

Sixth Pan European International Relations Conference
Turin, Italy
12-15 September 2007

The Will to Fight

Francisco Fernando de Santibañes, PhD Candidate
Department of War Studies
King's College, London
francisco.de_santibanes@kcl.ac.uk

*'A great civilization is not conquered from without until it has destroyed itself within.'*¹
Will Durant

The belief that societies are pacific has become one of the most influential concepts in International Relations today. Indeed, democratic peace theory -a theory that derives from this assumption– is now regularly mentioned as a law of the discipline.² Not only this, but the notion that democracies don't fight other democracies has also become a favorite theme among policy-makers. American presidents, for example, have called it to justify their policies abroad and, in the case of George W. Bush, the war in Iraq. But how strong is this theory?

Democratic peace theory became well known among IR scholars thanks to the efforts made by Michael Doyle to resuscitate Immanuel Kant's thoughts about the pacific nature of man.³ Kant explains that if permanent peace has not been reached during his lifetime it is mainly because unelected leaders are in charge of conducting the foreign policy of their countries. In effect, because authoritarian rulers don't suffer the consequences of actual combat -with all its sufferings and miseries- they consider war just as another activity. If only those who suffer the real consequences of war, the people, would be in charge of governing things would be different.⁴

In his essay *Perpetual Peace* Kant presents three main arguments that explain why republics – what we would call today liberal democracies– tend to be more pacific than authoritarian regimes. And one of the first things Kant does then is to observe the benign nature of citizens:

'If, as is necessarily the case under the (republican) constitution, the consent of the citizens is required in order to decide whether there should be war or not, nothing is more natural than that those who would have to decide to undergo all the deprivations of war will very much hesitate to start such an evil game. For the deprivations are many, such as fighting oneself, paying for the cost of war out of one's own possessions, and repairing the devastation which it costs, and to top all

¹ Will Durant and Ariel Durant, *The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3 (New York,: Simon and Schuster, 1935), Epilogue.

² See Jack S. Levy, "Domestic Politics and War," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 662. Even some realists seem to agree with this assessment. See, Jack Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories," *Foreign Policy* November-December, no. 154 (2004): 57, Robert Jervis, "Theories of War in an Era of Leading-Power Peace," *The American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2002): 4.

³ Michael Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics," *American Political Science Review* 80, no. 4 (1986). For Kant's *Perpetual Peace* see Immanuel Kant, *Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 93-125.

⁴ In Kant's view, there are two other reasons that help to explain why republics don't fight other republics. See, Michael Doyle, "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005).

*the evils there remains a burden of debts which embitters the peace and can never be paid off on account of approaching new wars. In contrast, under a constitution where the subject is not a citizen and which therefore is not republican, it is the easiest thing in the world to start a war.*⁵

There are, however, other reasons that explain why republics are pacific. Among them is the fact that the people dislike arm conflicts because they disrupt trade. It will then be in the interest of republics to keep the ‘spirit of commerce’ alive. Furthermore, individuals have a natural tendency towards integrating themselves with different cultures regardless national frontiers or geographical barriers. The free movement of individuals will then tend to create a common identity. What Kant called ‘universal hospitality’ – states accepting visitors from abroad –promotes, therefore, peace. Finally, the creation of a federation of republics would foment peace among all its members and once this federation covered the entire world ‘perpetual peace’ would finally be reached.⁶

But Doyle does not only enumerate Kant’s ideas, he also test their soundness –noting, for example, that no liberal democracy has ever fought a war against another liberal democracy. Even more, studies conducted by Bruce Russett and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita show that democracies tend to avoid military conflict with other democracies even when externalities -such as levels of economic development states- are taken away.⁷ Due to the emergence of this literature, Kant’s original thought has become one of the main pillars under which liberal thought stands today.

Not everyone, however, agrees with democratic peace theory. Among realists we found, for example, some of their main critics. John Mearsheimer, for instance, observes that ‘democracies have been few in number over the past two centuries, and thus there have not been many cases where two democracies were in the position to fight each other.’ There is then simply not enough data to make any kind of generalization regarding the absence of wars between liberal democracies. Even more, the uncertainty in world politics makes democracies conscious that some day other democracies might become authoritarian again and present further challenges to their security. Anarchy and the security dilemma are, therefore, always present.⁸ Jack Snyder and Edward Mansfield, on the other hand, note that although mature democracies might be less prompt to fight other mature democracies, newly

⁵ Kant, *Political Writings*.

⁶ Michael Doyle, "Three Pillars of the Liberal Peace," *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 3 (2005).

⁷ See, Bruce Bueno de Mesquita and David Lalman, *War and Reason: Domestic and International Imperatives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), Bruce M. Russett. "Grasping the Democratic Peace Principles for a Post-Cold War World." (Place Published: Princeton University Press, 1993).

⁸ John Mearsheimer, "Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War," *International Security* 15, no. 1 (1990): 50-1.

democratized countries, such as the revolutionary France, have historically been more inclined to initiate conflicts than mature democracies or authoritarian regimes.⁹ Finally, Christopher Layne, after analyzing a number of historical cases, observes that some of the examples that have been given to illustrate how DPT works show a different picture. The reasons that explain why these disputes never culminated in war have, in fact, nothing to do with democracy.¹⁰ But however accurate these criticisms might be none of them has harmed the consensus that surrounds the validity of democratic peace. Even more, the concept became so popular that it eventually also reached policy makers.

Although cited by President Clinton to justify his policies in Eastern Europe, it was George Bush and a group of close advisers –the neoconservatives- who would use of DPT to actively shape international relations. Indeed, while neoconservatives share with liberals the belief that democracies don't fight other democracies, they also note that it is in the interest of the United States to promote democracy abroad, either by diplomatic or military means. To liberal peace they apply, then, the use of force.¹¹ In short, either as a direct cause of events such as the Iraq War or as a justification for them, the notion that the people are pacific has played -and continuous to play- a major role in international relations.

The objective of this paper is to look into the history of political thought for a set of ideas that help us construct a different, more complex theory about people and war than the one first presented by Kant. In effect, some of the authors studied here challenge the assumption that peace should even be considered a welcome development in human history.

In the works of Niccolo Machiavelli, Friedrich Nietzsche and Carl Schmitt we find, for example, a rejection of pacifism. For them, pacifism is a dangerous outcome, one that, if unchecked, might cause the destruction of a nation in the hands of more powerful rivals. States should then confront the realities of international politics and preserve those institutions that help to keep the will to fight of a nation alive. But while the core of my argument is based on the thinking of these great authors, the ideas of other thinkers also serve the objective of placing the subject into context. Hans

⁹ Jack Snyder and Edward D. Mansfield, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War*, Bcsia Studies in International Security (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Christopher Layne, "Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace," *International Security* 19, no. 2 (1994). Sebastian Rosato has also questioned the logic behind DPT, Sebastian Rosato, "The Flawed Logic of Democratic Peace Theory," *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 4 (2003).

¹¹ For an introduction about the neoconservative main standings concerning international relations, see Francis Fukuyama, *America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy*, The Castle Lectures in Ethics, Politics, and Economics (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2006), 12-65. For a clear statement of President Bush in support of DPT, see George Bush, "President and Prime Minister Blair Discussed Iraq, Middle East," *The White House* (2004), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/11/20041112-5.html>.

Morgenthau and Samuel Huntington help us understand the role Liberalism and the will to fight play in IR and civil military relations.

