

MILITARISM AND HEGEMONIC (IN)STABILITY
IN THE AGE OF PRIVATE WARS

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ABSTRACT

For the last five centuries, nation-states have excelled in the art of war, thanks to the help of capitalism. Politics assumed the responsibility of determining whom to kill and why, of finding the 'just cause' for war. The market, on the other hand, occupied itself with supplying the instruments of slaughter. It is like saying that for centuries war has carried out a political, and therefore, public, function; but that private actors have always claimed wide margins of manoeuvre, and profit, in all the activities connected to its management.

The end of the Cold War, together with the ongoing globalization processes, mark an unprecedented cleavage with the past: the public-private divide tends to be blurred. The 'retreat of the state' favors the triumph of the global market of war, which in turns fosters an increase in civil conflicts and an unprecedented proliferation of violent non-state actors (VNSAs), competing and conflicting among themselves and with the state for the control of urban environments.

This evolution is redefining the very concept of war, bringing back the city at the center of the political conflict; and paving the way for the vindication of a new wave of urban militarism and hegemonic (in)stability.

Keywords: Armed Conflict, Globalization, Militarism, Cities, Violent Non-State Actors, Privatization.
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INTRODUCTION

For the last five centuries, nation-states have excelled in the art of war, showing an extraordinary capability to create military organizations that guaranteed sufficient obedience and were thus compatible with their own

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foundations of legitimacy. It is not a coincidence that absolute monarchs, whose power derived from God or tradition, demonstrated a marked predilection for mercenary troops and, when finances and the consolidation of the bureaucracies made it possible, for armies composed of professional soldiers. In the same way, only a revolutionary regime such as that of 1792 in France could have conceived of the idea of the *nation armée* and resort to mass conscription without fearing for its own survival as a political entity. This historical cycle reached its apex during the total wars of the early twentieth century, which saw the citizens of belligerent states involved first as soldiers and then in their capacity as civilians as well, as the targets of 'terror bombings' in the cities. After that, the USA and the USSR in particular engaged in the development of the largest arsenal in human history, accumulating thermonuclear arms whose use was limited (thankfully for all involved) to strategy simulations or war games. The two superpowers certainly did not remain inactive, but rather utilized their immense conventional military resources in wars against third parties, or to feed proxy wars entrusted to their allies on the periphery of the international system.

Over this same centuries, none of this would have been possible if the nation-state had not been able to count on the help of capitalism. The evolution of military apparatus in the political sphere requires a similar capacity for innovation in the economic sphere: from the production and sale of weapons, to the collection and allocation of capital. Even with regard to war, the historical vicissitudes of the state and capitalism appear in reality to be inseparable. It is enough to reflect on the age of the first great transoceanic enterprises, when long distance trade in precious metals developed in order to satisfy the growing needs of powers such as Spain; or the later colonial adventures of England, France, and the Netherlands, when it seemed instead that it was the governments placing themselves at the service of private interests.

Politics assumes the responsibility of determining who will be killed and why, of finding the 'just cause' for war – from the civilizing mission of colonialism to the global war on terrorism. The market, on the other hand, occupies itself with supplying the instruments of slaughter. It is like saying that for centuries war has carried out a political, and therefore, public, function; but that private actors have always claimed wide margins of manoeuvre, and profit, in all the activities connected to its management.

1. THE ENDURING CLAUSEWITZ

The year 1989 marks an unprecedented cleavage with the past. First of all, from the point of view of the international system, which has strug-

gled since then to establish new rules of conduct and clear hierarchies. The fall of the Soviet Union deprives the American administration of an enemy which, on an international level, had actually revealed itself to be an excellent governing partner. The two superpowers had succeeded, in fact, in constructing a vast network of patron-client relationships that allowed developing countries in particular to play their changing positions between the two blocks like a card for procuring ever greater resources. The immediate dismantling of that network compromises the US capacity for leadership, and its pretense to continue to exercise authority over the entire planet. At least until the appearance of a new enemy gives new life to the strategy of alliance.

