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Cosmopolitanism and organised violence

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Introduction

In this paper, I argue for a cosmopolitan political project as a way of responding to the spread of what I call 'New Wars'. And I suggest that this argument can be treated as a way of deducing the more general case for a cosmopolitan political project for three reasons.

First, the rupture with classical modernity that is associated with the process of globalisation is perhaps most decisively illustrated by the changes in the pattern of organised violence. The twentieth century can be described as the period in which the nation-state system reached its apogee and this period will probably be best remembered for the terrible barbarity of totalitarianism and war. But in future, the twentieth century may also be remembered as the moment when the nation-state system exhausted itself and when these statist phenomena (totalitarianism and inter-state war) were abolished, like slavery in an earlier period.

Secondly, what I call 'new wars' is an extreme manifestation of the erosion of the autonomy of the nation-state under the impact of globalisation. Indeed in contrast to the wars of modernity, in which states were able to mobilise resources and extend administrative capacities, these wars could be described as implosions of the state. The general case for cosmopolitan democracy is based on the argument that democracy at a national level is weakened by the erosion of the autonomy of the state and the undermining of the state's capacity to respond to democratic demands. (Held, 1995) In the specific case of war-torn societies, it is the collapse not just of democracy but of the consensus on which state rule is based under the impact of globalisation.

Thirdly, the legitimacy of political institutions is intimately linked to the physical protection of citizens. New wars can be viewed as 'protection-failures'. (Jones 1999) How and whether this protection is provided will shape the future of political institutions. The extent to which it is possible to echo Diogenes' claim to be a world citizen (*Kosmou politês*) may depend on whether protection (at least against threats to physical security) can be guaranteed at a global level.

I will develop this argument in a schematic way. First, I will sketch my own definitions of the relations between civil society and war within the states system. Then I will give a brief summary of what I mean by new wars. In the third section, I will propose a way of classifying the different tendencies of global politics and I will elaborate what is meant by a cosmopolitan political project. And in the final section, I will show how a cosmopolitan project can apply to the new wars.

War, Civil Society and the States System

The seventeenth century theorists of civil society based their argument on the concept of a social contract. For them, a civil society (*societas civilis*) was a rule of law in which citizens gave up the freedom of the state of nature in exchange for the guarantee of certain rights – security for Hobbes plus liberty and property for Locke. Later definitions of civil society included the idea of an active citizenry checking violations of the social contract by the state.

I define civil society as the medium through which a social contract between the governing institutions and the governed is negotiated and reproduced. This includes defining moments – constitutional conventions and round tables, for example – as well as every day public pressure through the media, political parties, churches, NGOs and so on. Thus civil society is inextricably linked to individual rights.

The emergence of civil society in the West was bound up with the construction of modern states and with inter-state wars. What Norbert Elias called the 'civilising process' – the removal of violence from every day life within the boundaries of the state – was based on the establishment of public monopolies of violence and taxation. 'The society of what we call the modern age is characterised, above all in the West, by a certain level of monopolisation. Free use of weapons is denied the individual and reserved to a central authority of whatever kind, and likewise, the taxation of property or income of individuals is concentrated in the hands of a central social authority. The financial means thus flowing into this central authority maintain its monopoly of force, while this, in turn maintains the monopoly of

taxation. Neither has in any sense precedence over the other; they are two sides of the same monopoly.' (Elias, 1982, p.104)

A crucial point about this monopoly process was the balance between the interests of the ruler (private) and the interests of the members of what Elias called 'state-regulated society' (public). The shift from a private to a public monopoly, from absolutism to the nation-state, was part of the process of state-building and of concentrating the means of violence and of taxation; for it required a complex and specialised administrative apparatus and social interdependence, which, in turn, restricted the power of the ruler.