Virtu

Considered today the father of modern political thought, Niccolo Machiavelli is well-known for having advanced the study of politics as an independent field of inquiry, one that focuses its attention on human behavior as it is, not on the search of an ideal type of government –as it used to be the case in the past. Indeed, this vision about politics made Machiavelli look into the history of nations, and in his own experience as a diplomat, for those forces that have permitted states to overcome their difficulties and, ultimately, achieve glory. Only by comprehending these forces, as the argument goes, can we be successful in the present.¹²

Machiavelli's political thought develops from one assumption: we live in a world in which most people behave as they can and not as they ought to. Any kind of moral consideration that obviates this reality and instead embraces idealistic goals is not only wrong but also dangerous. In effect, as soon as these moral standards are translated into actions, nations might be severely hurt. Leaders and states should then only be judged in terms of the time they have been able to preserve power. All other considerations must play a marginal role.

If some nations are able to grow over time it is because of their *virtu*. Raymond Aron observes that by *virtu*, Machiavelli means 'the capacity for collective action and historic vitality.'¹³ A virtuous society must, for example, be ready to embrace the use of disciplinary violence whenever circumstances call for it. If, on the other hand, a state negates the possibility of war, more virtuous nations will eventually vanquish this state. But such collective actions are only possible when citizens are willing to make the kind of sacrifices that are necessary to preserve the well-being of their community. Patriotism is, therefore, a crucial asset for any state.¹⁴

In Machiavelli's view, the prototypical example of a virtuous nation is Rome. There, citizens remained loyal to the state for centuries, possessors of a set of values that made them good soldiers and good citizens. But this did not mean that they were passive or that internal divisions did not take place in Rome. On the contrary, without the constant strain that was observed there between the plebe and the noble classes, the city would never have succeeded as it did. It was the equilibrium that

¹² A major preoccupation Machiavelli had at that time was how to achieve the unification of Italy. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. George Bull (London: Penguin Books, 1995).

¹³ Raymond Aron, *In Defense of Decadent Europe*, trans. Raymond Cox (Gateway: South Bend, 1979), xxvii.

¹⁴ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. Harvey Claflin Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 126.

resulted from having each fraction checking the power of the other that allowed Rome to preserve its *virtu* for so long. In fact, Machiavelli justifies the superiority of republics over principles under this term.¹⁵

However, to fully understand the meaning of *virtu* we must first explain how it differs from the more traditional use we give to the word virtue. As we have already seen, for Machiavelli the search for greatness should be pursued without taking into consideration the nature of the actions that are used to achieve that end –being these good or evil. He thinks, for example, that Romulus was right when he decided to kill his brother Remus because, as a result of his action, the city of Rome was created. This is a conception that challenges the sense of morality that has dominated the West for centuries. Indeed, the Aristotelian tradition –to which Christian philosophy owes so much– observes that doing good is an end by itself, an objective to which all other considerations should be subordinated. The actions of any men should then only be praised if they are the product of moral virtue, not of self-interest.¹⁶ In words of Leo Strauss, ‘goodness is the habit of choosing good means for the good end’.¹⁷ But what Aristotle and the other Greeks have forgotten, Machiavelli notes, is that what characterizes human existence is the scarcity of resources. The constant search for food, partners or shelter does, as a matter of fact, create the conditions for the members of a community to fight with one another, and for that community to fight other communities.

Besides *virtu*, here are two other concepts that are central in Machiavelli’s thought: fortune and necessity. While it is true that *virtu* might explain better than any other factor the success of a nation, the importance of fortune should not be overlooked. Fortune is, in effect, a force that all states should deal with regardless of how virtuous they are. A natural catastrophe –such as an earthquake- might, for example, bring an end to the existence of a nation full of virtuous and patriotic citizens. Whenever possible, states should try to ally themselves to fortune because whenever it is in the right ‘mood’ this natural force might bring glory to a nation. But, on the contrary, only the most skillful and forceful leaders can attempt to dominate fortune when it doesn’t favor a nation anymore.

Necessity, on the other hand, nourishes *virtu*. When, for example, a nation lives in a constant struggle with its neighbors, its citizens develop a set of skills and values that make that city powerful and glorious. On the other hand, when nations ‘enjoy’ long periods of peace and tranquility, their *virtu* might be lost and the society falls victim to internal corruption. Then it will only be a question of time until a more powerful rival decides to take its freedoms away.

¹⁵ Ibid., 14-6, 244. xxvii

¹⁶ Harvey Claflin Mansfield, *Machiavelli's Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 12.

¹⁷ Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (New York: Free Press, 1958), 234.

In short, *virtu* is the main force states have to deal with. Only by knowing how to preserve it – and how it interacts with fortune and necessity- can nations aspire to survive and achieve glory through time. But some questions remain to be answered: what kind of institutions should states adopt to maintain its *virtu* alive? And what happens if *virtu* is lost? In military expansionism and religion, Machiavelli seems to find some answers.

In his *Discourses on Livy* Machiavelli notes that republics cannot isolate themselves from the external world. Trying to enjoy freedoms without being disturbed from the outside would be naïve. Eventually, other states would attack the nation or the republic would succumb under the weight of internal corruption.¹⁸

*'So when a republic that has been ordered so as to be capable of maintaining itself does not expand, and necessity leads it to expand, this would come to take away its foundations and make it come to ruin sooner. So, on the other hand, if heaven were so kind that it did not have to make war, from that would arise the idleness to make it either effeminate or divided; these two things together, or each by itself, would be the cause of its ruin.'*¹⁹

There are a number of advantages Machiavelli finds in expansionist policies. Aside from the economic benefits and the honor that might come from conquering other lands, military actions also permit good citizens to make professional progress outside the field of politics. Indeed, one of the faults Machiavelli finds in republics is their incapacity to bring the best people to top positions in the government. And this represents a great danger for societies because these great men, feeling betrayed by this unfair exclusion, might decide to confabulate against the republic in search of personal success –by, for example, promoting internal struggle.²⁰ Providing these citizens with the possibility of achieving glory through military conquest might then avoid this scenario. Furthermore, expansionist policies also promote the *virtu* of people -by teaching them the value of sacrifice- and make them strong and powerful to check the nobles –in effect, without popular support it would be impossible to maintain a standing army.

But for Machiavelli religion plays an even more important role in preserving *virtu*. Because men are not intrinsically good or bad, but malleable, compulsion can make them do what is good for society. And while the law tends to regulate the external behavior of man, only religion can change

¹⁸ Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, 173.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 255.

him internally, creating an even a more reliable source of *virtu*. Leaders should then learn how to use religion to shape the behavior of people.

By using the example of Rome Machiavelli illustrates the importance of religion:

*'Everything considered, thus, I conclude that the religion introduced by Numa was among the first causes of the happiness of that city. For it caused good orders; good orders make good fortune and from good fortune arose the happy successes of enterprises. As the observance of the divine cult is the cause of the greatness of republics, so disdain for it is the cause of their ruin. For where the fear of God fails, it must be either that the kingdom comes to ruin or that it is sustained by the fear of a prince, which supplies the defects of religion. Because princes are of short life, it must be that the kingdom will fail soon, as his virtue fails. Hence it arises that kingdoms that depend solely on the virtue of one man are hardly durable, because that virtue fails with the life of that one; and it rarely happens that it is restored by succession'*²¹

Furthermore,

*'Those princes or those republics that wish to maintain themselves uncorrupt have above everything else to maintain the ceremonies of their religion uncorrupt and hold them always in veneration; for one can have no greater indication of the ruin of a province than to see the divine cult disdains.'*²²

But by religion Machiavelli does not mean any kind of religion. He is thinking about a civic religion, one that is always subordinated to political power and that can be manipulated by the rulers whenever they find this necessary. The Roman Senate, for example, made use of superstitions whenever they perceived a united city was necessary to confront a foreign threat. Even more, generals manipulated religious rites as a way to make soldiers feel confident about a future military victory. However, the main role religion played in Rome was to make citizens strong. The contrast with Christianity, in Machiavelli's view, couldn't be greater.

²¹ Ibid., 36.

²² Ibid.

