

War

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that war has been one of the central forces shaping human history. Nearly all social institutions and social relations have been wrought by the experience and legacy of various wars. Yet, until quite recently, the mainstream sociologists were reluctant to engage with this phenomenon leaving the analysis of war to political science, international relations and history. However this has not always been the case, as the classics of social thought were interested in organized violence and have made significant contributions to the study of war, state and society (Malešević, 2010). More recently political and historical sociologists have questioned the dominance of the peace-centred understandings of social reality emphasising the centrality of war, violence and coercion in the formation and reproduction of social orders (Centeno, 2002; Joas & Knöbl, 2013; Malešević, 2010, 2017; Mann, 1986, 2012; Wimmer, 2013). In this chapter we chart and

analyse some of these developments. The first part explores the main conceptual and definitional issues while the second part engages with the political sociology of war.

WHAT IS WAR? WAR AS AN OBJECT OF STUDY

Definitional Approaches

In international relations theory, war is often defined as ‘organized violence carried on by political units against each other’ (Bull, 1977, p. 184). As a working definition, this quote offers a good starting point for empirical research. As a conceptual definition, however, it does not account for important features attached to the ideal-types of war.

Hedley Bull’s definition grasps a crucial dimension of war: reciprocal organized violence between armed groups. The high intensity and lethality of this violence is indeed

what generally is seen to distinguish war from less violent ‘militarized inter-state disputes’ (MIDs). By focusing on the most visible and disruptive aspect of war, its organized violence, this definition is moreover consistent with the frequent use of the term to refer to an extraordinary temporal sequence rather than to describe a process or semi-permanent state of armed violence. It is indeed on the basis of the concentration of the utmost reciprocal violence, that war has been seen to manifest itself throughout history in the form of spatially discrete (battlefield, battlespace) and temporally situated (times of war/times of peace) events.

Bull’s definition however at the same time strips the concept of war from the multiple meanings that have come to be attached to it. One could indeed contend that organized violence only is one of the material manifestations of war rather than its only core conceptual element. When applied to the ‘classical’ wars of the eighteenth century, Bull’s definition does for example not allow distinguishing the battle from the wider war of which it is part. The fighting on the battlefield seems to become the defining reality of war rather than one of its many faces or phases. To account for the latter, one could suggest limiting the use of the term to those cases in which organized violence unfolds in the context of a wider conflict-relation between political protagonists, both as an outcome of this relation and as an attempt to modify it. This is also what justifies talking of the Hundred Years War between the Kingdoms of France and England (1337–1453) in spite of the fact that it did not correspond to 100 years of armed confrontation. Hobbes’s ‘war of every man [...] against every man’ (Hobbes, 1839 [1651], p. 115) goes a step further since it defines war independently of any violence, merely as a state of mutual fear and of reciprocal hostility (Joas & Knöbl, 2013): ‘the nature of war consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary’ (Hobbes,

1839, p. 113). It is following a similar logic that in the Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the law of nations considered states to be at war from the moment they had declared war, even in the absence of actual battles or fighting. Conversely, a sovereign could not pretend to the privilege of war if he resorted to large-scale violence against a state without previously having declared war (Holsti, 1996).

As we see, the generic concept of war has taken on many meanings and connotations that still shape its use today: it can be seen as a state of hostility (which partially justifies the notion of Cold War), as a practice of large-scale organizational violence (hence the ministries or departments of war in charge of preparing and organizing this category of statecraft), as a relational process linked to reciprocal enmity (war as a dialectic of wills) and as a set of recurring yet singular historical events (first world war, second world war). All of these dimensions come together in our archetypical representations of war.

While we might be increasing conceptual precision when considering these dimensions as cumulative conditions, it also entails significant risks of ethnocentrism: the strict distinction between the battle and war, the institutionalized rules of war and their violations, times of peace and times of war, political and military units and so on are all but universal (Keegan, 1993). This is arguably the main reason for which many quantitative scholars prefer terms carrying less historical connotations such as ‘armed conflict’. One can however also interpret this multidimensionality flexibly, by considering these connotations as part of the contemporary legacy of war and hence as virtually present (but not necessarily actualized) in current strategic thinking and practice (Bonditti & Olsson, 2016). Moreover, there is no denying that the discrepancies between the subjective representations and objective realities of war are a central aspect of the object itself rather than a purely contingent feature (Barkawi & Brighton, 2011).

While not reducible to organized reciprocal violence between political groups, we will however here consider the latter element to constitute the most stable and central aspects of war.

War, Violence and Conflict

To the limited extent that war is dealt with in sociology, it is often through related terms such as conflict, organized violence or collective violence (Joas & Knöbl, 2013). We therefore want to build on these concepts to situate war both as a specific phenomenon (at least as ideal-type) and as part of wider conceptual continua.

Let us start by situating war in relation to conflict. War in principle unfolds in the context of a wider conflict understood as a relation of reciprocal opposition between two or more actors leading to strategic interactions between them. Conflict might arise when social agents pursue incompatible objectives, but it nearly always is also tied up with relationally constituted identities, identities defining Self in relation and in opposition to Other. By no means do conflicts need to involve physical violence. Most conflicts, from labour conflicts to conflicts between political party-leaders in democratic systems, are usually non-violent. At the same time, violence can erupt independently from any pre-existing conflict for example in the case of genocide, one sided assaults etc. There is however an elective affinity between conflict and physical violence. Indeed, among the ways in which a conflict can be settled (negotiation, arbitration, court ruling, flipping a coin), physical violence is the only that does not suppose a basic trust that the Other will stick to commitments (Vasquez, 2009). In this paradoxical sense, war can also be seen as a last-resort mechanism of conflict-resolution when all other such mechanisms have failed (Holsti, 1996, Luttwak, 1999).