The construction of these public monopolies was, as Tilly has shown, intimately bound up with war against other states. (Tilly 1990). Inter-state war became the only legitimate form of organised violence and, moreover, was sharply distinguished from peace. In place of more or less continuous warfare, war became a discrete episode that was reserved for use against other states and was excluded from internal relations. Domestic pacification (the elimination of private armies, the reduction of corruption, violent crime, piracy and brigandage), the growth of taxation and public borrowing, the regularisation of armed forces and police forces, the development of nationalist sentiment, were all mutually reinforcing in wartime. Essentially, the social contract associated with the construction of the nation-state could be said to have taken the following form; civil and political rights were guaranteed in exchange for paying taxes and fighting in wars. The individual rights that citizens enjoyed in peacetime were exchanged for the abrogation of those rights in wartime. In wartime, the citizens became part of a collectivity, the nation, and had to be ready to die for the state. In exchange for individual civil and political rights in peacetime, the citizen accepted a kind of unlimited liability in wartime. Hence, Elias, writing just before the Second World War, feared that the civilising process would be engulfed by the barbarity of war.

Inter-state war is sometimes described as Clausewitzian war. The wars of classical modernity had a kind of extremist logic that is well analysed by Clausewitz. As war became more extreme and terrible, so the social contract was extended, reaching its logical end point during the Cold War period. Essentially, during this period, there were unprecedented gains in economic and social rights. But the risks were also dramatically extended. The price of these gains, during this period, was readiness to risk a nuclear war.

This was the essence of the political compromises made in the late 1940s between Democrats and Republicans in the United States (the Democrats retained big government in exchange for an anti-Communist crusade) and between Europe and America (the Social Democrats could come to power in exchange for agreeing to NATO). (Kaldor, 1990)

It should be stressed, as Gellner does, that civil society was a western phenomenon. (Gellner, 1994) The 'civilising process' hardly extended beyond a small urban elite in either the colonial empires or the eastern empires. It would be wrong, however, to treat these empires or their post-colonial and/or communist successors as traditional states. Rather they were modern states based on a mixture of consent and coercion but consent was, for the most part, mobilised through populist communitarian ideologies such as nationalism or socialism of the statist variety rather than through a rights-based social contract. In these societies, the distinction between war and peace was less acute since collective forms of social organisation predominated, rules were imposed from above rather than agreed through a process of negotiation. Or to put it another way, in these societies collective organisation for war was also the salient element of state-building but in these societies, the balance between consent and coercion was tilted towards the latter and the forms of social organisation that predominated in war-time tended to be sustained in peace-time.

The changes in the states system, on this analysis, can be explained by two phenomena. First of all, the social contract of the Cold War period was called into question. On the one hand, after Vietnam, the readiness to risk life in war was no longer automatic. And indeed by the 1980s, mass movements against nuclear war had developed. On the other hand, the growing neo-liberal consensus and the spread of globalisation eroded the guarantee of economic and social rights. Secondly, under the impact of globalisation, the distinction between Western and non-western societies is collapsing. On

the one hand, the capacity of non-western states to sustain populist projects within closed societies is undermined. On the other hand, increasing interconnectedness at a political as well as a cultural level provides some protection for disaffected individuals and allows them to demand extensions of political and civil rights, which, in turn, contributes to a speeding up of globalisation. As Beck puts it: 'The categories framing world society – the distinction between highly developed and under developed countries, between tradition and modernity – are collapsing. In the cosmopolitan paradigm of second modernity, the non-western societies share the same space and time horizon with the West.' (Beck, 2000)

Globalisation and New Wars

Globalisation is a wild process involving interconnectedness and exclusion, integration and fragmentation, homogenisation and diversity. The fundamental source of the new wars is the crisis of state authority, a profound loss of legitimacy that became apparent in the post-colonial states in the 1970s and 1980s and in the post-communist states only after 1989. Part of the story of that crisis is the failure or exhaustion of populist emancipatory projects such as socialism or national liberation, especially those that were implemented within an authoritarian communitarian framework. But this failure cannot be disentangled from the impact of globalisation

