

## **Hidden Wars: States of War and Proxy Wars nowadays**

*“Although these two words “war” and “peace” seem exactly correlative, the second contains a much broader meaning, since we can interrupt and disturb the peace in several manners without going to war.”*

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Principes du droit de la guerre*<sup>1</sup>

Today's wars mean combatants, weapons, money, words and images.

The peace researcher tries not to take the words for the things, the images for the truth and the existing balance of power for the desirable order according to justice<sup>2</sup>.

We should speak in terms of “States of War” and “Proxy Wars” rather than of “Humanitarian Wars”<sup>3</sup> to understand the current violent conflicts throughout the world. These notions are a useful complement to the terms “Reason of State”, “Powers”, “spheres of influence”, expressions unfortunately now much maligned.

These expressions “States of War” and “Proxy Wars” are relevant for our times, even under new forms. Some observers and researchers consider that internal conflicts just replaced the international wars. In doing so, they tend to underestimate the hidden connections between domestic and foreign affairs.

### 1. « States of War » and « Proxy Wars »: the concepts in the History

The « state of war » with a small « s » stands for a war-fomenting situation of tensions between States. Thomas Hobbes uses the expressions “state of nature” and “state of war” to describe the international relations. Jean-Jacques Rousseau cleverly criticises the conservative Hobbesian view. Less cynical than Hobbes, less optimistic than Grotius (and Kant), Rousseau is an ambitious realistic thinker of the international relations. He does not take the existing relations for legitimate but deals with the reality as such in order to progressively improve things<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Bachofen, Blaise et Spector, Céline (dir.) – Bernardi, Bruno et Silvestrini, Gabriella (éd.), Paris, Vrin, 2008, p.71

<sup>2</sup> Johan Galtung speaks of « positive peace » involving social justice through equal opportunity. This is different from negative peace or *pax romana*. Galice, Gabriel (dir.), *Regards croisés sur la guerre et la paix*, (dir.), L'Harmattan, Paris, 2013. See also Adrien Preiswerk. « Que faut-il entendre par recherches pour la paix ? » <http://www.gipri.ch/?s=preiswerk>

<sup>3</sup> Bricmont, Jean, *Impérialisme humanitaire*, Aden, Bruxelles, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Galice, Gabriel & Miqueu, Christophe, *Penser la République, la guerre et la paix sur les traces de Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, Slatkine, Genève, 2012 and also Ramel, Frédéric & Joubert, Jean-Paul, *Rousseau et les relations internationales*, L'Harmattan, Paris-Montréal, 2000.

The “proxy war” goes back to ancient times. The Chinese general Tan Daoqi (5th century BC) talks about a stratagem “To assassinate with a borrowed sword”. This is the third of his 36 principles.

The Cold War was a “state of war” according to two features. On one side, the nuclear threat was a deterrant for both major protagonists, the USSR and the USA. It was the time of espionage, spy novels and undercover war. On the other side, both superpowers (sometimes with China) were acting by proxy through local friends and allies in Southeast-Asia, in South-America, in Africa, in Europe. They conceived or supported revolutions, counter-revolutions, military coups and terrorist attacks<sup>5</sup>. In other words, there were “hot wars” during the Cold War, such as Korea and Vietnam.

In fact, the expression « proxy war » is, to a certain extent, inadequate and exaggerated. It is not that some just give a mandate to others, as if the local actors didn't have their own interests and agenda. In reality, it is a matter of crossed interests between stakeholders. The point is that some have more power than others, politically, economically, military. The proportion of internal and external factors is not the same in each situation. Some conflicts are more *Intext* (where internal factors and actors dominate), some others more *Extint* (where external factors and actors prevail). The interference of external countries in local affairs is an old story with different names: assistance to a friendly regime, protection of regional interests, in the new age protection of the population or defence of human rights. The colonial or imperial nations have always acted like this.

## 2. The new faces of the « States of War » and « Proxy Wars » nowadays

The “state of war” did not end with the end of the Cold War, if we hold that the Cold War really came to an end. The antagonism between market capitalism and state socialism do no longer exist but the East-West opposition remains. The question is to understand the reasons and forms of the current oppositions, including the East-West confrontation.

To a large extent, it seems that the economic issues (and more specifically, the financial markets) replace the military and political concerns in the world order. Henry Kissinger wrote in 1998 a suggestive paper with the title: “The IMF: throwing more fuel on the World Economic Bonfire”

*“Free-Market capitalism remains the most effective instrument for economic growth and for raising the standard of living of most people. But just as the reckless laissez faire capitalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spawned Marxism, so the indiscriminate globalism of the 1990s may generate a worldwide assault on the very concept of free financial markets. Globalism views the entire world as one market in which the most efficient and competitive prosper. It accepts – and even welcomes – that the free market will relentlessly sift the efficient from the inefficient and competitive, even at the cost of periodic economic and social dislocation.*

*Even well-established free-market democracies do not accept limitless suffering in the name of the market, and have taken measures to provide a social safety net and to curb*

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<sup>5</sup> Ganser, Daniele, *NATO's Secret Armies*, Frank Cass, London and New York, 2005.