To the extent that war refers to armed conflicts, it involves the use of arms and weapon

systems and hence the resort to more or less sophisticated instruments, technical tools and technologies of destruction. Even though some authors have envisioned a war without arms, fought mainly with fists, nails and teeth (Lucretius, 2001 [50 BCE], p. 171), there is no reliable historical data to support such a scenario. There are good reasons to believe that our physical limitations would severely hamper any prospect of violent escalation beyond a certain level in such a 'war' (Malešević, 2010).

In a nutshell, if one wants to pin down war conceptually on the basis of the abovementioned points, it could be defined as a simultaneously institutionalized, collective, organized and political form of violent conflict.

As opposed to, for example, duelling, but like barroom brawls, war is a form of *collective violence* since it involves on both sides a level of coordination of multiple individual actions. As such it raises the same type of dilemmas as any collective action implying potentially high costs (Olson, 1965).

As opposed to brawls, spontaneous rioting or even gang-fights, it is *organized* in the sense that it pits more or less complex and bureaucratized organizations¹ against each other, but also in the sense that it involves practices that have been organized and hence ordered for particular ends. The importance of more or less specialized military or armed organizations is in both cases crucial. Given the necessity to extract resources in terms of money and manpower, but also the need to maintain discipline amongst fighters in the face of overwhelming violence, war is inconceivable in the absence of coercive organizations (Malešević, 2010; Tilly, 1992).

Just like duelling or blood feuds regulated by a customary code, but as opposed to barroom brawls, war is more or less *institutionalized*. It is indeed at least to a certain extent tied up with expectations, established knowhow, norms and principles, that tend to reproduce it as a particular mode of interaction inseparable from an 'art of war' (Vasquez, 2009). However, like with all institutions, war often

gives rise to practices that run counter to these rules (Barkawi & Brighton, 2011), sometimes even leading to the breakdown of its underlying normative framework. To the extent that these transgressive practices are reciprocal and reiterated they might nevertheless give rise to new institutionalized practices. That being said, in highly asymmetrical, 'total' or 'civil' wars, and in many of today's wars (Kaldor, 1999; van Creveld, 1991), the level of institutionalization and rule-boundedness is at least in appearance very low, which the description of these wars as irregular also reflects (Balcells & Kalyvas, 2010). This phenomenon also concerns Western states since many of their current military operations are covert or secret.

War, Politics and the Political

Most definitions or analyses of war insist on its nature as 'continuation of politics by other means' (Clausewitz, 1993), as involving 'political units' (Bull, 1977, p. 184) or as pursuing 'political goals'. While we do not here want to engage in a discussion on what might make these attributes political, we at the same time need to avoid tautological or ahistorical definitions equating the political with the state. This task is all the more important as many studies insist on the difficulty of distinguishing political violence from other forms of violence, be they 'private', 'economic' or 'criminal', in contemporary wars (Green & Ward, 2009; Kalyvas, 2003; Owens, 2008). What, then, could confer a political dimension to the violence of war?

One can see it in two different ways. First, one can see it as distinct but cumulative conditions: war entails both large-scale *and* political forms of reciprocal violence, but in this case one misses the rationale of their combination. Second, one can see them as interlinked: war entails large-scale, high-intensity, sustained – and *therefore* ultimately political – forms of violence. There are two possible approaches to this second argument that we here endorse.

The first is the one developed by German philosopher and legal theorist Carl Schmitt (2007, also see Kalyvas, 2003). It sees the existence of political bonds as an essential pre-condition of war. War indeed is premised upon a high level of internal cohesiveness on the part of the 'units' involved. Such cohesiveness is necessary in order to maintain the ability to resort to utmost force in the face of adverse violence. It supposes to temporarily overcome internal divisions of an economic, cultural or social nature that might weaken the collective effort. War hence supposes a type of organizational power that supersedes and overruns other power-relations. Were it not so, the central antagonism of war would unavoidably be mitigated by less sustainable forms of (in)fighting (Collins, 2012). Ultimately, there would be no reason not to consider the scattered attacks of economic looting, violent demonstrations or spontaneously gathered lynch mobs, basically any collective violence, as also being war. Hence, the friend/enemy distinction consubstantial to war (and that in more sociological terms corresponds to respectively the highest level of association and the highest level of disassociation) reveals the existence of specific relations that unlike relations of an economic, cultural or social nature can bring groups to fight and die as a collective. These are the properly political bonds. War hence reveals and creates the political according to Schmitt. The adjective political implies a change in nature as to the degree of organization, intensity and sustainability that the violence of war entails.

The second, more processual approach, we draw from historical sociologist Charles Tilly. The latter notes that within any social setting collective violence supposes, in order to reach a certain level of salience and coordination, at least two generic processes to unfold: (1) boundary-activation and hence the rhetorical and social constitution of antagonistic groups; and (2) brokerage understood as the successful negotiation of alliances between the pre-existing constituencies that constitute these antagonistic groups, this in order to strengthen

their internal cohesion (Tilly, 2003; Collins, 2012; Kalyvas, 2003). Indeed, war requires a re-ordering of collectivities as well as organizations capable of extracting and mobilizing the resources necessary (capital, weapons, manpower, authority etc.) for the deployment of large scale violence. As Tilly here notes: ‘Where brokerage and boundary activation loom large [...], they commonly override previously existing social relations among participants – so much so that people who live peaceably together one day begin slaughtering each other the next’ (Tilly, 2003, p. 216). While integrated groups of fighters may constitute the backbone of war, these wider processes constitute its connective tissues. In this sense war requires processes of integration and articulation of diverse interests on the one hand, of bordering and exclusion on the other hand. Since these processes define the frames of collective life, they are profoundly political. They unfold during the escalation of collective violence but often function in reverse during de-escalation (Collins, 2012). This is important because it highlights that while boundary-activation and brokerage are necessary pre-conditions of war, they are by no means a necessary and systematic consequence of war (Malešević, 2010).