What is new about the crisis of state authority in the 1980s and 1990s is not simply the uncompleted character of the 'civilising process' in non Western societies but, rather, something that could be described as its opposite – the unravelling of the process. The monopoly of violence and taxation is being eroded and the balance between public and private and internal and external has shifted. On the one hand, in those areas prone to conflict, the balance between public and private has shifted as a consequence of the legacy of authoritarianism, the longevity of ruling groups or the failure of populist projects. In particular, centralised economic systems often tend to generate shortages of resources, which are rationed according to privileged and personalistic networks. On the other hand, the balance between internal and external has also shifted as a consequence of growing interconnectedness at a political, economic and social level

The combination of privatisation and globalisation can give rise to a process, which is almost the reverse of the process through which modern states were constructed. Corruption and clientilism leads to an erosion of the tax revenue base because of declining legitimacy and growing incapacity to collect tax and because of declining investment (both public and private) and, consequently, production. The declining tax revenue leads to growing dependence both on external sources and on private sources, through, for example, rent seeking or criminal activities. Reductions in public expenditure as a result of the shrinking fiscal base as well as pressures from external donors for macro-economic stabilisation and liberalisation (which also may reduce export revenues) further erodes legitimacy. A growing informal economy associated with increased inequalities, unemployment and rural-urban migration, combined with the loss of legitimacy, weakens the rule of law and may lead to the re-emergence of privatised forms of violence - organised crime and the substitution of 'protection' for taxation, vigilantes, private security guards protecting economic facilities, especially international companies, para-military groups associated with particular political factions. In particular, reductions in security expenditure, often encouraged by external donors for the best of motives, may lead to break away groups of redundant soldiers and policemen seeking alternative employment.

It should be stressed that the impact of privatisation and globalisation is, of course, Janus-faced. Privatisation breaks down authoritarian tendencies. Globalisation can bring positive external pressures for reform, particularly democratisation. On the one hand, external donors and outside powers have pressured governments to introduce political reform as a precondition of economic reform, to reduce corruption, increase respect for human rights, and introduce democratic institutions. On the other hand, support from outside powers and international NGOs for civil society has helped to strengthen domestic pressures for democratisation. It can be argued that it is in those situations where domestic pressures for reform are weak and where civil society is least developed that the opening up of the state both to the outside world and to increased participation through the democratisation process is most dangerous. In a number of countries, the process of democratisation

is largely confined to elections. Many of the essential prerequisites of democratic procedures – rule of law, separation of powers, freedom of association and of expression – are not in place. And even where procedures are more or less in place, decades of authoritarianism may have left the political culture vulnerable to populist ideologies based on the appeal to various forms of exclusive prejudices. Terms like virtual democracy, semi-democracy, or choiceless democracy have been used to describe societies characterised by elected authoritarian leaders.

These are the circumstances that give rise to the ‘new wars’. It is the lack of authority of the state, the weakness of representation, the loss of confidence that the state is able or willing to respond to public concerns, the inability and/or unwillingness to regulate the privatisation and informalisation of violence that gives rise to violent conflicts. Moreover, this ‘uncivilising process’, tends to be reinforced by the dynamics of the conflicts, which have the effect of further reordering political, economic and social relationships in a negative spiral of incivility.

I call the conflicts ‘wars’ because of their political character although they could also be described as massive violations of human rights (repression against civilians) and organised crime (violence for private gain). They are about access to state power. They are violent struggles to gain access to or to control the state. As the state becomes privatised, that is to say, it shifts from being the main organisation for societal regulation towards an instrument for the extraction of resources by the ruler and his (and it is almost always ‘his’) privileged networks, so access to state power becomes a matter of inclusion or exclusion, even, in the latter case, of survival.

In the majority of cases, these wars are fought in the name of identity – a claim to power on the basis of labels. These are wars in which political identity is defined in terms of exclusive labels – ethnic, linguistic, or religious – and the wars themselves give meaning to the labels. Labels are mobilised for political purposes; they offer a new sense of security in a context where the political and economic certainties of previous decades have evaporated. They provide a new populist form of communitarian ideology, a way to maintain or capture power, that uses the language and forms of an earlier period. Undoubtedly, these ideologies make use of pre-existing cleavages and the legacies of past wars. It is also the case that the appeal to tradition and the nostalgia for some mythical or semi-mythical history gains strength in the social upheavals associated with the opening up to global pressures. But nevertheless, it is the deliberate manipulation of these sentiments, often assisted by Diaspora funding and techniques and speeded up through the electronic media, that is the immediate cause of conflict.

