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Is it still possible to win Wars?

On a daily basis we are informed about wars taking place from Central Africa to Central Asia; about attitudes of power politics from the Near East to the Far East; about power struggles in the Ukraine, Thailand or Venezuela.

But the basic question is: Can wars still be won? We all remember the declaration of George W. Bush on the USS Abraham Lincoln : "Mission accomplished". Two years earlier, the Taliban were overthrown within weeks and the Kosovo became independent after a NATO bombing campaign against Serbia.

But taking a closer look, the situation is more complicated: The future of Afghanistan is still not clear after 13 years of warfare; people still get killed in Iraq almost on the daily basis; the Kosovo-problems are not solved; and Libya after the overthrow of Gaddafi gets more and more anarchic.

The question is to what extent has the essence of war changed in recent years? Can wars still be won? In this aspect, I would like to concentrate on five points:

- The essence of war in history
- How war is seen in today's world
- New dimensions of security and power
- How could all that happen?
- What does that mean concerning our question?

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I. The essence of War in history

- Carl von Clausewitz, the great Prussian thinker on strategic affairs defined war the following way: "War means to impose one's will upon someone else by military force". Practically, that means to destroy and to kill; to violate values we recognize under normal circumstances.

Throughout history, wars were accepted and took place almost on a permanent basis. During some centuries like the 17th and the 18th there were hardly a few years of peace. Wars were considered the prolongation of politics by other means; they were waged in the national interest; the soldier and the diplomat acted together. Years of war were followed by peace conferences; if they did not succeed, new wars were started.

More importantly; wars were waged and to 90% decided on the battlefield. And: wars were something great. It was a great honor to die on the battlefield; the honor of the nation rested on soldiers.

Wars even influenced romantic movements, there was a strong conviction that they could solve problems. Victorious rulers could decide the fate of the loser. Many were even convinced that fundamental questions had to be decided by war. This was certainly still the case 100 years ago before the outbreak of World War I.

And throughout history, states were formed on the battlefield and through war.

The Austro-Hungarian monarchy gained its statue as a great power fighting the Turks. Great Britain became a world power after the Spanish War of succession. Ludwig XIV is still considered as France's greatest king, as his Wars gave the country the shape it still has today. Germany was unified by the Wars of liberation and unification and the origin of the United States came from the War of independence.

Wars have always been terrible but they were an accepted part of international relations. And most important: great changes took place through wars. International relations were dominated by logic of war. Power politics were practically the only issue in international relations.

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II. How is War seen in today's world?

1. Europe has become a zone of peace

In Europe we had a "revolution in international affairs" which started with the Council of Europe, founded after WW II in 1949. Europe became a zone of peace. What was the essence of this revolution? Foreign policy in Europe was based on a new legitimacy, followed new goals, which were pursued by new means. A new way of thinking concerning sovereignty and international affairs originated.

1.1. New Goals and a new Legitimacy

During the last two generations, essence and form of interstate relations in Europe changed more than in 1000 years before. The legitimacy of foreign policy used to be to increase the power of the state or the monarch. Foreign policy was power politics.

In today's Europe the legitimacy of foreign policy of a European country is to increase the welfare of its citizens: the standard of living, the creation of new jobs, to safeguard human rights, to protect the environment and to promote culture. The welfare state got an international dimension; there is now a mixture of foreign and internal politics in Europe. Even more, human and social rights are implemented on a supra-national level.

1.2. New Means in Foreign Policy

Traditional means in foreign policy were Realpolitik, Raison d'Etat and War. What did that mean in practice? That meant whatever was useful for the State could be done by its ruler; even when forbidden for an individual. In the name of the State it was allowed to break treaties, to kill, to destroy.

In today's Europe the basis of security is not anymore a balance of power, but the implementation of common values: democracy, human rights, the rule of law. And

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international organizations like the EU, the Council of Europe, or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, have to monitor the implementation of those values. The logic of war was replaced by logic of values and logic of well-being. Security in Europe is now based on cooperation. In Europe it has become unthinkable to wage war to promote national interests.

If a state violates this principle, it can not be considered European.

1.3. New Basis for Security

The traditional basis of security has changed in Europe. Traditionally sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs were considered basic principles to safeguard international security, as it was still stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations and the Helsinki agreement of 1975.