This is not to say that the Clausewitzian ‘push towards the extremes of war’, the unrestrained dynamic of escalation, must necessarily be the predominant force pervading historical wars (Clausewitz, 1993).

The extreme paroxysm of ‘absolute war’ is virtually never reached in empirical wars (Clausewitz, 1993; Aron, 1986). It just means that ‘absolute war’ is the standard by which the character of empirical wars as full-fledged wars might be assessed (Table 40.1).

The Diversity of War

The word ‘war’ often summons up representations related to ‘conventional war’ understood as violent confrontations decided by large-scale battles between state-armies. This imaginary has become part of the way we think of war although ‘conventional inter-state wars’ never were the only or even the main forms of war. For example during the so-called Hundred Years Peace between 1815 and 1914 (Polanyi, 1944), roughly one century arguably only interrupted by a few sporadic wars on the European continent (e.g. War of Crimea, French-Prussian war), the British and French armies were in fact nearly permanently at war in their respective empires in what generally has been described as extra-state wars (Olsson, 2012a). Under these conditions it is not particularly astonishing that contemporary wars often are at odds with the above-mentioned representations. Two frequent images of contemporary war are in this regard especially difficult to make sense of.

The first image is the one of high-technological so called ‘surgical strikes’,

Table 40.1 The scales of violence and conflict

	<i>Non-violent conflict</i>	<i>Lethal Violence</i>	<i>Lethally Violent conflict</i>	<i>Institutionalized + lethally Violent Conflict</i>
Individual	Interpersonal rivalry	contract killing	Revenge killing	Duel
Collective/ coordinated	Interprofessional turfwar	Lynching, pogroms, violent riots	Gang-fight, barroom brawl, peasant retaliation against landlords	Blood feuds regulated by customary code
Organized (and collective)	Labour-conflict	Corporate murder	turf war between drug-trafficking syndicates	Religious sacrifice in Aztec wars (possibly)
political (and organized and collective)	Interstate dispute	Political mass-murder, “democide”, genocide	Generic armed conflict	WAR

'targeted killings' or pin-pointed special operations carried out by stealth planes, armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) or Special Forces teams, usually to kill at a distance individual 'High Value Targets' in Yemen, Pakistan or Somalia. Generally, such counterterrorist operations are dispersed both in time and space (Chamayou, 2015). In order to ensure flexibility, they are in the case of the US frequently carried out independently from the military chain of command. The US government indeed often resorts to the CIA that itself has externalized many activities to private military and security companies (PMSCs), thus freeing civilian authorities from the bureaucratic procedures entailed by the mobilization of the armed forces (Olsson, 2016).

The second image is the one of 'states of violence' (Gros, 2010) in which armed violence has become a regular way of negotiating political agreements or securing economic benefits (Andreas, 2004; Kalyvas, 2003; Keen, 2012, Debos, 2011). Multiple authorities might use violence as a matter of routine to foster political control but also, and perhaps more centrally, to maintain the fragmentation of power structures (Kalyvas, 2006). While escalation through brokerage and boundary-activation allows for a consolidation of political power (Collins, 2012; Tilly, 2003), violence here also serves to maintain political fragmentation in what appears as an endless process of fusion and fission of armed groups. Centrifugal dynamics serve as much to sustain margins of manoeuvre for all sorts of traffics as to prevent rivals from capitalizing on centralizing processes in a context of military competition. The contemporary situation in parts of Mali, Somalia or DR Congo might offer examples of this. These situations have been called 'low-intensity' war by some, 'high intensity crime' by others (van Creveld, 1991, Mueller, 2004). Much like in stateless and segmentary societies (Clastres, 1994; Evans-Pritchard, 1940), armed violence is here embedded in social systems that depend on this violence for the maintenance of their stability (Staniland, 2012b). Outbursts of

violence have become virtually inseparable from other types of social relations, thus blurring the categories of war and peace.

These two images that both might describe aspects of armed violence in Afghanistan, Somalia or Libya represent two extreme ends of contemporary wars. Strictly speaking, and when taken in isolation, they are not war at all since the first is not necessarily part of a structured conflict and the second does not allow distinguishing war from other types of social transactions. At the same time, these scenarios are generally inseparable from wider armed conflicts. Moreover, they have more in common than what might seem. They both tend to avoid the type of polarization characteristic of the 'total wars' of the first half of the twentieth century. They also both transcend the inter-state/civil war distinction without amounting to extra-state war. They erode the trinitarian structure (government, armed forces, people) that to a great extent characterized Western wars from the nineteenth century onwards (van Creveld 1991). Finally, their *modus operandi* is sometimes identical as highlighted by their common reliance on delegation of military coercion to non-state and/or private actors (Olsson, 2016).

Wars come in many forms and shapes, moulded as they are by the societies in which they are embedded and which they transform (Clausewitz, 1993; Malešević, 2014; Shaw, 2005). To make sense of this diversity, wars have usually been classified according to the number of political units involved (dyadic, triadic, multiparty, systemic etc.), the objectives pursued (territorial-, resource-wars), the nature of the actors involved (guerilla war, inter-state war), the type of technologies used in combat (nuclear, submarine or chemical war) or geographical reach (civil, trans-border, regional, world war). These distinctions and especially the one between inter-state and intrastate war are however increasingly difficult to apply to contemporary wars (Olsson, 2015; Tarrow, 2015). Even the theoretically opposed notions of war and peace seem to have become intertwined. Indeed, notions

of pacification, policing or (rebel-)governance have become as relevant for the study of war as for the study of pacified political orders (Holmqvist, 2014; Olsson, 2013a; Staniland, 2012b).