In these wars, violence is itself a form of political mobilisation. Violence is mainly directed against civilians and not another army. The aim is to capture territory through political control rather than military success. And political control is maintained through terror, through expulsion or elimination of those who challenge political control, especially those with a different label. Population displacement, massacres, widespread atrocities are not just side effects of war; they are a deliberate strategy for political control. The tactic is to sow the ‘fear and hate’ on which exclusive identity claims rest.

These are also globalised wars in another sense. Unlike inter-state wars, which were highly regulated and which indeed provided a model for statist forms of planning, these wars could be almost be described as the model for the contemporary informal economy, in which privatised violence and unregulated social relations feed on each other. In these wars, physical destruction is very high, tax revenues plummet further, and unemployment is very high. The various parties finance themselves through loot and plunder and various forms of illegal trading; thus they are closely linked into and help to generate organised crime networks. They also depend on support from neighbouring states, Diaspora groups, and humanitarian assistance.

The ‘new wars’ are no longer discrete in time and space. The various actors – states, remnants of states, para-military groups, liberation movements, etc. – depend on continued violence for both political and economic reasons. Cease-fires and agreements are truces, breathing spaces, which do not address the underlying social relations – the social conditions of war and peace are not much different. The networks of politicians, security forces, legal and illegal trading groups, which are often

transnational, constitute a new distorted social formation, which has a tendency to spread through refugees and displaced persons, identity based networks often crossing continents, as well as criminal links. Moreover, the conditions which give rise to the 'new wars' and which are exacerbated by them, exist in weaker forms in most urban conglomerations in the world and indeed often have direct links with the most violent regions.

All the same, social formations that depend on violence are always vulnerable, fragile and close to exhaustion. As Hannah Arendt pointed out, power depends on legitimacy not on violence –it is very difficult to sustain forms of political mobilisation that depend on violence. Herein lies the possibility for a cosmopolitan, i.e. non-exclusive, alternative.

The Configuration of Global Politics

I am among those who have argued that the division between so-called realists and cosmopolitans has come to supplant the traditional division between left and right. (See Giddens, 1994) Yet observing events in Seattle and Washington, it is clear that those traditional divisions still exist. I want to propose a somewhat more differentiated categorisation of contemporary politics as outlined in the table below. The rows show the difference between left and right (I have included the Greens as left). And the columns show the difference between parochialists or realists, those who see society bounded by the state, and the globalists. These distinctions could be said to correspond to a communitarian/individualist distinction, although it is possible to imagine a global communitarian –someone who favours a world state and homogenous global society.

	Parochialist/ Communitarian	Globalist/ Individualist
Neo-liberal	New Right, e.g. Thatcher, Haider, Northern Leaguers, and Putin?	New Centre, e.g. MNCs, Gore, etc.
Distributionist (and environmentally concerned)	Old Left	Cosmopolitans

Those in the lower left box, I would argue, have no future. Globalisation cannot be reversed. The collapse of communism demonstrated that it is no longer possible to sustain closed societies and to insulate large parts of the world from growing global interconnectedness. 'Socialism in one country' is no longer an option, if it ever was. Of course, fundamentalists and deglobalisers may succeed in establishing temporarily closed states, for example Iraq or Serbia, but these cannot be sustained and have to be understood as an ongoing reaction to rather than a reversal of globalisation.

Those in the top right box, who favour globalisation, are here to stay. But they need alliances with those who offer some form of political regulation. The two possible alliances that can be made suggest two possible directions for globalisation. The New Right favours an unregulated economy but strong and even authoritarian political states. They favour movements of trade and capital but they are against free movement of people. They want to restrict asylum seekers and maintain ethnic purity. An alliance with the New Right suggests a world of wild globalisation, managed or contained through authoritarian nationalism and coercion. The realist view that 'stability' is more important than democracy –that, for example, favours Putin or negotiates with Milosevic – is also in line with this approach, even though its proponents might express themselves in more moderate terms.