*'Thinking than whence it can arise that in those ancient times peoples were more lovers of freedom than in these, I believe it arises from the same cause that makes men less strong now, which I believe is the difference between our education and the ancient, founded on the difference between our religion and the ancient. For our religion, having shown the truth and the true way, makes us esteem less the honor of the world, whereas the Gentiles, esteeming it very much and having placed the highest good in it, were more ferocious in their actions. This can be inferred from many of their institutions, beginning from the magnificence of their sacrifices as against the humility of ours, where there is some pomp more delicate than magnificent but not ferocious or vigorous action. Neither pomp nor magnificence of ceremony was lacking there, but the action of the sacrifice, full of blood and ferocity, was added, with a multitude of animals being killed there. This sight, being terrible, rendered men similar to itself. Besides this, the ancient religion did not beatify men if they were not full of worldly glory, as were captains of armies and princes of republics. Our religion has glorified humble and contemplative more than active men. It has then placed the highest good in humility, abjectness, and contempt of things human; the other placed it in greatness of spirit, strength of body, and all other things capable of making men very strong. And if our religion asks that you have strength in yourself, it wishes you to be capable more of suffering than of doing something strong. This mode of life thus seems to have rendered the world weak and given it in prey to criminal men, who can manage it securely, seeing that the collectivity of men, so as to go to paradise, think more of enduring their beatings than of avenging them.'*²³

With time the citizens of Rome became idle, unwilling to make the sacrifices that were necessary to preserve the city. Patriotism became discredited once the precepts of the old religion were lost, and a set of new values replaced *virtu*. The lands Rome had once conquered were now colonizing the capital by introducing their own culture. Machiavelli observes, 'And truly, similar cities or provinces avenge themselves against their conqueror without fighting and without blood, for by permeating it with their bad customs they expose it to being conquered by whoever assaults it. Juvenal in his Satires could not have better considered this part, saying that through the acquisition of foreign lands, foreign

²³ Ibid., 131.

customs entered Roman breasts, and in exchange for thrift and other very excellent virtues, 'gluttony and luxury have made their home and avenged a conquered world.'²⁴

Was the decline of Rome inevitable? Is there a way by which Rome –or, for that matter, any other state- could have avoided a scenario like this? Machiavelli thinks that the best solution might be a return to the origins of the state. And then he mentions the history of the Catholic Church as an example of how this process can take place. If this institution has been able to survive for so long it is because of the timely emergence of movements –such as those founded by St Francis and St Dominick- that led the Church back to the initial teachings of Jesus Christ and away from the dishonesty of the clergy. This process is, however, a difficult one. A return to the original virtues might take place by an external event, such as a war or a natural catastrophe, or by a new and strong leadership that, once it provides moral guidance or oppresses the population for a long period of time, could make citizens obey the laws and religion once again -most of these scenarios being painful enough.²⁵

The Last Man

Machiavelli teaches about *virtu* and the necessity of applying a number of policies that might help to preserve it through time. But how do Machiavelli's teachings apply to our days?

Indeed, most of the problems Romans and Italians faced centuries ago are very different from ours. And while some of the theoretical insights Machiavelli provides might be a-temporal –such as the role that *virtu*, fortune and necessity plays in the life of states- most of the institutions and the ideologies he discusses are no present anymore. Moreover, many of his concerns –such as achieving the unity of Italy– are not ours, while new realities –Darwinism, socialism, the expansion of liberal democracy, etc.- have since then modified the political scenario at its core. The works of Friedrich Nietzsche provide us with a useful bridge to connect Machiavelli's thoughts with the contemporary world. In fact, Nietzsche's criticism of liberal democracy and the creature it has produced –the last man– retakes the theme of *virtu* and applies it to our times.

The influence the Florentine had over Nietzsche is more than clear. The German never hides his admiration for Machiavelli. In some of his notes he describes his works as 'perfection in politics' and in one of his books he mentions the Florentine as one of those few great individuals that lived

²⁴ Ibid., 15.

²⁵ Ibid., 210, 12.

before him.²⁶ But even more significant are the many similarities that we find in their works. The concept of *virtu*, for example, can be understood as the antecedent of the will of power. Moreover, both writers agree that the main goal for any statecraft should be the preservation of power through time and possess a profound disregard for the morality of their time.²⁷

The first thing to know about Nietzsche is that, due to the chaotic nature of his writings – ranging from a collection of aphorisms to the use of fictional characters to express his own views- and the constant contradictions we find in his works, this is a difficult author to comprehend. Indeed, a great number of interpretations about his thinking have been made.²⁸

But one of the ideas Nietzsche has that makes him stand out among other great philosophers is his belief that the ultimate goal of a society should be the production of those few individuals who can enhance culture. There is no place in his thinking for the common good. He seems to think that the advance of culture can be achieved by some kind of aristocracy, in which a group of artist-philosophers would be in charge of creating, while a class of warriors kept the ‘mediocre’ masses at a safe distance.²⁹ The people –being no more than quasi-slaves- would then have the task of providing the great ones with whatever necessity they might have. It is clear from this description then that Nietzsche does not share one of fundamental ideas under which modern political thought has been constructed: that all individuals have an intrinsic worth and that, because of this, they must possess equal rights.

Nietzsche is perfectly conscious that the world in which he lives is different from the one he dreams. Starting by the fact that Christianity -and what he considers to be its secular descendants: socialism and liberal democracy- has subverted everything that used to be noble in the past by, among other things, preaching equality. In his studies of history Nietzsche seems to have found examples of more noble societies -early Greece, Rome and the Renaissance- in which a set of different values existed. Those were men who embraced life and were not afraid of living dangerously. Furthermore, by overcoming themselves, they were also able to create higher forms of culture.

²⁶ Quoted from Bruce Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990), 4.

²⁷ Fredrick Appel, *Nietzsche Contra Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 122.

²⁸ The un-systematic way in which Nietzsche presented his thoughts made many think that he didn't have an overall philosophy after all. Martin Heidegger ‘reconstructed’ Nietzsche metaphysics –building it around two central concepts: Will to Power and Eternal Recurrence. Regarding his political thinking, Walter Kaufman sees Nietzsche as an ‘antipolitical’ thinker, while more modern works have studied this aspect of his philosophy more seriously. Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979), Walter. Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*.

²⁹ Detwiler, *Nietzsche and the Politics of Aristocratic Radicalism*, 1-16, 44-5, 63.

In *On the Genealogy of Morality* Nietzsche observes that two sets of values have been confronting each other throughout the centuries.³⁰ On the one hand, there are values that characterize what's noble, a dichotomy between what's good and what's bad. Those who have the joy of living under this dichotomy are able to affirm life by accepting what is good and then negating what isn't. On the other hand, there is the good evil dichotomy that's so common among slaves. Instead of being self-assertive, slaves first define what is evil and then, by pure negation, determine what is good.

And because slaves are weaker than their rulers, there is always the possibility that they might attempt a spiritual rebellion. This is, in fact, how the Jews were able to defeat the Romans. With the introduction of Christianity, the Romans started to feel doubts about their behavior, acquiring a sense of guilt that they had never experienced before. Vices, such as humility and pity, became virtues.³¹ The consequences of this process, Nietzsche thinks, are seen today.

With time man became increasingly weaker, a passive creature that now values love and charity and rejects the search for power, glory and war as vices. Furthermore, due to their constant efforts to lock their desires within themselves, individuals developed a 'bad conscience' that has introduced a culture of self-punishment.³² To sum up, our times -those of Christianity, socialism and democracy- are the times of the slave mentality.

*'... Today we see nothing that wants to expand, we suspect that things will just continue to decline, getting thinner, better-natured, cleverer, more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian - no doubt about it, man is getting 'better' all the time... Right here is where the destiny of Europe lies - in losing our fear of man we have also lost our love for him, our respect for him, our hope in him and even our will to be man. The sight of man now makes us tired - what is nihilism today if it is not that? ... We are tired man...'*³³

But Nietzsche notes that the time of Christianity –and that of certainties in general- is also reaching an end. And while this process could open new opportunities to reshape the values of men, it also introduces great dangers.

³⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

³¹ Ibid., 18-9.

³² (sec 16, p84-5) Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 27.

In Nietzsche's view, individuals need a horizon to survive, a system of beliefs that can order their actions and help them differentiate what is good from what is not.³⁴ But once modern man realizes that 'God is dead' the horizon that has dominated Europe for centuries will suddenly disappear. And while some positivists might welcome this event and think that science could supplant the role religion used to play in the past, Nietzsche warns them that the end of all theological faiths also brings the end of all metaphysical faiths -including that of science. The only role science can play is that of reducing uncertainties by explaining us some mechanical laws, but science is ultimately unable to produce a new set of values. Then, the danger we confront today is that of nihilism.

In fact, Nietzsche agrees that all truths are relative –what an individual thinks as truthful depends on the perspective from which he is observing 'reality.' Systems of values are then no more than the product of historical events that permitted some individuals –either the herd or the 'beasts of prey'- to create and then impose a set of values to others.³⁵ With time, these values became universally accepted within that particular community.

But is there any way by which the dangers nihilism represents can be avoided? Is there still a possible horizon for man? Nietzsche thinks that there is one, 'a new transmutation of values' that might permit a 'non metaphysical transcendence.'³⁶

After observing nature, Nietzsche concludes that what characterizes life is not the survival of the fittest -as Darwinists might think-, nor the search for truth and God that has characterized human endeavors for centuries, but the will to power. In effect, life should be understood as a constant fight for overcoming –oneself and others- through the acquisition of power. And the conflicts that such a process produces should not be rejected -as Kant and other philosophers have done in the past- but welcomed, because without conflict there would be no necessity and without necessity the overcoming of man would be impossible.³⁷

From this continuous process of self-overcoming, a super man might eventually emerge; a kind of philosopher-artist who doesn't need gods or metaphysical truths to survive; someone who is ready to affirm life in all its forms. The super man is the new horizon.³⁸

³⁴ Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992), 306.

³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003), 84.

³⁶ Joseph V. Femia, *Against the Masses: Varieties of Anti-Democratic Thought since the French Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 118.

³⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols; and, the Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 87, 103.

³⁸ There are some similarities between the concepts of will to power and *virtu*. They both deal with the notion of power over one's self and one's environment, and despise moral restrictions. However, some important differences remain. First of all, the will to power seems to be a more drastic concept than *virtu*. While Nietzsche

But in direct contraposition with the super man stands the last man of our days. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche describes him:

'Alas, the time is coming when man will no longer shoot the arrow of his longing beyond man, and the string of his bow will have forgotten how to whir...

Alas, the time of the most despicable man is coming, he that is no longer able to despise himself. Behold, I show you the last man. 'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and he blinks...

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. They have left the regions where it was hard to live, for one needs warmth. One still loves one's neighbor and rubs against him, for one needs warmth...

One still works, for work is a form of entertainment. But one is careful lest the entertainment be too harrowing. One no longer becomes poor or rich: both require too much exertion.

No shepherd and one herd! Everybody want the same, everybody is the same: whoever feels different goes voluntarily into a madhouse.'

The last man is the product of liberal democracy, someone who looks for comfort and security above everything else. He is happy with the mediocre life he has, knowing now that all truths are relative and that nobody has the right to question his life style anymore. The last man also loves peace, but only because he doesn't believe in anything strongly enough to fight for it. As Francis Fukuyama notes 'for Nietzsche democratic man was composed entirely of desire and reason, clever at finding new ways to satisfy a host of petty wants through the calculation of long-term self-interest. But he was completely lacking in any *megalothymia*, content with his happiness and unable to feel any sense of shame in himself for being unable to rise above those wants.'³⁹

Megalothymia, indeed, plays a major role in our discussion. The origin of this concept comes from Greece. In ancient times philosophers recognized that man is composed by reason, desire and the aspiration to be recognized –or *thymos*. And this *thymos* can take two different forms: *megalothymia* – the search for being recognized as a superior by others- and *isothymia* –the search for being

recognizes that necessity plays a role –by promoting the will to power- he does not mention fortune as a restriction to the will to power.

³⁹ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 301. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in his *Notes from the Underground*, may have been the first to describe the last man. It's not surprising then that Nietzsche expressed his admiration for the Russian writer. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, trans. Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage, 1994).

recognized as an equal by others. While *isothymia* is prevalent in the contemporary world –as is evident by the success of numerous social movements that look for equality of rights- the value of *megalothymia* has been mostly forgotten. As a matter of fact, although *Megalothymia* can be the source of violent conflict among individuals who are ready to risk their own –and other’s- life in their search for this kind of recognition, *megalothymia* is also be the source of some of humanity’s greatest achievements.⁴⁰ Gifted actors, painters and musicians are, for example, also driven towards creation by a strong desire to be recognized as superior–either by the masses or by a small circle of similar-gifted critics.

Nietzsche believes that liberal democracy has given far too much value to the pursue of peace - and as a result of this societies have become weaker. In effect, what early liberal and utilitarian thinkers –such as Locke and Hobbes- have achieved is to eliminate *megalothymia* from our lives, creating, in this way, the bourgeois society of today.⁴¹ The proud aristocrats of the past now have to accept a new model of society in which their desires for recognition are neutralized. Sports and the accumulation of wealth seem, indeed, to have become the only ways by which individuals can ‘exercise’ their *megalothymia*. As a logical outcome of this process, liberal democracies have entered into a lethargic state.

Retaking once more the concept of *virtu*, Nietzsche observes that struggle -and the state of danger that comes from it- not only produces great individuals, but also enhances nations:

‘The nations which were worth something, which became worth something, never became so under liberal institutions: it was great danger which made them something deserving reverence, danger which first teaches us to know our resources, our virtues, our shield and spear, our spirit - which compels us to be strong... First principle: one must need strength, otherwise one will never have it. Those great forcing-houses for strong human beings, for the strongest kind there has ever been, the aristocratic communities of the pattern of Rome and Venice, understood freedom in precisely the sense which I understand the word 'freedom': as something one has and does not have, something one wants, something one conquers...’⁴²

Furthermore,

⁴⁰ Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 182.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 184-5.

⁴² Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols; and, the Anti-Christ*, 104.

*'Democracy has always been the declining form of the power to organize: I have already, in Human, All too Human, characterized modern democracy, together with its imperfect manifestations such as the "German Reich", as the decaying form of the state. For institutions to exist there must exist the kind of will, instinct, imperative which is anti-liberal to the point of malice: the will to tradition, to authority, to centuries-long responsibility, to solidarity between succeeding generations backwards and forwards in infinitum. If this will is present, there is established something such as the Imperium Romanum: or such as Russia, the antithesis of that pitiable European petty-state...'*⁴³

In Nietzsche's view, nations need a hierarchical order, and for that to happen people should respect traditions, law and religion. These are all factors that contribute to a nation's power. Nietzsche shows serious doubts about the future of Europe in this respect. As a matter of fact, he perceives in Russia a far more vigorous and powerful nation. He thinks that if changes do not take place within the Old Continent, Russia would eventually become a major threat to Europe's security. But maybe, he observes, this is the type of danger Europe needs to revert its core values. Necessity, as Machiavelli has noted, is nourished *virtu*.⁴⁴

International Relations and The Will to Fight

With the last man, Nietzsche describes the individual of our days: a creature without chest who is afraid of living. Western democracies are now threatened by nihilism and this sense of conformity. Of course, the relations between states should also be affected by such a change.