However, 1989 marks an even more significant cleavage in the relationship between politics and the market. The previously mentioned anomaly of the Cold War – the fact that confrontation cannot go beyond the threshold of the rhetoric of deterrence without risking the extermination of the human race – shifts the competition from the military plane to the technological and industrial planes. And therefore the primary beneficiary is an economic system rather than a political system. 1989 owes far more to the competitive nature of American capitalism – author of the failure of the planned economy of the Soviet state – than to the penetration of democratic values. This is further demonstrated by the fact that, while capitalism has not encountered obstacles to its own expansion since then, in many countries (and not only in those of the former Soviet block) democracy is a conquest more in form than in substance. Actually, capitalism has established itself often to the detriment of democracy, imposing extremely elevated social costs to a growing multitude of men and women.

In other words, the fall of the Berlin Wall liberated the forces of capitalism from the geopolitical restraints that characterized the Cold War era. As if the bulwarks had suddenly given way, the free market flooded into eastern Europe, Russia, even China, washing away previously existing institutions or, at the least, subjecting them to its own uses. In the course of just a few years, the expansion of the free market accomplished a feat that overshadows, for the rapidity with which it was realized and for the vast number of countries involved, the numerous efforts at conquest which until then had characterized the history of capitalism. Furthermore, as a consequence of that event, states began to rethink their own role, launching a process of privatization that involved a growing number of sectors which until then had been under public management – from education to healthcare to the armed forces. That choice, meant as a remedy to help bring down growing budget deficits, ended up calling into question the very idea of democracy as a mechanism for the redistribution of resources, heightening the inequalities instead of diminishing them (Armao 2015).

With regard to war, in particular, this privatization process has resulted in the freeing up of growing spaces for new violent non-state actors (VN-SAs). Actors that seemed to have been relegated to the past now begin to recapture substantial segments of warfare arena. Mercenarism is a common practice in many wars where even children are forced to fight, on the African continent, in some Asian peripheries, and in Latin America; and piracy has made a comeback as a lucrative activity, especially in Asia and the Pacific.

The reappearance on the world scene of these kind of players, state rivals with respect to the use of violence – and, more recently, of groups such as mafias, terrorist networks, and military corporations – seems destined to contradict the universalist character of the state experience which is generally taken for granted. The fact that there is no place left on earth which is not part of one state or another, promoted the idea of a world that was fairly stable or that, at the least, had completed a necessary and decisive phase of its consolidation. And the slow, but constant progress in the number of democratic regimes, the end of the clashes between rival ideologies, the globalization of the economy, all contributed to strengthening this idea. The observation that between those same states the inclination towards preferring the instruments of law was gaining strength, as witnessed by an ever tighter network of international organizations, also seemed to confirm that within a short time violence would be confined to residual areas of the planet where, in the end, war itself would finally cede its place to the more moderate use of force by ‘international police corps’.

Many authors interpret this evolution as a return to the state of nature. According to them, even within many nation-states the very premises of civil coexistence, and in particular, that *pactum subiunctionis* upon which rests the sovereign authority’s claim to a legitimate monopoly on the use of force, seem to be questioned anew. The lexicon of political science was enriched by expressions such as ‘failed state’ and ‘rogue state’; and there are even those who theorize the return to fealty and organizing principles of feudalism.¹

Opposing this idea of a return to an original pre-political condition, we assume on the contrary that new wars are the product of the blurring of

¹ Post-89 saw a rebirth of feudal studies, both in a theoretical mood – neo-medievalism as a paradigm capable to combine the ostensible contradiction between globalization processes and state sovereignty (FRIEDRICHS 2001) – and in empirical terms – neo-feudalism as a way to interpret the consequences of globalization on agriculture in Chile (MURRAY 2006) or in Australia (DAVIDSON and GRANT 2001), or the spreading of neo-conservatism in the USA (ZAFIROVSKI 2007).