The alternative is an alliance with the cosmopolitans –the people often described as global civil society, the new transnational NGOs, the human rights community, those who support multiculturalism, and so on. I have put the cosmopolitans in the lower right box because I do consider that cosmopolitanism involves a commitment to human rights, and I also take the view that civil, political and social rights are indivisible. Jones defines the cosmopolitan standpoint as 'impartial, universal, individualist and egalitarian' (Jones, 1999, p.) and argues for a system of global justice based on a cosmopolitan moral position.

What then makes cosmopolitanism any different from a human rights perspective? Appiah suggests that cosmopolitanism is different from humanism in that it celebrates multi-cultural diversity and the free movement of people. He argues for the notion of a rooted cosmopolitan –someone who is attached to a particular place or home with its cultural particularities ‘but takes pleasure from the presence of other, different places that are home to other different people’ (Appiah, p. 22) and also is able to choose his or her home. Of course, it could be argued that a human rights perspective must include respect for different cultures –the right to worship freely or to use one’s language, for example. Appiah suggests that a humanist position is compatible with world government, whereas a cosmopolitan perspective implies a variety of polities. I am not convinced of this point since world government implies such a concentration of power that guarantees of individual liberty would be hard to sustain.

However, the utility of the term ‘cosmopolitan’ as opposed to humanist does seem to lie in its presumed emphasis on cultural and political diversity. This is partly explained by its colloquial usage. A cosmopolitan tends to be someone who is familiar with different cultures and languages –although it does have an urban, elitist connotation. More importantly, it derives from the original Kantian use of the term. Kant envisaged a global system divided into states in which cosmopolitan right overrides the claims of sovereignty. This is usually interpreted as human rights. But an interesting aspect of the original Kantian position is the way in which he insisted that, as a condition for perpetual peace, cosmopolitan right could be confined to the right of hospitality. This can be interpreted as a plea for multiple identities. Strangers need to be treated as guests –politely but not as members of the family. Hospitality, surely, requires respect for human rights, but this is not the same as integration or homogenisation.

Thus an alliance between the new globalist centre and the cosmopolitans implies a global ‘civilising process’. The aim is a rights-based system of global governance. And this implies a global social contract – a global civil society. Cosmopolitanism is often treated as a sentiment or moral standpoint. I want to suggest that it is, in fact, a political project, which is best elucidated in relation to ‘new wars’.

A Cosmopolitan Approach to New Wars

It follows from the argument about the character of ‘new wars’ that efforts aimed at conflict prevention or management should focus on a reversal of the ‘uncivilising process’, on the reconstruction of relations based on agreed rules and public authority. Above all, the centrepiece of any peace strategy has to be the restoration of legitimate authority. It has to counterpoise the strategy of ‘fear and hate’ with a strategy of ‘hearts and minds’. This kind of restoration of legitimate authority cannot mean a reversion to statist politics; it must imply multi-layered authority –global, regional, and local as well as national. It is impossible to revert to a bounded ‘civilising process’.

First and foremost such an approach has to start by building a new form of cosmopolitan politics to counter the politics of exclusion. At a local level, cosmopolitan politics can include both political movements and parties that are secular and non-nationalist or religious, as well as moderate identity based parties that respect and cherish different identities. Cosmopolitan or democratic politics is usually associated with civil society, in particular NGOs and independent media, but it also may have political representation in parliaments or even governments. What is needed is a transnational alliance that includes both local actors and those engaged in a variety of international activities committed to a cosmopolitan approach.

In nearly all conflict zones, it is possible to identify individuals, groups or even local communities that try to act in inclusive democratic ways. Precisely because these are wars which are not total and in which participation is low, in which the distinction between war and peace is eroding, there are often what might be called ‘zones of civility’ that struggle to escape the polarisation imposed by the logic of war and provide space for cosmopolitan politics. Examples include Tuzla in Bosnia Herzegovina, Northwest Somaliland as well as many other places. (Kaldor 1999). Pro-democracy groups are not, moreover, confined to non-violent resistance. Self-defence groups or reformist forces like the RPF in

Rwanda or even elements in the KLA may be counted among these cosmopolitan or democratic political groupings.