*market excesses by regulation. The international financial system does not as yet have these firebreaks.*"<sup>6</sup>

Kissinger, a realistic conservative, is partly right. "Globalism" is an idealization of the so-called "globalization", in fact a restructuring of the social powers including a secession of the elites within and between the countries. Within the free-market capitalist democracies, peoples act, react and resist, and not only in "well-established free-market democracies". After the financial crisis of 1998 came the finance crash of 2008; there were some comments on the necessity to change and the past practices returned. The 1980s and 1990s offer a new worldwide landscape with the internationalized finance, the collapse of the state communism in Eastern Europe, the supremacy of the free-market capitalism and of the United States of America, and the new technologies of communication. Zbigniew Brzezinski develops his own vision of the world order in terms of American supremacy on the grand chessboard<sup>7</sup>.

The 2000s saw the emerging countries (among them China, the "peer competitor" of the USA), the diversities of nations and free-market capitalisms<sup>8</sup> and also the revival of major armed conflicts (Afghanistan, Iraq...), partly based on the fight for raw materials and on the rivalries between powers, the renewal of the arms race, all that under the guise of the war on terrorism, the menace of mass-destruction weapons, the protection of human rights and the "Nation Building". This new situation leads some British authors like Niall Ferguson<sup>9</sup> and Robert Cooper to praise a "new liberal imperialism"<sup>10</sup> under the George W. Bush administration.

As a matter of fact, the economic issues did not replace the political or military goals, they just combine with them, and they support each other. The political, military and economic powers are interconnected. The AMEX Defense Index (DFI) of the New York Stock Exchange is designed to represent a cross section of companies involved in providing systems and services to the US government for the purpose of supporting military, defense and intelligence efforts. When criticizing the Bush administration, the former advisor to President Clinton, Benjamin Barber, distinguishes the subtle owls hunting in dusky night, from the elementary eagles needing full light to catch their prey<sup>11</sup>. Anyway, both owls and eagles are raptors, not doves. Thomas L. Friedman writes:

*"The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist. McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the designer of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> <http://imfsite.org/financing-programs/objectives/fuel/>

<sup>7</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard*, Basic Books, New York, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Berger, Suzanne and Dore, Ronald, *National Diversity and Global Capitalism*, Cornell University Press, New York, 1996 and also Hall, Peter A. and Soskice, David, *Varieties of Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001. Basically, the opposition is between a market-oriented Anglo-Saxon Capitalism and the "Rhineland capitalism" (Germany, Switzerland, Japan, Scandinavian countries) with co-operation between employers-workers and crossed partnerships between companies-banks.

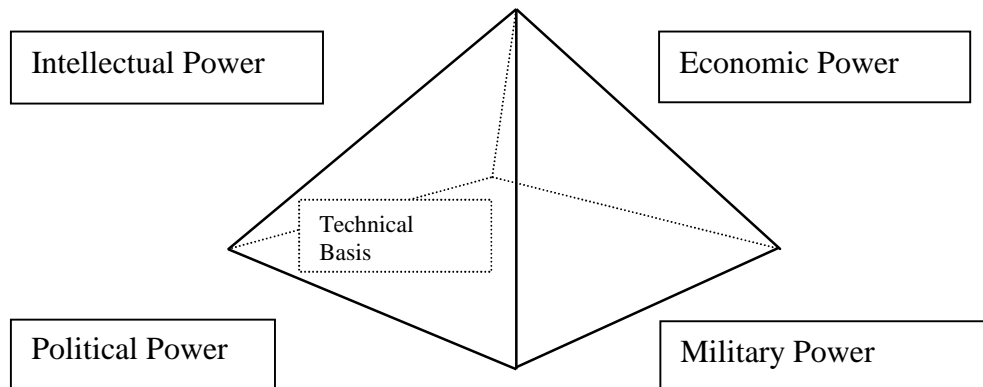
<sup>9</sup> *The Guardian* 31 October 2001 : « Welcome the new imperialism ». Robert Cooper was counsellor of Antony Blair and Javier Solana.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/apr/07/1>

<sup>11</sup> Barber, Benjamin, *Fear's Empire*, Norton & Company, London and New York, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Friedman, Thomas, L., *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, FSG, New York, 1999.

## The Pyramid of Power



The violence within the markets<sup>13</sup> is reinforced by the markets of violence.