the public-private divide. Going back again to history, we could observe in fact that, particularly in Europe, the exit from the feudal system and the entire state-building process can be resumed in terms of the pretense of the monarchies to gradually enlarge their sources of legitimacy, and to define themselves (also against other competing political authorities) in terms of the legitimate holders of the monopoly in the use of force. This process entailed the creation of a certain, limited, number of public spaces of sovereignty – the nation-states, with their own armed forces and police apparatuses – and also a gradual ban on private violent actors, such as mercenaries, pirates, and so on (Tilly 1975 and 1990). We assume that the end of the Cold War, together with the ongoing globalization processes, inverted this process, and that the public-private border is now again blurred. As a consequence, the internal and external factors also are blurred. The “new wars” (Kaldor 2012) are both local and global, and they are different from both classic inter-state wars and classic civil wars.

It is worth stressing this main point: the post-Cold war period was, and still is, characterized by both the recurrence of state wars and the spread of forms of organized violence other than wars. Asymmetric warfare between alliances led by the USA and failed states, such as those witnessed in Afghanistan and Iraq, coexist alongside civil wars, such as that of former Yugoslavia; and other conflicts managed by ethnic or terrorist groups, gangs, and narcotraffickers, among others. The massive military-industrial complexes conceived in the context of the threat of nuclear Armageddon are still there of course, but they now coexist with irregular armies of insurgents capable of carrying out massacres through the use of light weapons and improvised explosive devices.

In sum, it is absolutely correct to assert that “new wars have a logic that is different from the logic of [the] ‘old wars’ – the idea of war that predominated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries”, because in the new era of globalization “the distinction between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace are breaking down” (Kaldor 2013: 2). At the same time, however, it seems equally legitimate to state that we still live in a Clausewitzian era, if we only remember this nowadays rarely quoted and yet fundamental citation: “we see, therefore, that war is not merely an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse carried on with other means. What remains peculiar to war is simply the peculiar nature of its means” [Clausewitz 1976 (1832): 87]. The privatization of war, in fact, is a consequence of the privatization of politics – of the “retreat of the state” (Strange 1996), increasingly eager to reduce the burdens associated to welfare and to privatize public sectors (including institutions holding the monopoly of the legitimate use of force).

2. BRINGING THE CITY BACK IN

The 1989 cleavage, therefore, also fostered an increase in civil conflicts and an unprecedented proliferation of VNSAs (terrorists, gangs, warlords and contractors); and a constant growth in social inequalities, both within individual countries and at the global level – a data in outright contradiction with the increase in the number of democracies (Somaini 2009). Above all, however, 1989 produced a rescaling of authorities, bringing cities back to the centre of the political universe (Sassen 2007; Brenner 2004).

This renewed political protagonism of the city is redefining the very meaning of *urban security*. Going back to history, it is easy to note how cities have always been a favoured target of wars: from the sieges of ancient times and the medieval world, to the terrorist bombings of World War II (Graham 2004; Coward 2009). The fate of both war and guerrilla warfare is linked to the conquest of the capital city and its locations of political and financial power, as well as the fate of the *coups d'état*. We could remember the entrance of the Vietcong in Saigon on April 30 1975, or of the Sandinista troops in Managua on July 19 1979; the attack on the Palacio de la Moneda in Santiago by Chilean military leaders on 11 September 1973, or the repeated occupation of the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires by Argentinian armed forces. In times of peace, the city has had to defend itself from an endless series of threats: from street crime, to social disorder and terrorist attacks (Moser 2004; Agostini, Chianese, French and Sandhu 2010).

In the long process of state- and nation-building, from the sixteenth century on, the state adopted the main role of guaranteeing the security of its citizens monopolizing the legitimate use of force, while the city, curtailed in its political prerogatives, was entrusted with the main task of the accumulation of capital (Tilly 1990). What changes with 1989, and with the following rescaling of authorities, is that the city turns out to be more and more frequently a place where VNSAs compete and conflict among themselves and with the state for the control of territory – and not only in the Global South of the world.