Strengthening cosmopolitan politics is much more important than trying to reconcile opposing exclusivist groups, even though conflict resolution efforts at a societal level may be important in changing political perspectives. Negotiations among warring parties help to legitimise those who support exclusive approaches to politics and may result in impossible compromises involving various types of partition and power sharing that entrench identity politics. There may be a case for negotiations to stabilise the violence and create space for alternative cosmopolitan groupings but how this is done and with what aim should be understood as part of a common cosmopolitan strategy.

Secondly, a cosmopolitan approach requires respect for cosmopolitan law. This is international law that applies to individuals and not to states. The two main components of cosmopolitan law are the Laws of War and Human Rights Law. The strategies adopted in new wars directly violate cosmopolitan law. The lacuna in cosmopolitan law is enforcement. I have argued for a reconceptualisation of humanitarian intervention as cosmopolitan law enforcement. Understood in this way, humanitarian intervention has to involve the direct protection of civilians and the arrest of individual war criminals. Typically, the techniques of humanitarian intervention have to be defensive -the creation of safe zones, safe havens, no-fly zones, and humanitarian corridors- and cannot be confused with traditional war fighting. The aim is not to engage an enemy but to defend civilians –not to destroy or weaken enemy soldiers and infrastructure but to save lives.

Thirdly, a cosmopolitan approach requires global justice, that is respect for economic and social rights even in conflict zones. Indeed, if cosmopolitan politics is to counter the populist appeal of exclusive identity politics, it has to be able to address every day concerns. But this is not just a matter of global distribution, of, for example, the provision of humanitarian assistance, which in any case helps to feed the forces of violence. It is a matter of building legitimate sources of employment and of providing a way of living that is consistent with human dignity so that young men and women have a real alternative to becoming a criminal or living off humanitarian aid. In other words, it means the construction or reconstruction of a regulated market economy and this is inextricably linked to the rebuilding of legitimate authority with legitimate sources of revenue.

A cosmopolitan approach of this kind implies a new global social contract –it is the beginnings of a global civilising process. Elements of global civil society already exist. There have been defining moments – the Founding of the United Nations, the Helsinki Agreements, even though the actors were states. The contract established in these defining moments is revised reproduced and extended through public pressure from media, NGOs, as well as some international officials. But although human rights have been codified, the capacity or the willingness of national and global institutions to implement those rights is still quite inadequate.

Can there be a global social contract, which would guarantee the implementation of fundamental human rights? Does this imply that the individual has to be prepared to pay global taxes or, more importantly, does the individual have to be prepared to die for humanity? I think the individual has to be prepared to risk life for humanity but not in an unlimited way (as was the case with statist wars) since he or she is part of humanity. Humanitarian intervention is less risky than war-fighting although more risky than the kind of risk-free war (at least from the point of view of the soldiers) that the US and Nato are promoting as a form of humanitarian intervention. Indeed, human rights activists and aid workers already risk their lives for humanity. It is sometimes said that this notion is ridiculously utopian – dying for hearth and home is quite different from risking life for something as grand and abstract as humanity. But risking life for one's nation is in fact a relatively recent invention. The notion that there is some higher good beyond secular notions of nation and state long preceded this invention.

In her reply to those who criticised her plea for cosmopolitanism, Martha Nussbaum refers to the 1172 trees in Jerusalem that commemorate the 'righteous goyim' - individuals, couples or families who risked their lives in the Second World War to save Jewish lives. 'The terror which persists' says

Nussbaum 'is the terror of the question they pose. Would one, in similar circumstances, have the moral courage to risk one's life to save a human being simply because he or she is human. More generally, would one, in similar circumstances, have the moral courage to recognise humanity and respond to its claim, even if the powers that be denied its presence.' (Nussbaum, 1996, p.132) In the new wars, it is possible to find cosmopolitans who risk their lives to save others. Can their experience offer a moral basis for future forms of cosmopolitan governance?

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