The War/Warfare Articulation

The Western ‘way of war’ has been durably affected by the cumulative bureaucratization of military organizations (Malešević, 2010). One imperfect although significant indicator in this regard is the so-called ‘tooth to tail ratio’: the number of combat-soldiers (‘tooth’) in relation to non-combat troops (‘tail’: administration, logistics and support) in the active duty military of any given army. Purportedly, and although the definition of ‘combat-soldiers’ raises many problems, this ratio would typically for the US have been around 1 to 3 in the Union forces during the American civil war, 1 to 4 during First World War, and 1 to 7 during the Second World War and the Korea war. Today it would be around 1 to 11 (Gabriel & Metz, 1991, p. 88). The resulting organizational logic favours bureaucratic practices and routines geared towards efficiency and technical performance (speed, connectivity etc.) of military operations. It does not, however, put the relational dimension of strategic interaction at the forefront. As a consequence, the traditional warrior ethos envisioning war as a contest of force between fellow warriors is increasingly disconnected from everyday military practices (Janowitz, 1960, Moskos, Williams & Segal, 2000, Olsson, 2012b). This tendency has been accentuated by another long term trend: the evolution from soldiering as *occupation* – for example on the part of military aristocracies – to soldiering as *profession* focused on merit, intellectual skills and evaluation of competence.

Strengthened by the international delegitimation of war (Finnemore, 2003), the above-mentioned evolutions might explain the increased rhetorical disconnection between war and warfare. *Warfare* as

technique and practice is increasingly thought of independently of *war* as violent encounter involving reciprocity and exchange (of blows and strikes but also of ideas and knowledge, see Barkawi, 2006). Indeed, multiple specialized military practices are increasingly deployed by military bureaucracies in operations that are not formally defined as ‘war’: military operations other than war (MOOTW), stabilization or stability operations, targeted killing, peace operations etc. In their midst, the military often continues to talk of warfare – asymmetric, irregular or unconventional warfare – although political leaders do not refer to them as war at all. Of course the fact that these ‘interventions’ are not officially seen as wars does not mean that they are not. What is however interesting is that their relational nature is somehow denied: in stabilization operations and peace operations, even in the context of counterinsurgency in Afghanistan or the NATO bombing campaign over Libya, there were no designated enemies, only ‘local violence’ to be managed, mastered or policed.

It is as if the former sovereign privilege of waging war increasingly is only bestowed (or blamed) on non-state actors and irregular armed groups, while the former beneficiaries of this privilege, the states, only claim to ‘intervene’ in the context of what is often portrayed as a form of ‘cosmopolitan law-enforcement’ (Kaldor, 1999). Far away from this political rhetoric, war however remains a tangible reality for both types of actors (Olsson, 2015).

War, Warriors and the Political Organization of Military Force

If war is violence carried on by political units, how are combatant organizations related to political units? In its current form the distinction between military and political organizations, or more precisely between military and civil authorities, is relatively recent in Europe. It flows from the organizational complexification of European states from the end of the Renaissance onwards (Tilly, 1992). Indeed, a

functional specialization appears between officials in charge of war-making and those in charge of policing, justice and finance who are equally indispensable to the war effort. However, since the monarchs are competing within their realm with other warrior aristocrats, the latter offices are increasingly given to specially appointed 'administrative noblemen' (*noblesse de robe*) and to members of the upper bourgeoisie rather than to warrior aristocrats (*noblesse d'épée*). This leads to the emergence of a new 'state-nobility' the social power of which is totally independent from any claim to military power (Bourdieu, 1998).

The distinction between military and civilian offices has however never been clear-cut in most states. The existence of gendarmerie-type police forces with a military status in many countries still today bears testimony to this initial indistinction between (what today would be called) war and policing, as well as between military and civil authorities. It is through a differentiation internal to the war-making function of states, and also as a result of war, that civil administrations have progressively grown strong, become autonomous and progressively have submitted combatant organizations to civil authorities, thus in the process also restraining and specializing the field of military competence.

The political significance of combatant organizations can however not be accounted for without saying a few words about their 'mode of production'. Throughout history many different models have existed: the war bands of simple or complex chiefdoms, hereditary warrior aristocracies, slave soldiers, mercenaries, levies, conscription armies, voluntary irregular militias, modern professional armies etc. One can position them on an axis going from a form of political authority centred on despotic power to one mainly displaying infrastructural power. The first form of power describes, according to Michael Mann (1986, 1993), the capacity on the part of a small political-military elite to impose coercively its arbitrary decisions. The second describes the ability to take and

implement deep-reaching decisions throughout society through the association and integration of societal stakeholders to the exercise of political power (Mann, 1986). Mercenaries, professional armies and the levying of troops allows exercising (but also supposes) a high level of despotic power. It puts significant resources at the disposal of political elites without necessarily forcing the latter to bargain with their subjects. On the contrary, the model of citizen-soldiers or full national conscription armies allow shoring up infrastructural power while limiting the use of despotic power: the political elites need to bargain with their populations over military goals and political rights (Tarrow, 2015). With regards to the contemporary resort to private military and security companies (PMSCs), it is however worth mentioning that besides boosting the states' despotic powers it also plays a role in extending infrastructural power by associating 'private' and wider societal resources and interests to the exercise of state power (Olsson, 2013b). If we add the dimension of the size of political communities, we can present these different articulations between combat forces and political societies on a bi-dimensional graph describing different historical and political situations (see Table 40.2).