But incorporating the will to fight to the study of International Relations is not an easy task. Indeed, in recent years this discipline has tended to obviate domestic variables. And this is particularly the case of neorealism –maybe the most influential school of thought in IR. Most neorealists have conscientiously eliminated internal factors from consideration by noting that states behave in similar ways regardless of their political or economic systems.⁴⁵ Therefore, to understand their behavior we must observe, as the argument goes, their position in the international system –how powerful, for instance, they are relative to the other states. Two forces -sociabilization and competition- make sure

⁴³ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 2003), VI, 208.

⁴⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York, London: W.W. Norton, 2001).

that all states behave in a rational way in their search for more security. In short, this is a framework that doesn't leave much space to discuss our subject. To recover a sense of the role that the will to fight plays in IR we will then have to go back to one of the first realists: Hans Morgenthau.

Today Morgenthau is regarded as one of the founding fathers of IR. By adapting some concepts of German thought –such as the will to power and the autonomy of the political- to the methodological language used in the departments of political science of the US, he was able to settle bases for what would become a well-defined discipline. But what is not always mentioned about Morgenthau is that he was also a student of serious political philosophy and that his works were influenced by the writings of Nietzsche and Machiavelli.⁴⁶ To mention just one example of their relation, the role Morgenthau gives to power as a key variable to understand international politics can be interpreted as an adaptation of Nietzsche's will to power to the study of relations between states. But what is then Morgenthau's conception of international relations?

In Morgenthau's view, states –not international organizations, social classes or corporations- are the central actors of international politics. And what characterizes these units is their constant search for power, something that takes place not because of any systematic reason but because it's in the nature of humans to do so. As long as a world government is not created –something he finds highly unlikely under the present circumstances- the conflicts that derive from this search for recognition will never go away. We might then better leave aside any idealistic attempt to change the basic rules of world politics and assume a realistic approach to the phenomenon; something that will not only protect the interest of our countries, but also help to preserve the stability of the international system. Even more, any attempt to establish collective security -by implementing altruistic schemes such as the League of Nations- is destined to fail because states don't worry about respecting international agreements but about protecting their interests –and the attainment of these two objectives are sometimes incompatible.

If we don't observe a constant state of war between nations today, Morgenthau tells us, is because of the balance of power. Imagine, for example, that a state becomes so powerful that it starts threatening its neighbors. What these states are going to do is to form an alliance that stops the growing power from becoming a hegemon. Eventually, from the formation of this kind of alliances stability emerges –the prototypical example is Europe between the last Napoleonic war and World War I. But for the balance of power to take place there must be enough flexibility within states to allow for the formation of alliances. If, on the other hand, states don't pursue their national interest but

⁴⁶ Christoph Frei, *Hans Morgenthau: An Intellectual Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2001), 121-22.

start ideological crusades or refuse to confront their enemies, instability –and possibly war- could take place once more.

It is, however, in the way Morgenthau defines national power that we finally find a place for the will to fight. In *Politics among Nations* he enumerates what variables make for national power. And while the most obvious ones are the size of the population, the level of economic and technological development a country has achieved, and its military strength, Morgenthau also mentions national character. He asserts that ‘certain qualities of intellect and character occur more frequently and are more highly valued in one nation than in an other.’⁴⁷ Then he notes that, for instance, higher morals are more common among some peoples than others. This fact is key to a good understanding of IR, because ‘without national morale, national power is either nothing but material force or else a potentiality that awaits its realization in vain.’⁴⁸

At the time Morgenthau was writing these passages he was particularly worried about the effects that nihilism and the attachment of the American people to certain liberal principles were having in the conduct of US foreign policy. While nihilism makes a state less powerful by weakening its willingness to make sacrifices, Liberalism shadows its view of the world. It’s the responsibility of a government then to deal with these issues first by understanding the character of the people and then by obtaining their support to pursue of a rational foreign policy. Morgenthau admitted, however, that this last objective is particularly difficult to achieve due to the fact that some of the inclinations people have –especially in the US- do not necessarily coincide with the principles that allow for the conduct of a sound foreign policy.⁴⁹

Apart from what Morgenthau notes, there are other ways by which the will to fight allows us to comprehend world politics. By analyzing specific wars, for instance, we learn how misconceptions about the levels of will to fight that characterize certain people might affect military conflicts. The perceptions Hitler had about the will to fight of the French -after what they had suffered during World War I- might, for example, explain why he decided to invade that country in the first place. A demoralized nation is, in effect, an easier target than a nation that’s ready to confront the suffering that comes from a long dispute. But on other occasions governments have also underestimated the will to fight of the people. The Argentine military seems to have predicted that the British would not support an attempt by its government to retake the Malvinas, but they were wrong. A similar case can be made

⁴⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 5th ed. (New York: Knopf, 1973), 143.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 154.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 154, 60.

about the recent invasion of Lebanon by Israel. The support Hezbollah received among the population seems to have been stronger than it was initially predicted.

Finally, two concepts that have become central to a realist approach to IR also help us understand how a diminution in the will to fight of a state might increase the chances of war. Let's consider what happens when an abrupt modification in the will to fight of a country takes place.

A critical point occurs when a state realizes that some of the main assumptions it had made about the international system are wrong.⁵⁰ And whenever a number of states pass through these points at the same time the levels of uncertainty in the system will suffer a dramatic increase, Presidents and prime ministers might, for instance, feel confused about the future of their states.⁵¹ Is their nation going to be recognized as a major actor of the international system? How might changes in its relative power affect the security of the country? We can think of an abrupt diminution in the will to fight of one or more states as an example of a critical point, one that could provoke a major crisis in the system. But how might a process like take place?

Suppose that the leaders of a state, after reading internal polls, realize that their population is becoming less and less willing to make the kind of sacrifices that are necessary to succeed in war. The rulers might correctly conclude that –*ceteris paribus*- the relative power of their nation is declining and, as a consequence, might feel compelled to attain any of the objectives their nation might have – such as obtaining a more important role in international organizations or giving back some territory that serves as a natural barrier against potential enemies- before the other actors of the system realize what's taking place. The tension that might result from these new demands –and from the sense of urgency that accompanies them- can create the conditions for a major conflict. Furthermore, the state that is suffering the decline in relative power might also conclude that it serves its interest to start a preventive war, thinking that if it doesn't attack now its rivals will eventually become too dangerous. The fact that the will to fight of a population is a particularly difficult variable to measure might create different perceptions about what the balance of power at a given time is. The chances of a war will then become higher than they already are.

Furthermore, the offensive defensive balance provides us with another approach. This theory states that there are a number of political, geographical and technological factors that determine the chances of a war to take place.⁵² Indeed, from the balance that takes place between the factors that

⁵⁰ Charles Doran, *Systems in Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), vii.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

⁵² Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (1976). For a further elaboration of Jervi's work see, Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*, Cornell Studies in Security Affairs (Ithaca, N.Y.; London: Cornell University Press, 1999).

favor offensive operations and those that favor defensive operations, the probabilities of a conflict emerge. If, for instance, offensive operations become less costly because some new weapon is introduced, the security competition between states increases. Everyone will now feel less secure because now the possibilities of invading in a successfully way increase. Even the states that once favored the status quo might have no other option than to initiate military action because they fear that if they don't do so first, another state will invade.

Major modifications in the field of military technology have produced, as the argument goes, some of the most notable changes in the offensive defensive balance. With the introduction of tanks and airpower, for example, invading another country has become an easier task than it was before and, as a result, more wars have been observed in the system. On the contrary, the invention of defensive weapons or the existence of geographic barriers –such as mountains, oceans or buffer states- can make invasions more difficult and, therefore, promote peace.

By using the framework provided by the theory of offensive defensive balance we can infer that a decrease in the will to fight of a particular state might –*ceteris paribus*- have a similar effect that the elimination of defensive barrier, making the chances of a war against that country higher than before.⁵³

To sum up, the will to fight of a people plays a major role in explaining international relations. Not only does it tell us about the causes and outcomes of particular conflicts but it also help us to understand why increases in the number might occur in a particular time.