Until now, social sciences have devoted most of their attention, on one side, to the abstractions of the globalization processes, on the other, to the empirical evidences of violence, on the contrary relegating to the background the role of the territory as such, and the triggering of the competition for its control. It seems that researchers forgot that the nation-state itself was born from a similar competition for the control of the territory won at first, and not by chance, by sedentary bandits over nomadic ones (Olson 2000); and later, among the sedentary bandits, by those capable of gaining a higher “protection rent” and, as a consequence, to reinforce their sources of legitimacy (Lane 1979).

The traditional state-centric perspective prevented social science scholars from fully grasping the great transformations in the security domain after the end of the Cold War (Davis D.E. 2003). In a world where the state is no longer the only possible political and social benchmark, the first problem is tracing the borders of the various “imagined communities” (Anderson 2006) of each of the old and new political spheres of allegiance and reciprocity (Davis D.E. 2009). The head of a government, the leader of a group of rebels or a gang, the boss of a mafia clan or a cartel of drug traffickers all aim at gaining loyalty (or at least compliance) of the individuals living in their territory; but the identities that they grant to their subjects are different, as are the forms and shares of coercion that they use, and the welfare models that they are able to propose.

Since the nineteenth century, the idea of nation proved to be the best way to convey the sense of belonging to a social community. This idea allowed us to clearly draw the borders between the *internal space* of legitimacy of a sovereign authority and the *external space* occupied by other states. The war was, typically, the time when these borders were crossed; while peace intervened to re-establish order, redesigning the hierarchies of power or restoring the previous status quo. The proliferation of imagined communities, and the correlated privatization of organized violence generate a much more fluid territoriality and, with it, a relentless proliferation of *contended spaces* and *no-man’s land*, both among states and within them. Sovereignty is no longer exclusively organized on a state-by-state basis (Brown 2010); it ceases to be an absolute prerogative of the state, to become a shared and divided resource within specific regions (sometimes trans-border) or even in the suburbs: “effective sovereignty is not necessarily predicated on and defined by the strict and fixed territorial boundaries of individual states” (Agnew 2009: 438).

In cities, mafias and gangs transform some neighborhoods into junctures of strategic importance, as much from the political perspective of the effective exercise of coercive power and the maintaining of a certain degree of social cohesion, as from the economic point of view of the management of the traffic of illegal goods. Even more than the state-level dimension, the urban sphere also highlights a second aspect of these new imagined communities: their transnational character. Terrorists, mafia and gang members follow the migratory flows created by globalization, projecting themselves from the peripheries (developing countries) toward the centers of the world capitalist economy (developed countries), and maintaining their identity and their sense of belonging to the group. Their first task is to subjugate the members of their own community of origin, and shape the new environment to serve their own needs (Armao 2000 and 2014).

In fact, each of these groups – political if and when it proves to be capable of effectively competing for the monopoly of coercion in a certain territory, however limited – increasingly tends to operate like a company within a cluster, developing systemic relationships with other companies operating in its area of settlement (Porter 1990; Fujita, Krugman and Venables 1999). And just as some industrial clusters branch out beyond the national borders, some of these new political clusters cooperate and compete on the global level, proposing in fact a further challenge to the traditional prerogatives of the state (Wixted 2009; Pitelis, Sugden and Wilson 2006). Going on with this analogy, it is easy to ascertain how, within a specific geographical space, different clusters of sovereignty may be forced to cohabit, and sometimes conflict. In terms of physical, military, control of a particular territory, the traditional state often becomes just one of many clusters laying claim to a portion of the coercive power exercised by all the violent actors present in a given area (and the state may not even represent the most successful of these contenders). This is true both for the so-called failed states, in which the government in charge in the capital competes with ethnic clans, liberation movements, warlords or simple criminals in a daily struggle for the control of territory; and for those democratic regimes that are incapable of guaranteeing the minimum requirements of citizenship in various zones, large and small, of their own national territory.