This graph highlights an important point: the fact that in spite of a variety of ways of organizing combat forces and diverse degrees of specialization of practitioners of war, all modalities inseparably link military and political power. War and political organizations are deeply intertwined and mutually constitutive, this independently from the mode of articulation and differentiation of civilian and military authorities.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF WAR

War and Social Theory

There is no doubt that throughout history war has been one of the most influential forces of

Table 40.2 War and political power

		Main type of political power	
		Despotic	Infrastructural
Relative size of political community	+	<p>Resort to private coercion (PMSCs, mercenaries)</p> <p>Slave soldiers</p> <p>Professional army</p> <p>Volunteer irregular militias</p>	<p>Full national conscription</p> <p>Partial conscription Of levies</p>
	-	<p>Feudal warrior aristocracy</p> <p>Warbands in simple chiefdoms</p>	<p>Classical citizen-soldier in city-states</p>

social change. Both inter-state and civil wars have significantly shaped social relations within and across different societies all over the world. This intrinsic link between war and society was theorized by the classical philosophers and political theorists from Sun Tzu, Thucydides, Plato, Aristotle and Cicero to Aquinas, Machiavelli, and Hobbes among many others. Most of these early theoretical contributions were generally centred on strategic or normative issues, aiming either to provide elaborate templates for the successful conduct of war or to assess the moral validity of particular forms of combat (i.e. just war tradition). It is only much later, with the rise of Enlightenment rationalism, that war and society became an object of systematic conceptual and empirical study. Hence

instead of the moral, logistical, tactical and strategic concerns (i.e. the art of war) the focus shifts towards more scientific ambitions (i.e. what makes war possible and how do wars impact social order). This transition towards the social science of war and society was slow, uneven and characterized by strong institutional resistance towards such explanatory accounts. On the one hand, the study of war was hampered by the rulers' continuous emphasis on the instrumental benefits of such studies. In this context Clausewitz's masterpiece *On War* (1832) was mostly absorbed as a traditional military treatise and less, what it actually was, a novel understanding of the relationship between the state, society and war. On the other hand, the expansion of Enlightenment principles,

which glorified the use of reason, rationality and peace, has paradoxically also proved to be an obstacle for the understanding of the complex dynamics of war and violence. Since the majority of social and political theorists were inspired by these Enlightenment ideas they shared the assumption that war has no place in the ever progressive future (Joas, 2003; Joas & Knöbl, 2013). In such an environment war was perceived much more as a relic of bygone eras and less as a highly adaptative form of social experience.

Despite this pronounced and widespread neglect of war in social and political theory, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century witnessed the emergence of several schools of thought interested in the study of organized violence. Although they came from very diverse intellectual and political traditions they all identified war as a key catalyst of historical change. Hence in Austria-Hungary, Ludwig Gumplowicz and Gustav Ratzenhofer developed theories that link war with the origins of social stratification, private property and ethnic nepotism. Their ideas influenced several leading American sociologists including Lester Ward and Albion Small. In Germany, Werner Sombart, Otto Hintze, Joseph Schumpeter, Franz Oppenheimer and Emil Lederer all articulated new approaches to the study of war and society with some theorists focusing on the links between democracy and war, others analysing the impact of capitalism on war and the rest exploring the long term historical consequences of warfare on social relations (Joas & Knöbl, 2013; Malešević, 2010; p. 17–45).

The unprecedented carnage of the Second World War dented sociological interest in the study of organized violence. Thus from the late 1940s until the 1980s the sociological research became preoccupied with the peace-centred and developmentalist themes. The three dominant perspectives of this period had all shifted their analytical focus towards distinctly non-war related themes: class and inequality (neo-Marxism), culture, education

and religion (structural-functionalism) and bureaucracy and value changes (neo-Weberianism). It is only from the mid 1980s onwards that some sociologists started again exploring the role war plays in the transformation of social order. Initially these interests were driven by the ever increasing militarization during the later stages of Cold War. Hence Tilly (1985), Mann (1986, 1988), Hall (1985) and Shaw (1984) among others developed new theoretical models that sought to historicize the relationships between the state, society and war. More specifically the ambition was to offer a *longue durée* comparative historical sociology where war was understood to be one of the key generators of social change.

For Tilly (1985), Mann (1986, 1993) and Hall (1985) war played a decisive role in the economic and political rise of Western Europe. As Hall emphasizes, the early modern European political space was historically relatively unique in the sense that it combined a shared normative universe (i.e. Christianity) with a multipolar power structure. This unusual historical context stimulated continuous inter-state wars that ultimately prevented the emergence of a hegemonic, unified and continent-wide European empire. In this context, war generated a multipolarity that was beneficial for the development of civil societies, trade and citizenship rights as the rulers were forced to cooperate with their citizens in order to fend off the constant external threats. Tilly and Mann have also emphasized the centrality of inter-state relations in the transformation of domestic social relations: war cannot be reduced to relationships between states; it is a social force that also changes the internal dynamics of individual societies.

With the end of the Cold War, sociologists become more interested in the study of war. The end of the bipolar order gave way to an increase in civil wars on the one hand and an inclination towards military intervention on the part of the most powerful states on the other hand. Both of these developments have generated substantial sociological

engagement. The expansion of civil wars from the Caucasus and the Balkans to Africa, Middle East and Latin America have pre-occupied the attention of scholars working within the rational choice theory tradition. In their view such violent conflicts are usually fought over scarce resources where the warring sides wage wars to maintain or acquire material goods and maximize utility (Kalyvas, 2006; Laitin, 2007). Much of this research is focused on the strategic uses of violence by individual and collective agents. For example Laitin (2007, p. 22) argues that civil wars are profitable for insurgents 'in that they can both survive and enjoy some probability of winning the state' including 'the expectation of collecting the revenues that ownership of the state avails'.