In Search of Solutions

The emergence of Russia as a major geopolitical and ideological threat has been reflected in the works of numerous political thinkers. And some of them paid special attention to what they considered to be a lack of will, among Europeans, to confront the Soviet Union. Thinkers such as Raymond Aron and Jean Francois Revel have, indeed, described this phenomenon extensively.⁵⁴ But it's in the writings of Carl Schmitt and Samuel Huntington that we found an attempt to find solutions to this problem. Although they both found in liberalism the main responsible issue for having created this crisis, they resigned themselves to propose a number of institutional changes in their countries as the best way to empower them. Replacing liberalism with another metaphysical system would take far too long.

⁵³ Jervis briefly mentions the importance that the attachment to one's own country plays in the offensive-defensive balance, Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," 195.

⁵⁴ Aron, *In Defense of Decadent Europe*, Jean-Francois Revel, *How Democracies Perish*, trans. William Byron (New York: Harper and Row, 1983).

The state of crisis in which the Weimar Republic was immersed during the 1920's and 1930's made Carl Schmitt advance a series of challenges to Liberalism. First of all, Schmitt blames Liberalism for permitting the existence of Political Romanticism. In effect, only liberal societies –with their sharp distinction between the public and the private sphere- could allow for politics to become something of a spectacle, an area in which the aesthetic tastes of the individual can be experienced – just as in the theater or in the opera. With Romanticism, politics has then become a continuous discussion in which no decision is ever reached. Determining what is right from what is wrong is simply out of the question because by settling a dispute the discussion would reach an end, and the satisfaction that comes from exchanging phrases would then also be lost. To conclude, what Political Romanticism has allowed –by never reaching a decision- is for the status quo to continue.⁵⁵ And Schmitt thought that, due to the profound crisis Germany was going through, such a scenario was unacceptable.

Furthermore, Schmitt blames Liberalism for having created a system of government - Parliament Democracy- that doesn't work any more. In his view, one of the main presumptions the founding fathers of Parliamentarism had in mind for its well functioning was the existence of an open debate of ideas. This would, as the argument goes, allow for the selection of the best possible alternative. But the expansion of democracy in the last centuries has made it impossible for solutions to be reached in this way. Today, the responsibility of making decisions is not in Parliament anymore but in a number of committees and subcommittees that are heavily influenced by the action of interest groups.⁵⁶ Moreover, when its time to vote, majorities are created through the use of propaganda, by manipulating the feelings and short-term interests of the public.⁵⁷ As a result, the will of the people is not advanced.

As a matter of fact, for Schmitt democracy and liberalism are not the same thing. The association we tend to make between these two different concepts is the result of circumstances that were very different from ours. In effect, the strategic alliance between them came to be as a result of the common enemy they had during the 19th century: the monarchy. But now, having succeeded in their task, the contradictions between these two principles are more evident than ever before. There is, for instance, no reason why democratic governments should be identified only with Liberalism and its institutions. History is full of examples that show authoritarian governments that have represented the

⁵⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Political Romanticism*, trans. Guy Oakes (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1986), xxxi.

⁵⁶ ———, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. Ellen Kennedy, *Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985), 49-50.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

will of the people well, or even better than the best parliamentary democracy. The people can be represented as well by a single individual as by a committee of representatives.⁵⁸

Finally, in *The Concept of the Political* Schmitt presents his most sophisticated attack against Liberalism. What liberalism has ultimately done, he observes, is to suppress the political from our lives by reducing all disputes to the fields of economics and ethics. In this way, political adversaries are now considered simply as competitors or intellectual adversaries. There is, however, a political aspect that is always present, regardless of whether we like it or not.

As aesthetics is defined by the distinction between beautiful and ugly, ethics between good and bad, and economics between what is profitable and what it is not, friend and enemy define the political. The enemy is the other, the one who is existentially different from us, someone with whom a deadly conflict is possible.⁵⁹ And because on differentiating friends from enemies depends the same existence of a human groups, the political precedes all other human endeavors in importance.

The first responsibility of the state is then to identify its friends and its enemies.⁶⁰ Only by doing this could citizens live in peace and pursue their private affairs with tranquility.⁶¹ States should be aware that –both in the external and the internal front- potential enemies exist and that war with them is always a possibility. Those who have ignored this reality have suffered a great deal. This was, for instance, the case of the Russian upper classes, who made the mistake of idealizing the qualities of the peasantry at the same time the latter were planning an uprising that would put an end to former's existence. Furthermore, the French aristocracy engaged in a similar behavior before the revolution of 1789.⁶²

The greatest risk for a nation is then to lose its will to fight. Schmitt notes that 'If a people no longer possesses the energy or the will to maintain itself in the sphere of politics, the latter will not thereby vanish from the world. Only a weak people will disappear.'⁶³ What Liberalism does is to harm the ability of the state to carry its main task: distinguish who the enemy is and act in consequence.

In a series of notes he published after reading *The Concept of the Political* Leo Strauss asserts that the main objective Schmitt had while writing this essay was not to challenge any of the practical

⁵⁸ Ibid., 17, 34.

⁵⁹ ———, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. J. Harvey Lomax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 25-7.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 46.

⁶¹ Here, the influence of Hobbes is evident. See, Thomas Hobbes and Richard Tuck, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). It's also interesting to note that although in his first works Schmitt claims that the Catholic Church has a pivotal role to play in society, later he tends to think, as Hobbes does, that strong religious identifications can weaken the loyalty of citizens towards their state.

⁶² Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 69.

⁶³ Ibid., 53.

implications Liberalism might have, but to question it as a metaphysical system. What is more dangerous about Liberalism is that by negating what is political in our lives it takes away from us almost all that is 'serious' about human existence. In effect, the struggle to determinate what is right from what is wrong is what makes us human. Liberalism, on the other hand, tries to avoid the settling of this question because it's afraid of mortal combat. Strauss concludes by saying that while Schmitt was successful in showing how Liberalism hides –but does not eliminate- the political, he failed to provide us with an alternative horizon.⁶⁴

But if Schmitt was not able to give us a new horizon, was he at least able to suggest any practical solution that might help to attenuate the difficulties Liberalism produces? How could, for example, the unwillingness to fight we observe today be reverted? Schmitt makes two proposals: first he calls for a stronger state and then for the introduction of a myth that can help rally the masses against their enemies.

The challenges Germany faced during Schmitt's lifetime made him think that a stronger state was necessary. With political movements –both from the extreme Right and the extreme Left- challenging the existence of the republic from within and a powerful Russia threatening it from the East, Schmitt proposed a stronger Executive, one that could establish order and, if necessary, banish the opposition. Thus he introduced a novel interpretation of article 48 of the Weimar Constitution, one that permitted the President to call a state of emergency.⁶⁵ Only by making the state of emergency permanent and without restrictions, he thought, will the state be able to identify who the enemy is.

Schmitt was particularly worried about Russia.⁶⁶ The introduction of a new kind of dictatorship had allowed the Communist government to recognize the existence of the political. But this fact could not explain the success of the Soviet Union entirely. Following the works of anarchist George Sorel, Schmitt notes that myths are what make people act.⁶⁷ And the profound hate against the bourgeois that characterizes communist rhetoric has permitted the Russians to consider the possibility of sacrificing themselves for a cause again.⁶⁸ And this new attitude is, in effect, what makes Russia and socialism in general so powerful and threatening.

But besides strengthening the state, what else could western societies do to confront the socialist myth? Schmitt thinks that because of the state moral relativism and disbelief that existed at

⁶⁴ Ibid., 101-7.

⁶⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985), 11-3.

⁶⁶ Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (London & New York: Verso, 2000), 125-6.