3. OUTLINES OF A NEW MILITARISM

One of the factors that has certainly contributed to bridging the gap between public and private managers of collective violence has been the democratic regimes' gradual abandonment of the universal draft. Among Western nations, the process of abolishing the draft started in the middle of the Cold War and has not yet concluded.² In some cases it appeared to have been taken in the absence of any real debate about its potential implications, and yet the choice was entirely in keeping with what seemed to be the dominant aspects of the new millennium: the end of the ideologi-

² Great Britain abolished National Service in 1960 with the definitive extinguishment of any imperial ambition (the Suez Canal episode dates back to 1956); and the US did the same in 1973 as a result of the Vietnam experience, marked by the birth of a genuine collective movement of draft resistance. In other European countries the decision came much later: France and Spain, for example, abolished the universal draft in 2001; Italy in 2006; and Germany suspended it in 2011, even if constitution retains provisions to reintroduce obligatory military service, when necessary.

cal conflict, advent of new information and communication technologies which made strategists predict a new 'revolution in military affairs', and not lastly, an increasingly widespread intolerance among the young for the burdens and risks of military service.³

The USA illustrated the seemingly inevitable demise of conscription when the government excluded the possibility of a draft even as the 'global war on terror' and the direct involvement of American troops on two fronts (in Iraq and Afghanistan) revealed the number of available soldiers to be thoroughly inadequate. In order to satisfy the demand, the Bush administration instead chose, firstly, to lower its standard for recruitment into the all-volunteer force. In fiscal year 2007, only 79 percent of the recruits had a high-school diploma, compared to a previous average of 90 percent. And, in a departure from the regulations in force at the time, the US Army admitted a large number of candidates with criminal records, for a total equal to 10 percent of all recruits.

Secondly, the army increasingly relied on elements of the National Guard and the Reserves – organizations that still embody the ideals of the citizen-soldier, in spite of the fact that they, too, are based on voluntary recruitment. By 2004, these units made up 33 percent of the US military forces deployed in Iraq. The use of reservists, in particular, rose from 12.7 million work days in fiscal year 2001, to 61.3 million work days in fiscal year 2006, involving a total of almost 600,000 men and women (Commission on the National Guard and Reserves 2008; Lynch and Stover 2008).

Thirdly, the Bush administration exponentially increased the practice of subcontracting functions to private military corporations, which seemed capable of remedying the vocational crisis while at the same time guaranteeing high professional standards. According to governmental data, on March 2009, contractors made up 48 percent of Department of Defense (DOD) workforce in Iraq, and 57 percent in Afghanistan (Schwartz 2009). This trend was substantially confirmed by Obama administration: on March 2011 contractors made up 58 percent of DOD workforce in Iraq, and 48 percent in Afghanistan (Schwartz and Swain 2011); on March 2013, 62 percent in Afghanistan (Schwartz and Church 2013). The result is that "according to government officials and analysts, the military is unable to effectively execute many operations, particularly those that are large-scale and long-term in nature, without extensive operational contract support. Even in short-term operations, contractors can play a variety of critical roles. [...] Given the extensive role of contractors in military operations,

³ The body of literature on the revolution in the military affairs is immense. See, most recently, BAYLIS, WIRTZ and GRAY 2013.

many DOD officials and analysts consider contract management a mission-essential task” (Schwartz and Church 2013: 2).

The combined effect of voluntary recruitment and outsourcing inevitably results in an emphasis on delegating military functions and, as a consequence, political institutions’ renunciation of their prerogative both to determine the strategic dimensions of the conflict, and to verify their correct application. As far as public opinion is concerned, the lack of a mandatory draft as a requirement of citizenship and the consequent recourse to contractors risk accentuating the sense of estrangement experienced by the masses who are excluded from directly participating in war events, and often entirely ignorant of them (circumstances that also characterized the relationship between the military and civilians in the past). Among civilians, this estrangement can manifest itself either as concern about the authoritarian character of the military institution, or as an excessive faith in the ability of the armed forces to resolve any problem.