Traditionally foreign policy was orientated towards the security of the state. Since the founding of the Council of Europe, security in Europe has been orientated towards the citizens. Today, the implementation of those common values like human rights, democracy and the rule of law is monitored by supranational institutions.

2. The American Exceptionalism

A revolution in foreign policy like in Europe has not taken place in the US. The goal of American foreign policy still is to secure national interests and to increase the power of the country. And:

foreign policy is backed by the military, as one scholar said:

"Foreign policy without the backing of the military is like a baseball game without a baseball bat."

The eminent American scholar Joseph Nye distinguished between "hard power" and "soft power", which constitutes the intelligent use of cultural achievements and new technology to make a country more attractive. This distinction is certainly essential. But European foreign policy has gone a step further: in Europe, foreign policy is not anymore power orientated but well-fare orientated. The task of a diplomat in a European country is not anymore the promotion of the power of the State but about "connecting people".

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There are certainly also cultural differences between Europe and the US concerning security. In any election campaign, in Austria as well as in the United States, you have to talk about security. But in the United States, a politician who runs for office has to talk about military security; whereas in Austria people want to be told about the improvement of social security, the health care and their pension funds.

The United States is a land with a mission. Every US administration still insists on national sovereignty and is sceptical towards international organizations. Americans want to fight for the good and against the evil. George W. Bush was not the first who mentioned an "axis of evil" in the world. Oliver Cromwell, 350 years ago already mobilized against "an axis of evil" in his days, which, in his eyes, was constituted by the Pope and the catholic Habsburgs.

In this sense it is only logical that the United States tries to dominate key-industries like Microsoft, Google or Facebook and to control information by establishing a National Security Agency.

3. Repercussion of Globalization; Wars in Third World and Terrorism The repercussions of globalization concerning security and war can be seen as a dialectic process. Globalization unites people by exchanging goods and values. But globalizations also divides. By being included into the world wide economic systems, countries like China, India or Brazil get stronger and can be become more nationalistic.

In this sense there are certainly contradictory repercussions concerning power politics; and there is one problem: some forces, like global markets, act worldwide and unlimited, whereas political intuitions basically function on a national level. But taking into account the complex structure of globalization, one conclusion can be drawn: war is hardly anymore a solution in a complex globalized world.

Why are so many wars and civil wars taking place in Africa and other parts of the Third World? There is certainly not one single answer to that question. But one reason is certainly this: all social, economic, political and religious conflicts we experienced in Europe since the French Revolution, those countries are confronted with in one single generation and: the logic of War still dominates political thinking.

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Radical ideologies have time and again influenced foreign policy as terrorists have been active in different places in many periods of history. A characteristic of Islamic terrorism is certainly the fact that it can be active on a worldwide basis and therefore constitutes a new threat.

III. New Dimensions of Security and Power The essence of security and power has changed dramatically in recent decades:

Traditional security was to 90% military security. Compared to the great challenges of human security in today's world, military security covers only 10%. The same can be said as far as power is concerned:

traditionally, 90% of power exerted on an international level was military power. Today, the power of the brave, the new players and new dynamic forces make up 90% of the power. In this sense, 90% of the changes which took place in former times were caused by war, which is responsible of 10% of the new development in today's world, when we think of globalisation, the rise of China, the implosion of the Soviet Union or the unification of Germany.

In former times, wars were decided to 90% on the battlefield, today to 10%, what makes it practically impossible to win wars anymore. On the other hand, people today are affected to 90% by the international development, what was not the case in former centuries.

1. New Dimensions of Security

Traditionally foreign policy was orientated towards the security of the state, based on a strong army. Today, foreign policy is, to a very large extent, also oriented towards human security, towards the security of the individual citizen. In the 21st century, threats to international security are to 90% non-military threats. An essential goal of foreign policy has become to guarantee the basic necessities of human life. Many international organizations, countless NGOs and governments are actively promoting human security. They fight against hunger and disease and are in favor of development, human rights and a decent standard of living. Where the basic requirements for human security are not met, from Ukraine to Venezuela and from the Central African Republic to Thailand, peace and security are in danger.