In contrast, the wars fought by the leading world powers in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Mali, Ukraine and further afield, have influenced development of the cultural and political economy perspectives on war. Among the culture-centred approaches Smith's (2005, 2008) and Alexander's (2013, 2004) work has been most influential. These neo-Durkheimian analyses focus on the cultural practices and symbolic action that define the social experience of war. For Alexander and Smith wars are first and foremost cultural phenomena: 'war is not just about culture, but it is all about culture' (Smith, 2005, p. 212). Their argument is premised on the idea that violent experiences and traumatic events do not shape social action by themselves but require specific cultural coding in order to do so. In Alexander's (2004, p. 10) view: 'it is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events in themselves'. In this context Smith (2005) explores how the experience of the Iraq war gave way to very diverse cultural interpretations in the US, UK, France and Spain, leading to radically different popular responses to this war.

The political economy perspectives downplay the cultural factors and emphasize the role of neo-liberal globalization in making both the Western military interventions and

civil wars possible (Bauman 2001, 2002; Kaldor, 2006[1999]). This approach is built around the argument that globalization is a structural force that creates conditions for the proliferation of warfare. While Western military interventions are seen as safeguarding the economic interests, investments, markets and resources of the leading corporations, civil wars are understood to be the direct consequence of the collapsing state structures caused by the exploitative nature of these corporations. As Bauman (2001, p. 11) argues, these globalising wars are centred on 'the abolition of state sovereignty or neutralising its resistance potential' in order to accommodate the expansion of global markets.

The Origins of War

War is often perceived to be as old as the human species. Moreover, socio-biologists go even further and argue that war is older than the human race since other animals have been fighting wars before *homo sapiens sapiens* emerged as a distinct sub-specie (Gat, 2006). However, such accounts conflate a social institution (war) with the psychological and biological responses (aggression, killings or fighting). These views are wrong as warfare is never a simple extension of 'aggressive impulses' but in fact is its opposite: the organizational attempt to constrain such uncontrolled aggression. Since wars entail a complex division of labour, hierarchical decision-making, self-discipline and organizational compliance, any unregulated aggressive behaviour would ultimately contribute to a resounding military defeat. Hence war is first and foremost a human institution shaped by specific social relations.

Despite the popular views that see war as immemorial, archaeological, paleontological and anthropological research indicates that war develops quite late in human history. As anthropologists show, most simple hunter gatherers, who account for 98 percent of the time there has been human existence on Earth, tend

to avoid protracted violent conflicts and have no technological, organizational or ideological means to fight in such conflicts (Ferguson, 2013; Fry, 2007; Fry & Soderberg, 2013). Such foraging bands are as a rule very small, egalitarian, fluid and non-sedentary. Their priority is a constant search for food and devising various ways to escape from the dangerous predators, diseases and the unpredictable weather changes. It is only with the Neolithic revolution and the emergence of sedentary lifestyles in the early Mesolithic (c.12,000 years ago) that war becomes an established social practice (Ferrill, 1985; Kelly, 2000; Otterbein, 2004). Historical sociologists emphasize the parallel and non-coincidental historical appearance of war, agriculture, permanent urban settlements, domestication of animals, the mass use of complex tools, technology and the development of complex division of labour, religion and established social hierarchies (Malešević, 2010, 2017; Mann, 1986).

Despite its late development, once war appeared on the historical scene it quickly became one of the most influential forces shaping social relations. This is not to say that early wars were exceptionally destructive. Although the court records, religious texts, literature, artistic depictions and other early documents often depict huge battlefields and millions of human casualties, most historians now agree that such portrayals are largely inflated and even fictitious, mainly aiming to provoke a sense of awe, fear and reverence for the rulers (Malešević, 2017). Since the scale of warfare is linked to organisational capacity and ideological penetration, most pre-modern wars were small and ritualistic skirmishes involving relatively low number of casualties. However, as organizational and ideological powers has expanded over the centuries, the practice of warfare has become more destructive. This is especially visible in the early modern period when rulers were forced to expand their militaries by recruiting outside of the aristocratic core.

Although wars brought destruction, they also indirectly stimulated profound social

change. For one thing the preparation for war often fostered technological and scientific innovations which were later adopted in other areas too (from the wheel, iron, stirrup, compass to nuclear power, fast food and internet). For another, such technological novelties also influenced class and status dynamics. For example, the gradual replacement of bronze with iron-based weapons helped transform the patterns of social stratification in ancient Greece. Whereas, the monopoly on the production of scarce bronze encouraged the rise of a hierarchical warrior caste, and the discovery of cheap and widely available iron stimulated a shift towards a more egalitarian social structure in several ancient Greek city-states including Athens, Corinth, Megara and Syracuse (Howard, 1976). As Scheidel (2017) demonstrates it was the mass mobilising warfare and other large scale structural calamities that were the key mechanisms of social leveling throughout the course of human history.

The shared war experience was also influential in the development of democratic and parliamentary institutions. It is important to remember that the Athenian democratic institutions were built on top of the society-wide participation in warfare. This city-state was comprised of self-armed farmers-soldiers who could also deploy their weapons against any potential domestic tyrant. In a very similar vein medieval Switzerland's popular assemblies (*landsgemeinde*) emerged in the context of self-armed farmers willing to use their weapons to protect their freedoms (Malešević, 2014).