⁶⁷ George Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, trans. Jeremy Jennings (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁶⁸ Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 68.

the time among Europeans this was a particularly difficult task to achieve.⁶⁹ But, he thought, Mussolini seems to have found a solution. The answer to the socialist threat is the introduction of an alternative and more powerful myth: the dream of an idyllic nation that should be defended by all its sons and daughters. The myth of the nation has, indeed, defeated the socialist myth on Italian soil. A stronger state and a new myth could, if not eliminate Liberalism, at least empower western countries vis-à-vis their enemies.

Although Samuel Huntington shares Schmitt's concern about the negative effects Liberalism has for the security of the West, his approach to the subject is different. While he agrees that Liberalism negates the realities of world politics –including the possibility of military conflict- and by doing so makes it difficult to apply a sound foreign policy, Huntington tends to emphasize more the role that this ideology plays in subverting the professionalism of the armed forces. And this worried him particularly because, with the end of World War II, the United States was facing in nuclear Russia a mighty rival. If the US wanted to preserve its security, it would have to modify the flawed nature of its civil-military relations.

The first thing Huntington does in *The Soldier and the State* is to observe that the officership is a professional body, just as lawyers and doctors. In fact, these officers count with all the characteristics that makes for a profession. They possess a particular expertise –the management of violence-, a responsibility –protecting society-, and have some of the characteristics that form a corporation.⁷⁰ He concludes by telling us that the more an officership approaches the ideal of professionalism, the better they will be suited to protect the security of the state.

Huntington also notes that the military are endowed with a particular mindset. The members of the armed forces –regardless of their nationality- tend to value the group more than the individual, they believe that conflict is an inevitable reality of world politics, and they usually have a pessimistic view about human nature.⁷¹ Even more, and contrary to what many think, the military tends to be cautious about the possibility of initiating conflicts with other states. In short, the members of the military are realist conservatives.

Liberals, on the other hand, tend to negate the political. Liberalism provides a pivotal role to the protection of the individual against all kinds of economic and political pressures, and trust, above all, the possibility that, through reason, progress and peace can be achieved. And it's this belief that

⁶⁹ Ibid., 73.

⁷⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civilmilitary Relations* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1957), 7-18.

⁷¹ Ibid., 62-4.

makes them trust the usefulness of international law and the value of world organizations.⁷² But however peaceful Liberalism might look at first, Huntington argues, as soon as a war starts, liberals tend to fight with an enormous zeal, as if they were involved in a moral crusade against evil.

After analyzing Liberalism and other ideologies –Marxism and Fascism- Huntington suggests that only Conservatism is compatible with the military ethic, not only because Conservatism values the group more than the individual or because it shares a pessimistic view about men, but also because it allows for other systems of belief to exist across national frontiers.⁷³ It doesn't possess then the ideological fervor that characterizes Liberalism and Marxism.

But what happens when the prevailing ideology of a country differs from that of the military? The professionalism of the armed forces suffers.

It's in the nature of politics that whoever wants to acquire power will need to make some concessions. And in a society that doesn't share the same values than the military, this means that the officership will have to adopt a new set of values in exchange for power –hurting, in the process, its professionalism and its ability to defend the country. If, on the other hand, the military refuses to do this, it will ultimately be condemned to social ostracism and be unable to influence the state.⁷⁴

For Huntington, the case of the United States is a particularly dangerous one. A brief look into American history helps us understand why. With the exception of a couple of political movements that existed before the Civil War, the US has remained a nation dominated by Liberalism. The lack of external threats and the continuous growth of its economy have indeed made this an ideal place for the expansion of this ideology.⁷⁵

Huntington believes that although Liberalism has shown a great deal of creativity when dealing with domestic affairs, it's ultimately unfit to confront foreign matters. First of all, Liberalism tends to ignore international affairs whenever possible. But when it has to confront world politics, it imposes domestic solutions to dilemmas that are international in character –by, for instance, trying to establish democratic governments and free enterprise everywhere. Even more, it also tends to demand from other countries ethical standards that are simply unreachable for them.⁷⁶ All these characteristics have made Liberalism ultimately unable to run a realistic foreign policy in the US.

But Liberalism in America has shown a particular enmity against the military. As a matter of fact, the conservative character of the armed forces makes them an ideal target. And this explains why

⁷² Ibid., 90.

⁷³ Ibid., 93-4.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 146-7.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 148-50.

Washington has, throughout history, implemented a series of policies that have tried to neutralize the power of the military either by diminishing its size -in times of peace- or by transforming its core values –when this was not possible.⁷⁷ But by doing this, the only thing Liberals have achieved is to weaken American defenses.

Huntington believes that best thing Americans can do to improve their country's security is to change their core values. Not only would a conservative ideology permit the military to maintain its professionalism intact, but, furthermore, Huntington also believes that conservative values are good per se –regardless of whether they serve national security or not.⁷⁸ The existence of a hierarchical order and a strong religion are, for example, two goals that he seems to agree with. Apart from strengthening the military, they would also strength society at large. The popularity that some conservative and realistic thinkers, such as Reinhold Niebuhr and Hans Morgenthau, were reaching in America at the end of the 1950's made Huntington think that a more sympathetic environment towards this set of ideas was now possible.⁷⁹ But he knew that an ideological change takes time and that some kind of short-term solution was also necessary if the state was going to be empowered. In his theory of objective civilian control he thought to have found one.

Objective civilian control introduces a sharp distinction between the responsibilities of civilian leaders and those of the military. While the former should be in charge of settling the political objectives of the nation, the latter should be in charge of implementing those objectives in the military field.⁸⁰ A number of advantages come from this model. First of all, objective civilian control makes it impossible for politicians to affect the professionalism of the military by interfering in their expertise; furthermore, by banning the participation of the officership in politics, the armed forces could preserve its core values intact. The alternative model, subjective civilian control, tries, on the other hand, to neutralize the political power the military might have by civilianizing and politicizing it. A policy that adheres to this view would, for instance, promote the introduction of civilian into the ranks of the military or even implement democratic reforms within the armed forces. The logic is that once the military reflected the values of society, it would not represent a threat to the nation anymore.

Huntington concludes by telling us that the military should remain the 'tool of the state,' not its 'mirror.'⁸¹ Only by doing this can we expect to maximize its efficiency and improve the security of the nation. To sum up, while his theory might not create a more conservative society, at least it serves the

⁷⁷ Ibid., 154-5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 464.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 457-9.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 77.

⁸¹ Ibid., 83-4.

objective of preserving the professionalism of the armed forces by isolating them from a liberal society, ‘a bit of Sparta in the midst of Babylon.’⁸²

Conclusions

The thinkers who were studied throughout this chapter form part of a distinctive intellectual tradition: realism. They all describe the world as they see it and call for the implementation of policies that respect the set of rules that are imposed by this reality. Of course, the forces that shape the world vary from author to author. While Machiavelli finds in *virtu*, necessity and fortune the main forces that determine the destiny of nations, Nietzsche and Morgenthau think that the will to power reflects the true nature of politics. Schmitt, on the other hand, emphasizes the importance of the friend enemy dichotomy. Another aspect that characterizes these thinkers is the profound dislike they feel towards those idealistic views that, once applied into politics, might cause the ruin of nations.

The differences between these thinkers should, however, not be obviated either. While Nietzsche and Schmitt, for instance, tend to celebrate conflict as something good per se and both look for a new system –metaphysical or not- to take the place that Liberalism occupies in our lives today, others are more conservative in their approach. Morgenthau and other realists, for instance, reject the belief that we should welcome conflict and they, instead, demand for the implementation of a more realistic foreign policy that might bring more stability to the international system. Even more, Machiavelli and Huntington never try to establish a new model of society but expect a return to the values of the past –those of Rome or an idyllic America.

But it is in their enemies that we found the main difference among realists. While the first realists –Machiavelli and Nietzsche- blame Christianity for having weakened nations, more recent authors seem to find in Liberalism the main reason for causing this phenomenon. Friedrich Nietzsche helps understand this transition.