The United Nations and many of their agencies like UNCTAD, UNICEF, UNESCO, to name only a few, want to create security through cooperation. To safeguard human security and to promote human rights has become a basic legitimacy of foreign policy.

In former times, international relations were mostly about one single issue: military security, power and war. Today countless issues are an essential part of international conferences and international activities. Today there are many dimensions to international security:

there is an economic and financial dimension; there is the important role of energy and the environment; there are human rights and education. Most importantly, those new dimensions of human security do not anymore rely on the strength of the military.

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2. New Dimensions of Power

In former times, the essence of power was based on the grace of God or on military power. Today, power should be based on a democratic legitimacy. In practice, the legitimacy of a government is linked to its possibility to increase the wellbeing of the people. For many people it has become more important to increase their standard of living than to increase the military power of their country in order to dominate others.

To demonstrate what fundamental changes have taken place, consider the word "great" we use for powerful personalities in history. Alexander the Great as well as Peter the Great or Catherine the Great are considered "great", because they succeeded to increase their power of their country, conquering and destroying others. Any ruler who would act in similar ways today would not be considered as "Great"; the international community would demand that they would be brought before the International Criminal Court.

In former times, a ruler was powerful if he succeeded to enforce his will upon his subjects. Today an elected official can exert power if he can attract and convince others. In former times, conquering a country was a legitimate act. Anyone who wants to conquer foreign territory today faces international sanctions, like Saddam Hussein, after he invaded Kuwait in 1990.

In former times a state had a power-monopoly. This monopoly has been broken by countless new institutions like the media, NGOs or international corporations. Those new institutions can not only exert power, but also oppose the power of the state.

What are the driving forces behind great changes which take place in the world today? Through centuries wars were the driving force for changing the international landscape. If we analyze today why the Soviet Union imploded, why apartheid was abolished in South Africa or why minorities succeeded to emancipate themselves, we can see that those changes were not brought about by wars, but by the power of the brave, by new technologies or by new ideas.

The Polish trade Union movement, Solidarnosc and Nelson Mandela represent the power of the brave. The anti baby-pill, the mobile phones, the internet and computers stand for the power of new technologies. The power of new ideas was demonstrated by the 1968 movement and the influence of human rights.

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IV. How could all that happen?

Those dramatic changes in international relations took place on the basis of a revolution in education; a democratic revolution and a revolution in information. People have become more critical. They see the great sacrifices, suffered by wars and that goals proclaimed on the occasion of outbreaks of wars are hardly achieved. On the other hand people have developed a sense of entitlement. They prefer a higher standard to a conquering army.

With the mobile phone, the computer and the internet a revolution in information has taken place. Social media give everybody the opportunity to share his or her opinion to participate in decision making. Naturally it is easier to be critical than to be constructive in this context.

V. What does all that mean concerning our question: Is it still possible to win wars?

Today it has certainly become much more difficult to wage wars and practically impossible to solve problems by war. Wars nowadays take place in public: In front of the TV camera; observed by human rights NGOs and are linked to parliamentary hearings. If one can say that wars were decided to 90% on the battlefield in former times, today they are only decided to 10% on the battlefield.

Considering the multitude of issues in today's international relations it has become very difficult to formulate clear goals for any war. If we take Afghanistan as an example: The American and Allied troops were ordered not only to destroy the Taliban but to improve the economic and social situation in the country, to safeguard women rights and to set up a new system for education. How should soldiers, who are trained "to be a killing machine", achieve all those goals? After the revolution in education and information, it has become almost impossible to defeat ideas by military means.

More importantly, the home front, the environment at home, has drastically changed. There is a new concept of honor. In former times, even 10,000 casualties in one day

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were considered as "great" and a great honor for the country. Today, especially in Western countries, we have developed zero-casualties mentality. Not even professional soldiers are supposed to die anymore on the battlefield. In some countries even the word "war" was replaced by other notions like "no fly zone"; "interventions" or just that we have to "step in".

Under these new circumstances problems can certainly be more easily resolved by cooperation than by confrontation. Military power has become only one part of the international security structure; many non-military issues can only be solved by cooperation. Security has developed a supra-national dimension. Under those circumstances it has become very unlikely to win a conventional war.