War and the Rise of State Power

The early historical sociologists such as Otto Hinze, Ludwig Gumplowitz and Franz Oppenheimer have all identified strong links between the rise of state power and war. As Oppenheimer (2007 [1914], p. 57) puts it bluntly: 'States are maintained in accordance with the same principle that called them into being. The primitive state is the creation of

warlike robbery; and by warlike robbery it can be preserved'. In this context the early scholars have emphasized the centrality of coercion for both the internal control of states' subjects as well as for the external expansion of state power. More recently Charles Tilly and Michael Mann have developed this argument further by identifying the historical trajectories of war and state development. As Tilly (1985, 1992) has demonstrated, war has been a primary catalyst of state formation and as states expanded they continued to engage in more destructive wars ('war made state and state made war'). Tilly charts how the preparation for war and the escalation of warfare in the early modern Europe ultimately strengthened the surviving states. With the expansion of protracted wars and increased inter-state competition, rulers were pushed towards unprecedented levels of state re-organization. This included substantially increased military funding, the investment in science and technology and the banking sector, all necessary to fund ever expensive wars. Moreover, to successfully and regularly collect revenue and to recruit soldiers the states embarked on an organizational transformation including greater centralization of state power, the development of extensive administrative infrastructure, the establishment of centralized fiscal systems, better capital accumulation and well established legal systems. The combination of protracted wars and state re-organization resulted ultimately in a much smaller number of organizationally more potent polities: while in the fourteenth century, Europe had over 1000 polities, by the end of the sixteenth century this was reduced to around 500 and by the early twentieth century Europe had only 25 states (Tilly, 1985, p. 15).

Michael Mann (1986, 1993) expands this analysis further by exploring the changing relationships between state and war over longer historical periods. For Mann the state is defined by its propensity towards 'social caging'. Unlike the stateless groups of simple hunter gatherers who lack security and

economic subsistence but have abundance of freedom, state power offers economic survival and military protection at the expense of individual liberties. With the expansion of state capacity its subjects/citizens are often acquire more protection and economic resources but at the expense of individual autonomy: the states cage individuals through economic and security benefits. However, throughout history the state has proven to be the most effective large scale social organization in the sense that it could simultaneously preserve compact territorial control, maintain large scale administration, provide conditions for the society-wide economic production and control domestic order among many other things. Most of all the state utilized war as a tool to extract resources, impose ideological hegemony, preserve internal peace and establish geo-political dominance.

Although state power is often tied to war, this is not a simple and evolutionary relationship. Instead Mann (1993) differentiates between the despotic and infrastructural powers of states which contributed differently to warfare (see Table 40.2). While the despotic power entails the ability of the rulers to use coercion willy-nilly, the infrastructural powers refer to the state's capacity to implement its decisions across its entire territory, mostly with the consent and cooperation of societal actors. Hence relying on the despotic powers alone might allow the rulers to make quick decisions and defeat weaker neighbouring states and non-state agents. However the possession of extensive infrastructural powers is critical when waging protracted wars against strong enemy states. Since infrastructural powers involve a degree of popular consent and the organizational capacity to successfully wage wars, such powers become essential in the modern era. Thus modernity is in part characterized by the continuous expansion of infrastructural powers: the state's monopolization of the use of violence, the ability to police one's territories, to extract revenue on a regular basis, to collect and use information on state's subjects/citizens,

and to monitor the flows of people, goods and information. As the states acquired these potent organizational and infrastructural capacities wars have also become much more destructive. While most pre-modern wars generated relatively small number of casualties, usually involving no more than a few thousand deaths (Eckhardt, 1992), the modern era brought about extremely destructive total wars with millions of fatalities. The pinnacle of this mass destruction was the twentieth century with over 203 million casualties, the majority of which died as a result of warfare (White, 2012).

War and Society

The continuous rise of the organizational and infrastructural capacities of states often went hand in hand with the expansion of ideological power. Hence, unlike the pre-modern polities which were ideologically deeply hierarchical, modern nation-states are built around some key shared normative principles. Thus whereas the traditional empires were the capstone governments where the rulers controlled but rarely penetrated different social orders, nation-states entail formal equality and a degree of principled fraternity among their citizens (Hall, 1985; Malešević, 2013). This ideological glue is most often articulated as nationalism, a phenomenon that is particularly pronounced in times of war. It is no coincidence that the world-wide transition from the imperial to the nation-state model was characterized by intensified wars throughout the globe. As Wimmer and Min's (2006) analysis of 464 wars waged in the last 200 years shows, warfare has played a central role in this process. More specifically, as nationalism became a principal source of popular identification, imperial orders crumbled under the weight of nationalist insurrections. Furthermore as the nationalist principles undermined alternative sources of state legitimacy, the rulers acquired new ideological means to rally entire

societies for war. From the French and American revolutions and the Napoleonic wars onwards, nationalism served as a most potent mechanism for the mobilization of people and resources for war.

This new phenomenon of the society-wide 'nation in arms' had two long term social consequences. On the one hand this war-state-society nexus generated much more powerful military machines capable of unprecedented external destruction and internal control. Externally the states acquired better organizational mechanisms and more powerful ideological justification to fight protracted wars since the mass production, mass politics and mass transport and communications were all mobilized for mass destruction. Internally the states managed to monopolize the use of violence over their territory, to develop effective policing agencies, to establish elaborate legislative systems and to introduce extensive surveillance technologies to control their citizens.