What does "violence of the market" mean? In the last decades, the number of small states has increased and the size of big companies has become bigger (for this reason, Alain Joxe speaks of "sovereignty of the companies"<sup>14</sup>). This process has led to a reinforced power of big companies through the governments, sometimes even to the privatization of the States. Sometimes, the big companies share the power with the government. This is the case with the partnership between the National Security Agency and Internet providers and services like Yahoo and Google. They wage together the "war on terror" but also on the industrial and technological competitors or on competing countries. The cyberwar belongs to this battlefield. For all these reasons, the limits become narrower between the political and the economical areas. As Beatrice Edwards says:

*"The military industrial complex is only a subset of the overarching gov./corp. complex. The military industrial complex includes defense contractors, the Pentagon and the revolving door between them, through which top-level military and civilians officials in the war-making industry transit during their career (and post-retirement). (...) Votes and profits go hand-in-hand, and this political-economic conglomerate promotes war (or the preparation for it) as a source of financial gain."<sup>15</sup>*

More precisely, the major powers generally compete through a non-military "state of war", based on the "arms of peace" like (among others) trade and technology, while they use

<sup>13</sup> "The criterion of evaluation, without which the account of capital cannot exist, results, in a constantly renewed way, from the fight of the man with the man on the market", Weber, Max, *L'histoire économique*, Gallimard, Paris, 1991, p.16. Translation by Gabriel Galice.

<sup>14</sup> Joxe, Alain, *Les guerres de l'empire global*, Paris, La Découverte, 2012.

<sup>15</sup> <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/23728-six-reasons-to-be-afraid-of-the-private-sector-government-security-state> Beatrice Edwards wrote *The American Corporate Security State*.

genuine weapons against the minor powers (sometimes called “rogue states”), as do the small nations among themselves. The major powers also use proxy States or non-State actors like mercenaries or private security companies. The espionage represents obviously a borderline case of “arm of peace”.

In addition to that, the States have surrendered their monetary, then budgetary ability to the benefit of the financial markets. The self-weakened States are no more able to be the guarantors of last resort, except through the peoples who have to bear the burden of the increasing risks and costs at the expense of their standard of life, at least for the lower classes, at home and abroad. Inequality rises, at the risk of turmoil (Greece, Spain...) or potential civil war. The US dominance consists (also) in the military-industrial superiority and on the (paradoxical weak-strong) US \$ as world currency.

The “markets of violence”<sup>16</sup> back the violence of the market; they are a part of it. This goes beyond the former “military-industrial complex” denounced by President Eisenhower in his farewell address. State and non-State actors are more and more involved in the different kinds of battlefields, sometimes under cover. A certain number of States discreetly support jihadists using terror and some discrete special military units or mercenaries (agents), but also hackers and so on, act in the name of States (principals).

The current crisis in Syria is typically a proxy war<sup>17</sup>, and so is the current crisis in Ukraine. Eighteen years ago, Zbigniew Brzezinski explained why and how Eurasia is the major issue for the primacy of the United-States<sup>18</sup>. “Hence, the issue of how a globally engaged America copes with the complex Eurasian power relationships -and particularly whether it prevents the emergence of a dominant and antagonistic Eurasian power- remains central to America’s capacity to exercise global primacy.” There are five “active geostrategic players” on the Eurasian chessboard: France, Germany, Russia, China and India. Besides, Eurasia has five “geopolitical pivots”: Ukraine, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Turkey and Iran. Showing a great interest for that country, Brzezinski suggests extending the “Weimar Triangle” (France-Germany-Poland) to Ukraine, in order to shape the “critical core of Europe’s security”, under the double aegis of the EU and NATO. He argues extensively on Ukraine, even suggesting a possible 2005-2010 agenda for starting to join the EU and NATO. The resulting tension with Russia was expected: “*Whatever the future, it is reasonable to conclude that American primacy on the Eurasian continent will be buffeted by turbulence and perhaps at least by sporadic violence.*”<sup>19</sup>

President Obama is broadly following in the footsteps of Brzezinski’s political blueprint. The priorities that he was setting in his address to the UN General Assembly, September 24, 2013, are clear:

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<sup>16</sup> The notion was initially used by Georg Elwert, Kalulambi Pongo Martin, and Landry, Tristan, *Terrorisme international et marchés de violence*, Les presses de l’université de Laval, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Bitar, Karim Emile, « Guerre par procuration en Syrie », *Le Monde diplomatique* juin 2013 <http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2013/06/BITAR/49154>, Richard Labévière « Syrie : Une guerre de l’empire global », 28/8/12 [www.afrique-asie.fr/nous-ecrire/28-politique31/3612-syrie-une-guerre-de-l-empire-global.html?tmpl=component&print=1&page=](http://www.afrique-asie.fr/nous-ecrire/28-politique31/3612-syrie-une-guerre-de-l-empire-global.html?tmpl=component&print=1&page=), Gabriel Galice, « Syrie : faire confiance aux diplomates plutôt qu’aux fusils », *Le Temps*, 29/9/2013, « Syrie, l’initiative russe relance le débat et nuance les appétits », *Le Temps* 13/9/2013 et aussi Eberhard Hamer, « Syrie : guerre par procuration vers la paix ou bien vers le chaos », <http://www.horizons-et-debats.ch/index.php?id=4188>

