultimate dimension of our subject, a dimension which goes beyond inter-state war. As long as there are several states, war between them will be possible; but, as we have seen, it has already lost its justification, or its meaning, and it may become less and less frequent and less and less central for political life. But could it be that the decline of war would have to be paid for with an increase of private, individual or civil violence? We live in a period of permanent destructuring; but can the individual, the city and humanity build themselves without referring to stable structures and institutions against which action and change can be measured? Can one eliminate the Platonic question of the relation between the structure of the soul, that of the city, and that of the world?

Never before has this relationship appeared so problematic. In all other civilizations or periods some kind of religious understanding of the world was shedding some light as well as some constraints upon the relationship of men and cities with each other. In our situation, which Hannah Arendt characterizes as ‘worldlessness’, the question is whether men can organize their coexistence in
Beyond the three traditions

a peaceful and rational manner or whether they are the slaves of needs and passions which may reassert themselves all the more violently for having been ignored or repressed. The post-Cold War horrors of the former Yugoslavia shock us to a greater extent than the even more gruesome ones of Rwanda because they are happening in a country which seemed more familiar and more penetrated by modern individualistic culture. One cannot help thinking, then, of Freud’s remarks in his letter to Einstein about war: civilization leads to the aggressive or destructive instinct being turned inwards, and transformed into guilt or self-hatred; but since this development does not take place everywhere at the same time and at the same pace, those who have experienced it are horrified and helpless in front of those whose aggressivity is still following its spontaneous, brutal and cruel course against external enemies. On the other hand, once rediscovered, destructive violence, among the civilized, can be even more cruel and limitless than among the non-civilized. The Freudian notion of the ‘return of the repressed’ seems to shed important light on totalitarianism, just as that of the ‘narcissism of small differences’ (recently put to good use by Michael Ignatieff in his Blood and belonging) helps to explain why the increase in homogenization which goes with modernity seems to encourage the revival of national or ethnic rivalries. Freud used to say that men can substitute love for aggression within a community, as long as there remains another one on which they can vent their need to hate.

If there is some truth in this view of human nature, the issue is raised of its compatibility with democracy and with peace. For Bergson, democracy is the least natural political regime: the society according to nature is the closed, warlike one; openness and peace have always been conquered by the vision (whether religious or intellectual) of universal brotherhood and the will to act upon it. The question remains of the beliefs and institutions able to consolidate this victory over aggressive parochialism. Liberal democracy is the regime which tries, unlike all other societies, not to embody the unity of the community in a sacred leader and not to embody evil and violence in a scapegoat, domestic or external. Precisely because of that, it is always in danger of being challenged by the thirst for absolutes, or by the need to find an enemy. The totalitarian temptation is the ever-recurring companion of individualistic democracy, just as the risk of blind self-destruction is the ever-recurring consequence of the declining relevance of war.

Our time has taught us that we live in one world, and that peace is possible. But it has also taught us the fragility of humanity, in both meanings of the term: humankind can be destroyed by atomic weapons; and our respect and pity for our fellow human beings can fall prey to the return of archaic myths, to the emergence of new fanaticisms, or to the permanence of basic instincts, if education, institutions and forceful resistance do not stand in their way.

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Pierre Hassner

Is this view a rationalist, a realist or a revolutionary one? Probably a combination of all three. Martin Wight himself pointed out that while his division into three schools had much pedagogic value, most serious thinkers were necessarily overcoming it in order to attempt some particular synthesis. The same goes for Waltz's three images. My purpose has only been to follow in the footsteps of these two authors, while stressing even more that we cannot pass judgement on the anarchic structure of the international system or the attempt to build an international society without reflecting about the recurring paradoxes of history, the unprecedented opportunities and dangers of our society, and the permanent nature of man.