After September 11, the risks of a new militarism were feared by many intellectuals in the USA at a moment in which the terrorist menace seemed to justify the attribution of unprecedented prerogatives to the armed forces, even in the domestic sphere, thus foreshadowing the birth of a new model of a “garrison state” (Lasswell 1941). Among the military forces, it tends to be exhibited in frustration over what is perceived as a lack of acknowledgement of the importance (and the danger) of their mission or, vice versa, in an almost aristocratic claim on the right of membership to a body separate from the state.

The entry of contractors into what, until that moment, had been a fully monopolized market of violence introduces an element of competitiveness that could, over an extended period of time, have even more significant consequences than those outlined here. In the course of combat, the involvement of private contractors complicates coordination (when it does not create actual conflicts of competencies) between the hierarchical lines of command: in addition to the traditional competition between different branches (Army, Air Force and Navy) there is now additional antagonism between these and the managers of the military corporations. The presence of soldiers and contractors in the same war theatre – all with different functions, responsibilities and rules of engagement – also produces negative effects on the cohesion and the morale of the troops (Avant 2007).

The contention, however, generates effects of a systemic nature as well, from the point of view of career models for the officer corps, and from that of the military institution as a whole. The first case represents the possibility of exploiting the competencies and merits acquired in the public sector in order to guarantee career advancement in the private sector. For the person directly concerned, shifting from the state military apparatus

to the private military corporations can produce undisputed benefits, in terms of both income and social status. But for the state, this mechanism represents a cost without any possibility of a return, and is neither constructive nor profitable.

In the second case, the effect is that of further accentuating the tendency already observed in Western countries where, starting with the recruitment campaigns, occupational motivations prevail over the institutional: the pay, benefits, and the possibility of specialization in fields useful in the civilian life, rather than disinterested service, patriotism, and military values (Moskos 1977). This strategy might have made sense as an effort to widen the recruitment base in the context of the monopoly of force held by the state. Today, on the contrary, in an arena where private actors can issue offers that are far more advantageous than those made by their public counterpart, it seems entirely counterproductive.

The structural consequences caused by the abandonment of the mandatory draft should be added to those created by the end of the Cold War and the redefinition of the missions entrusted to state armed forces. A first consequence, in fact, was the drastic reduction in the size of the military apparatuses and their radical reorganization into much more agile units, which are intended to compensate for reduced firepower with greater efficiency and the ability to coordinate with other branches of the military made possible by the new communication technologies (Forster 2006; Moskos, Williams and Segal 2000). In the early 1990s, scholars in the field began predicting the possible consequences of these structural changes, especially with regard to the armed forces of Western countries (Burk 1994 and 1998). It was observed, for example, that the requirements for flexibility and speed of deployment implied the shortening of the hierarchical ladder and a general reduction of ranks. The overall reshaping and budget cuts, on the other hand, pushed administrations to reserve full-time contracts for the fighting personnel for an indefinite time period, while all other members of the military, as well as the civilians hired in the fields of administration, logistics, and other services, were limited to fixed-term contracts in accordance with the practices already adopted by private industries and the civilian sector of public service (Caforio 2003).

In a short time, among the employees this created an increasing sense of estrangement from the traditional values of the military institutions, often compounded by frustration generated by the fact that the salaries they received were often inferior to those of their colleagues hired to work in similar positions for private companies: "the implementation of commercial business practices to improve efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and flexibility has a marked impact on perceptions of military employment. Not only has it fragmented military work, but it also appears to have undermined

the traditional value system associated with military service based on selfless service, loyalty, and commitment to the organization” (Heinecken 2009: 493-494).⁴

All of the factors described above can help explain the difficulties in recruitment that the armed forces in Western countries occasionally face. But, that what matters most, is weakening the ability of the states, as compared to the competing VNSAs: a) to justify the merits of violence for reaching specific objectives to their own constituencies – a true contradiction in terms for democracies, which they can try to obfuscate by lying to their citizens, as repeatedly happened in the USA during the war in Iraq in 2003 (Brewer 2009); and b) to offer soldiers benefits proportionate to the motivation that compels them to kill and even risk their own lives.