In Nietzsche’s opinion, Christianity subverted the noble values of the past by converting vices into virtues and by introducing the same idea of equality. But Liberalism went a step forward by promoting equal rights for everyone. Moreover, its individualistic nature made Liberalism the perfect ally of nihilism and together they created, in ours, a society that’s composed by individuals who are afraid of living, ultimately unable to overcome themselves. Indeed, if the man of today loves peace, it

⁸² Ibid., 465.

is only because he doesn't believe in anything strong enough to fight for. Pacifism is then just a symptom of a terrible disease.⁸³

In the works of Morgenthau, Huntington and Schmitt we found a different kind of criticism against Liberalism. They blame it for negating the realities of world politics and, by doing so, weakens the power of the state. Either by ignoring the presence of external and internal enemies or by trying to impose domestic solutions to international problems, Liberalism has made possible for states to implement unsound policies; policies that, in a nuclear world like ours, might not only mean the end of our freedoms but also universal annihilation. Lastly, Huntington also believes that Liberalism has deteriorated the professionalism of the armed forces by imposing on them a set of values that is incompatible with their ability to defend the state.

But if realists are illiberal this doesn't mean that they are necessarily undemocratic. In fact, one of the main criticisms Schmitt advances against Liberalism is that, through the adoption of the Parliamentary form of government, this ideology has made it impossible for the will of the people to be expressed. Propaganda and interests groups have corrupted the democratic process. In short, democracy and liberalism are, in his view, not the same thing. The fact that none of the authors reviewed here –with the sole exception of Nietzsche- seems to be truly undemocratic confirms this impression.

Another conclusion is the important role the will to fight plays in world politics. This -usually neglected- concept can be considered one of the many forms that *virtu* can adopt. When a society is able to keep its will to fight through time it can expect to remain uncorrupt and safe. When, on the other hand, a population loses its capacity to make the kind of sacrifices that are necessary for the conduct of a war, the power of the state might diminish drastically. No matter how many tanks a country might have or how well developed its economy might be, if the people are not willing to defend their state anymore, the nation will become an easy prey for its enemies.

Throughout the 20th century, realists have shown a special concern about the decrease they perceived in the will to fight of the West. The alliance between Liberalism and nihilism has, indeed, restricted the work that illiberal groups –such as church, family, and the military- use to do in the past.

⁸³ With the arrival of the nuclear age positions that favor struggle as a useful device to avoid the decadence of a state have lost much of their appeal. The potential costs of a war between countries that possess weapons of mass destruction are simply too high to even consider its advantages. It should be noted, however, that when Machiavelli wrote about international conflicts he was mostly concerned about the expansionist wars Rome fought at its borders, not with major conflicts -such as the Punic Wars. Today, we can make a similar distinction between wars that involve two or more nuclear powers and minor types of conflict. Therefore, while a realist justification for war might have lost sense in the former case it might still possess some useful insights in the latter.

But being now the individual king and moral relativism an undisputable principle, its has become increasingly difficult for these groups to teach individuals the value of personal sacrifice –without which dying for one’s own country is impossible- and to provide them with a horizon. And these institutions are fundamentally illiberal because, among other things, they reject relativism, value the group more than the individual and maintain a strong hierarchical structure –all illiberal principles. In short, for realism, these groups are the best antidotes societies have against the last man.

Neorealism, on the other hand, teaches us some geopolitical lessons. A diminution in the will to fight of some states might not only explain particular conflicts, but also explain why more wars might take place in the international system at a given time. The uncertainty that’s created in the system when numerous states are passing through critical points and the changes that occur in the offensive defensive balance might increase the chances of a war.

But can realism also help us to understand the realities of international politics today? And can it tell us something about our future?

The first thing to note is that western countries are living today under the ‘metaphysical’ system call Liberalism. In fact, these are nations where the individual, not the group, is supreme, societies in which truth is relative and decisions should –at least in theory- always be reached by consensus and not as a result of violent struggle. Furthermore, either in presidential or parliamentary systems, governments tend to respect the division of power and foment free speech –two of the main recipes Liberalism propose. Realist would predict that, in such a scenario, the will to fight of the people would suffer a reduction. And, as a matter of fact, levels of patriotism have suffered an important diminution. Considering the possibility of reinstalling conscription seems, for example, out of the question.

However, the differences between the United States and Europe should not be underestimated. While Liberalism dominates Europe’s ideological landscape –at least after the fall of Communism- illiberal groups have imposed an important check to the expansion of Liberalism in the US. And as a result, the levels of patriotism are very different. For instance, while 71% of Americans say that they are very proud of their nationality, only 46% of British, 39% Swedish, 37% French and 13 of Germans say the same.⁸⁴

The difference between the degrees of influence religion has in the United States and Europe today is striking. While 45% of the Americans attend religious services at least once a week, in Europe that number drops to 17% in France, to 15% in Germany, to 14% in Great Britain and only to 4% in

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Sweden.⁸⁵ Even more, the armed forces also seem to play a more important role in America than they do in Europe. And this can be measured not only by the number of citizens that are actively involved in the armed forces, but also in polls that show how much more respect Americans have for this institution than the Europeans do.⁸⁶ The issue of gays in the military might help to illustrate this assertion. In the decision to ban the open presence of gays in the military Americans seem to have shown more respect towards the conservative mindset of the officership than the Europeans—as Huntington might assert.

The other factor that differentiates the United States from Europe is its expansionist policies. But this is not meant in terms of foreign policy decisions but in the number of troops that are established outside its territory at a given time -relative to that of its European allies. We must remember that at least 369,000 members of the US Armed Forces are set abroad at a given time, in all five continents.⁸⁷ As a matter of fact, Americans seem to be following the same recipe that Machiavelli proposed centuries ago to preserve *virtu* among the people: religion and expansionism.

From these factors we might conclude that, aside defense budgets or technological achievements, the will to fight is another reality that makes the United States more powerful than Europe. We can then ask ourselves how powerful Europe really is. It makes no sense for Brussels to pursue a more autonomous defense policy from Washington. Is Europe powerful enough to defend itself without American support? Are Europeans ready to make the kind of sacrifices that are necessary to win a major conflict? Have their armed forces been able to preserve the professionalism that makes them an efficient tool –but not a mirror- of the state?

Finally, one striking fact is that almost all the thinkers we have studied until now thought that Russia represented a major threat. Indeed, Nietzsche, Schmitt, Morgenthau and Huntington all expressed the belief that Russia was becoming a major power and that it could challenge the security of the West. Even more, most of them coincided in the remarkable will to fight that society showed. Either because the Russians approach life in a different way from ours or because, in the hate for the bourgeois, they have found a powerful myth, the West was being challenged.

The question to be asked now is why China doesn't seem to represent a similar threat to today's thinkers. After all, China counts with a number of conditions that make it a remarkable rival, just as Russia before it. Realists would agree that, first of all, the illiberal government at Beijing

⁸⁵ World Values Survey (online database), Online Data Analysis, available from <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>. The German data reflects the results of a poll taken in what used to be West Germany during 1999.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ See, for example, PBS, U.S. Military Deployment 1969 to the Present; available from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/pentagon/maps/9.html>; Internet.

doesn't negate the realities of world politics. On the contrary, a relatively independent bureaucracy carries a realistic foreign policy. Even more, Chinese culture tends to favor the group over the individual, something that helps to deter the emergence of the last man. And, finally, in making China a world power once again –after generations of humiliation- the state seems to have found a powerful myth that can be used to rally the support of the population.⁸⁸

To conclude, realism provides us with a set of questions that every society should answer. Although many of their thoughts might be rejected under moral grounds, some of their insights represent important contributions to the understanding of world politics and deserve our attention. We can instead decide to ignore them, but only at our own peril.

⁸⁸ While 90% of Chinese show their willingness to fight a war in defense of their country, only 65% of Americans say the same. Online Data Survey.