<sup>18</sup> Brzezinski, Zbigniew, *The Grand Chessboard – American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, [http://www.takeoverworld.info/Grand\\_Chessboard.pdf](http://www.takeoverworld.info/Grand_Chessboard.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Galice, Gabriel, « La crise ukrainienne sur l’échiquier américain », *Le Temps*, 15 avril 2014.

*“The United States of America is prepared to use all these elements of power, including military force, to secure our core interests in the region.*

*We will confront external aggression against our allies and partners, as we did in the Gulf war.*

*We will ensure the free flow of energy from the region to the world. (...)*

*We will dismantle terrorist networks that threaten our people.*

*And finally, we will not tolerate the development or use of weapons of mass destruction.”*

Iran is supposed to carry out proxy wars, not the US:

*“Americans see an Iranian government that has declared the United States an enemy and directly – or through proxies – taken American hostages, killed U.S. troops and civilians (...)”*

Beyond the “core interests”, President Obama mentioned in his address other interests in Middle East and North Africa (presumably elsewhere, including Eurasia):

*“We will continue to promote democracy and human rights and open markets because we believe these practices achieve peace and prosperity”*

The question of the “open markets” reminds us of the Opium Wars of the British Empire. As Benjamin Barber points out (“You Can’t Export McWorld and call it Democracy”), some analysts confuse the strong wish to extend democracy with the strong will to expand capitalism and private interests<sup>20</sup>. Unlike his predecessor President Bush, President Obama prefers “to lead behind” but, like his predecessors, he definitely still wants the USA to lead.

The friends in war are allies, supporters or mercenaries. The political allies act most of the time (not always) officially. The supporters can back from behind. The mercenaries appear either in the (relative) light of day (but not the details of their action) or totally in the shadows (Ukraine<sup>21</sup>)

### 3. Some pointers for the future

Between them, the major powers (sometimes blocs of powers) are waging muted or proxy wars. The muted direct wars are fought with secrecy, espionage, legal weapons, tax legislations, technologies (Cyberwar, Space War), commerce, interest rates, currency rates, propagandas or damages to the image and so on. The proxy wars use monitored States, non-State actors (mafias, rebels or mercenaries), influenced companies (including the media) and foreign-funded NGO’S. State and non-State actors co-operate on the ground or government agencies lead and train non-State actors.

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<sup>20</sup> Barber, Benjamin, *Fear’s Empire – War, Terrorism and democracy*, W. W. Norton Company, New York – London, 2004.

<sup>21</sup> Both the USA (400 Blackwater) and the Federation of Russia (Vnevedomstvenaya Okhrana) are suspected to use mercenaries in Ukraine.

What is new today is the increasing diversity of decisive public or private actors (among them newly emerging States and major companies) and also the connections between them. Some private companies (notably in the field of the exploitation of natural resources but also famous industrial transnational corporations) indeed tend to act as principals financing private civil or armed groups, militias or private security companies. The privatisation of war happens at both top and bottom. At the top, some companies become so influential that Alain Joxe speaks of “the sovereignty of corporations”. At the bottom, some so-called terrorists are in fact acting as “entrepreneurs of violence” on a “market of violence”, making business with cigarettes, weapons, drugs and hostages, under the guise of a religious ideology.

All the combinations are possible: public principals and private proxies, private principals and private proxies, private principals and public proxies (corruption of the police or armed forces.)

The states of wars are related to the globalized financial world order and the proxy wars develop with the social disorders and the privatizations of the violence.

The adequate answer to ensure genuine peace<sup>22</sup> is not the so-called “humanitarian intervention” (with its well-known unsuccessful outcome) but the social development and the extension of democracy by the peoples themselves.

It also means some changes in the political world order (briefly: more justice, more independence of the weak nations from the strong countries, renewed confidence between the leaders and those they lead), in the economic world order (briefly: more UNCTAD, less WTO) and in the military world order (in short: less NATO, more UN), including the implementation of articles 45 to 47 of the Charter of the United Nations on the establishment and role of the Military Staff Committee.

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<sup>22</sup> Comments on Krzysztof Deabik’s view of perfect peace, real peace and actual peace by Gabriel Galice, “L’irénologie au GIPRI”, in *Regards croisés sur la guerre et la paix*, Galice, Gabriel, Paris, L’Harmattan – Cahier du GIPRI n°9 – 2013.