With regard to the first point, the comparative advantage of private groups derives from the fact that most of them can easily demonstrate that violence is a necessary, and sometimes sufficient, means to achieve their ends. For others, violence can, in fact, represent an end in itself. The new coercive non-profit organizations, for example, have no need to resort to philosophical theories about the regenerative power of war, or to refer to manuals on guerrilla warfare in order to persuade their men to follow them down the path of revolution or *jihad*: the objective conditions of inequality and exploitation, and the unbearable daily struggle for survival are sufficient motivators. If the inability to access the political arena and lack of normal channels of representation deprives individuals of any hope of having their voices heard, and even the possibility of escape represented by emigration is closed to them, then the only remaining option is to gather around a leader and be loyal to a cause (Hirschman 1970).

With regard to the second point – the ability to adapt methods of compensation to the individual motivations of the soldiers – private groups demonstrate a flexibility unknown to states, employing different combinations of resources related to status, economic incentives, and coercion for each individual case. Private military corporations may rely exclusively on economic motivations, having no difficulties in offering their contractors much higher compensations than state armed forces. Mafia recruiters, to make another example, are perfectly capable of offering their affiliated members unexpected possibilities for financial enrichment, but they can also take advantage of members’ loyalty to their minority group which, especially in a migratory context, may be subjected to conditions of objective

⁴ This climate, moreover, increased the fear of a possible trade unionization of the military, which, in all countries, has so far has been denied any right to collective representation (BARTLE and HEINECKEN 2006).

exploitation and discrimination.⁵ And even terrorist organisations, which rely primarily on ideological involvement and indoctrination, do not shy away from using money to motivate new recruits. On the contrary, competition between rival groups occasionally necessitates the search for funds that will finance not only propaganda activities, but also welfare initiatives benefitting the community, including improved compensation for combatants. Among other factors, this contributes to explaining the importance of the role played by the states that sponsor terrorism (Byman 2005).

Finally, gangs employ three main strategies for recruitment, depending on the circumstances and the context in which they operate. The first is aimed predominantly at the sense of fraternity, the idea that becoming a member of the group represents a true social achievement despite the risks related to the obligation to fight in order to defend the interests and reputation of the gang. The second recruitment technique relies mainly on the sense of belonging to a larger community, and the duty to join a group in order to defend the values of this community. It can therefore be adopted only when the gang enjoys a certain legitimacy, or is at least tolerated even though it engages in illegal trafficking. The third technique, which tends to prevail during periods of greater conflict for the control of a given territory, is based on different forms of physical and psychological coercion which make it possible to increase the ranks in a relatively short time (Jankowski 1991).

CONCLUSION

The situation described in the previous pages – the privatization of war (as a consequence of the retreat of the state), the renewed political protagonism of the city (also as conflict zones), and the changing nature of militarism (redefined by the entry of VNSAs) – gave rise to a new era of ‘permanent global civil war’. *Permanent*, because war is a daily, almost ordinary, situation for billions of men and women; which nurtures both politics and economy. *Global*, as opposed to ‘world’, because it is not involving all the major powers in the same event at the same time. Unless in the coming years Western democracies officially undertake the dramatic clash of civilizations rather too frequently predicted in many circles, we will experience a continuous, slow loss of blood and lives on the streets worldwide.

⁵ The propensity to foster the feeling of deprivation as an instrument to legitimise its existence among migrant communities has been observed, for example, in the Japanese Yakuza (HILL 2003).

The spread of VNSAs, their frequent (even obsessive) recourse to violence in their everyday activities, as well as their way of conceiving politics and managing the market inevitably will produce an ‘un-sustainable development’, in terms of human ecology – the natural, social and built environment in which we all live – in a growing number of countries (and not only at the outskirts of the international system).