On the other hand, this greater integration of state, society and war brought about radical transformation of social relations. For one thing the direct corollary of the expansion of military power was the gradual extension of parliamentarism and citizenship rights. As Tilly (1992), Mann (1993) and Tarrow (2015) demonstrate, the proliferation of the religious, political and civil liberties in early modern Europe is the consequence of intensified wars. Faced with the shortage of soldiers and resources the governments were forced to trade these rights in exchange for the increased public taxation, the introduction of the universal military conscription and the public support for the state at war. Mann (1993) emphasizes that this was a slow and gradual process that initially was aimed at the middle classes and was extended to urban poor and peasantry only in the latter stages of the First World War and at the onset of the Second World War. The two total wars were also instrumental in changing gender relations. Having most men at the front lines, the European and North American states faced chronic shortage of industrial labour. In this

context they had to rely on women to keep the military and civilian industries going. This mass influx of women unto the labour market undermined traditional patriarchal social relations as women were reluctant to leave their paid positions after the war. The enormous sacrifices of ordinary citizens during the two total wars has also put pressure on the post-war governments to introduce greater welfare provisions. The large scale casualties and the wartime calls for national solidarity have helped delegitimize deep class divisions thus stimulating the development of the welfare state in Europe and to some extent in North America. The complete defeat of the Nazi supremacist ideology together with the mass participation of the non-European populations from the colonies in Second World War has also delegitimized the deeply entrenched racist policies of the pre- Second World War Europe and America (Mann, 2012). Hence the legacy of total wars was not only unprecedented destruction but also a profound change in social relations.

New Wars?

Another important legacy of the Second World War was the relative stability built around the balance of power between the two military blocks – NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Although this period of the Cold War was beset by many proxy wars, its defining feature is the decline of inter-state wars. The collapse of Soviet Union and other communist federations dented this stability resulting in the proliferation of civil wars (Hironaka, 2005). Furthermore the end of the bipolar world opened the space for military interventions on the part of the most powerful states. While these developments have been extensively analysed by international relations scholars, political sociologists have also attempted to theorize and explore these changes. Thus the gradual shift from inter-state towards intra-state wars has been understood by some as a historically unique phenomenon. Kaldor

(1999), Bauman (2002) and Munkler (2004) have dubbed these violent conflicts ‘the new wars’. For both Bauman and Kaldor such conflicts are first and foremost the product of neo-liberal globalization. Kaldor (1999) argues that new wars are predatory conflicts that often emerge in the context of the globalization-induced state collapse in Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and some parts of Eastern Europe. The main feature of such wars is the proliferation of paramilitaries who utilize identity politics to politicize ethnic and religious differences in order to acquire and maintain positions of economic and political power. Such wars tend to be brutal as they are usually waged against the civilians. By using the remnants of collapsing state structures, paramilitary leaders focus on the acquisition of personal wealth and in this process regularly kill and displace huge numbers of civilians. These new wars are seen to be profoundly different from the conventional ‘old’ wars, purportedly because they are not waged on front lines, do not distinguish between the soldiers and civilians and prioritize plunder over ideology (Bauman, 2002; Kaldor, 1999).

In addition to these civil wars, Bauman (2002), Shaw (2005) and Singer (2009) also focus on the wars waged by the world leading military powers including the Western military interventions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya, Mali, Chad, etc. Bauman (2002) describes these conflicts as ‘globalising wars’ fought at a distance by means of sophisticated military technologies. He sees these wars as not geared towards the capture of territory but rather towards the opening up of new markets to the global flow of goods and capital. For Shaw (2005) most such wars are ‘risk transfer wars’ in the sense that they minimize life-risks to Western soldiers and also lower the political risks for the elected politicians who might lose power if too many Western soldiers die. In this context political risks are transferred unto ‘local civilians’ as the avoidance of casualties among one’s own soldiers generates more civilian casualties in the countries in which one intervenes. In contrast, Singer (2009)

zooms in on the new technological inventions and the mass deployment of unmanned robotic systems including drones, robotic demolition vehicles, unmanned submarines, patrol robots, robotic mine sweepers and autonomous sniper systems. The focus here is on the gradual replacement of human soldiers by their robotic equivalents in a not so distant future. In this context Chris Coker (2013, p. xxiii) argues that ‘robots will be fighting robots in 2035’.

These perspectives on new wars have been challenged by scholars who emphasize a substantial degree of continuity in the way wars have been waged over the past two centuries (Biddle, 2004; Kalyvas, 2001; Newman, 2004). For example Newman (2004) identifies strong similarities between the nineteenth century’s and contemporary civil wars, while Biddle (2004) and Malešević (2017) question the technological determinism underpinning claims that ‘high-tech’ Western military interventions are historically unprecedented.

CONCLUSION

We have in this chapter tried to situate war both as a concept and as an empirical object of enquiry in the wider social theory literature. In so doing, we have focused on its defining features, as well as on its essential variability and transformations. We have simultaneously tried to highlight the importance of the study of war for the understanding of the production, reproduction and transformation of socio-political orders. This centrality of war has however not always been self-evident in the social sciences, many researchers having seen in its utmost destructiveness the antithesis of their own progressive convictions or theories of modernization. The irony is however that on the long term of the structural transformation of political societies, war has proven to be as much of a destructive force, laying waste to entire countries and causing desolation, as it has been a crucial vector of change, spurring social dynamism while extending and densifying chains of

interdependence. While our improved understanding of these processes is one of the major contributions of the historical sociology of organized violence, its major works tend to focus on the Western world. As a consequence, the comparative study of non-Western war-state-society *nexuses* is unfortunately still one of the lesser-charted waters of this research agenda. By allowing for a combination of a *longue durée* and world-historical perspective, such a ‘globalization’ of historical sociology holds promising avenues for future research on war.

Note

- 1 Organization here refers to a differentiated arrangement of social relations exercising active control over human activities.

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