Finally, *civil* means, first of all, that war is increasingly undertaken by actors of civil society defined, according to Gramsci, as the private sphere of economic relationships. Secondly, *civil* explicitly refers to the city as the preferred sphere for the dynamics of capital *and* for coercion. We should never forget that we moved in fact “into what has been called the ‘urban century’”, and that “there appears to be no end to this headlong urbanization of our world. In 2007, 1.2 million people were added to the world’s urban population each week. By 2025, according to current estimates, there could easily be five billion urbanites, two-third of whom will live in ‘developing’ nations. By 2030, Asia alone will have 2.7 billion; the Earth’s cities will be packed with 2 billion more people than they accommodate today. Twenty years further on, by 2050, fully 75 percent of the world’s estimated 9.2 billion people will most likely be living in cities” – and we could also easily agree that “new military ideologies of permanent and boundless war are radically intensifying the militarization of urban life” (Graham 2010: 2 and 60).⁶

In 1941, the already cited Harold Lasswell prefigured “a world of ‘garrison states’ – a world in which the specialists on violence are the most powerful group in society. From this point of view – he added – the trend of our time is away from the dominance of the specialist on bargaining, who is the businessman, and toward the supremacy of the soldier” (Lasswell, 1941: 455). Today, in the age of globalization, it seems that the businessman and the soldier are joining their forces in a new model of supremacy, intended to produce a new world of ‘garrison cities’: a strange and peculiar mixture of gated communities necessarily reserved for a high-income population – controlled-access residential areas, often bordered by walls or fences, protected by sophisticated video-surveillance systems and by private police, and supplied with all services (Atkinson and Blandy 2006;

⁶ It is not at all fortuitous that police forces are increasingly undergoing a process of militarisation through the creation of special units which seek to emulate elite corps of the armed forces in both training and weaponry. For example, in the US, the Police Paramilitary Units (PPU) or Special Weapons and Tactics Teams (SWAT), directly modelled on the Navy Seals, have become widespread in the last few decades: in 1995, 89 percent of all police departments located in communities with over 50,000 inhabitants had one of these teams, which represents a doubling of the 1980 figures (KRASKA 2001). Similar units appeared in some European countries, such as Germany and Italy, in the 1970s, mainly to combat terrorism.

Bagaeen and Uduku 2010) – and slums for the unprivileged people – whose informal and engulfing architecture is the realm of organized crime and gangs (Davis M. 2006).

And the state is reinforcing this trend, dismantling the welfare, and devolving (or, directly, outsourcing) its monopoly of legitimate force to private actors; and adopting a new, residual mode of domination – what Bauman defines as “mutually assured vulnerability”, based on the beefing up and dramatization of “official fear” (mainly of terrorism). In USA, for example, CIA and FBI are launching alerts on possible attacks, and building up tension; but “this is how the popular demand for the emaciated version of state power that has successively withdrawn (or has been banished) from most of its past protective functions, is rebuilt on a new foundation – personal vulnerability and personal safety, instead of social vulnerability and social protection” (Bauman 2004: 119). This, at least, what happens in the domestic domain.

At the global level, we are experiencing the subversion of one of the most renowned theories of International Relations: the hegemonic stability. This theory stated, in fact, that to limit the discord and the war, cooperation is necessary, and a politics of reciprocal adaptation favored by the ‘brokerage’ of an hegemonic power (Keohane 1984). The current paradox, on the contrary, is that all the current (and prospective) hegemonic powers seem devoted to nurture instability, fostering the expansion of the global market of organized violence.

Western (and most developed) democratic countries, in particular, are playing the game of the ‘enemy at the gates’, even if they produce, control and sell most of the world armaments. In 2016, military expenditures accounted for a total of 1,686 billion dollars; 626 of which spent by USA, and 334 by Europe. But the most relevant data is related to arm exports: between 2012 and 2016, USA accounted for 33 percent, and Europe for 21.7 percent – a total of 54.7 that, adding also Russia and China, amounts to 83.9 percent (SIPRI 2018).⁷

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⁷ And we should not forget nuclear armaments. The total world amount is of about 14465 warheads, 92 percent of which owned by the two superpowers: 6450 USA (1750 deployed), 6850 Russia (1600 deployed) (SIPRI 2018).

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