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# The dangerous relations between national economies and war

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Summary : The relations between national economies and wars are complex, each being, in turn, ends and means. From the beginning of time, war has been conceived as a natural way of acquiring wealth. Later, the use of power relations and the growing concentration of administered powers were effective means of strengthening the coherence of states under construction. Preparation for war was a factor of technological and economic power. For some economists, war is inscribed in the fibres of the market economy (Marx), while for others (Galbraith), it constitutes a factor of social regulation. Above all, however, the oblique economic war is also present in the power relations between states and nations.

Résumé : Les relations entre les économies nationales et les guerres sont complexes, les unes et les autres étant, tour à tour, fins et moyens. Dès l'origine des temps, la guerre a été conçue comme un mode naturel d'acquisition des richesses. Plus tard, le recours aux rapports de forces et l'essor de la concentration des pouvoirs administrés ont constitué des moyens efficaces de renforcement de la cohérence des Etats en construction. La préparation à la guerre constitue un facteur de puissance technologique et économique. Pour certains économistes, la guerre est inscrite dans les fibres de l'économie de marché (Marx), alors que pour d'autres (Galbraith), elle constitue en creux un facteur de régulation sociale. Mais surtout, la guerre oblique économique est aussi bien présente dans les rapports de puissances entre les Etats et les Nations.

Guerre, guerre économique, conflit économique, puissance économique nationale  
War, economic war, economic conflicts, national economic power

Conceived initially like a confrontation, violent one and murderer, organized human groups, the war is a polysemous concept. Today, one speaks about cold war, economic war, commercial war, war of information, even about terrorist war. Should one retain, in the concept from war, only the wars opposing two or several States (or territories) or two or several ethnic or social groups? Since Clausewitz (the war is the continuation of the policy by other means), the definition becomes a value judgment. It implies an attack conscious with the physical and mental integrity of the individuals and groups which take part in it. The war took new dimensions. During this last half-century, misery made more deaths than the 14.000 wars indexed since the beginning of the human history. It is well however about a fatal violence, because the affluent countries dissuade the poor countries from legitimate claims that the latter cannot put forward, taking into account the imbalance of the military forces.

The connection between economy and war is complex, one and the other being, in turn, end and means. Thus, a war is gained already in its preparation (If screw pacem, para bellum). The economy is itself a weapon, intended to impoverish or destabilize the enemy country (sanctions, blockade, destruction). The continental blockade of Napoleon sought to ruin England, first stage towards its military weakening. It was not a question of conquering markets, but of engaging a play with negative sum, at the higher price for the enemy. In this context, economic optimization yields the step to the relative power of the States.

Two principal economic designs of the war have coexisted for at least three centuries. For the ones, the war and the economy are indissolubly bound by common interests and major bonds of interdependence. For the others, the war is a burden, justified or not by political and strategic constraints of the States.

## **I. War and economy, like joined products**

During the American Civil War , the President of the United States Abraham Lincoln defended the interests of the industrial and financial power of the strongly protectionist North-East against the agricultural producing South favorable to free trade. This war, however expensive and sanguinary, was not less the departure of a formidable wild industrial development of the United States. This example shows the ambiguity of the relations between the economy and the wars. In the same way, launching by the United States of the program of the “Star Wars” meant the economic crisis and the end of the Soviet experiment. This time, the economy dictated its law.

### **I.1. The war and its preparation are factors of development**

Right from the start times, the war was designed like a natural mode mode of acquisition of the richesses. The predation constituted a means practices to grow rich. “This is why that which kills an enemy must be reprimand, that who seizes the richesses of the enemy must be rewarded”(Sun Zi). For Aristotle, each man must fight to preserve his freedom and his richesses.

Releasing the free man of the tasks painful and degrading, the overcome people are led to the slavery, which constitutes an instrument of production essential with the Greek economy. The war brings riches to the winner.

“The machine of the modern State is historically derived from the organisational requests of the war and the States such as we know them today find on the whole their origins and their development in the crucible of the wars”. The weapons with fire involved a formidable transformation of the war, States (obliged for their safety to have regular incomes to face the necessary military expenditure) and of the economic life. The expenditure of preparation to the war became considerable, in order to ensure a national safety adapted to the threats. Rabelais already recalled in its time that Money is the “pécunes”. However, up to one very recent period, the possession of the riches (by the predation) and the power constituted the two principal acknowledged reasons of the wars.

For the German historical school, the war is avoided of thousand virtues, of which that of the development of the productive forces. For Sombart, the European industrial revolution and the capitalist system were the fruits of the war. The military needs for the war created the prerequisites to the development of capitalism while supporting:

- the constitution of large markets, with the centralization of the orders and the consumption of mass,
- the incentive with industrialization and the industrial merger,
- the encouragement with the technological innovation, the standardization, the research of the economies of scale and the rational organization of work,
- improvement of the competitive spirit and the research of the profit,
- the training of the social discipline by the modern armies,
- the rise of the financial sector, by the management of the military debt of the State.
- formation of new fortunes,

The recourse to the reports/ratios of forces and the rise of capitalism constituted effective means of reinforcement of the coherence of the States in construction. In return, the State supported the development of capitalism. Near to warlike mentality, the entrepreneurship, born from the passion of gold and the money, was also expressed in military forwardings, which made it possible to tear off by violence what it was difficult to obtain by other means. The war is an evil necessary to the economic development of a capitalism. The State imperialist (which extends the national power beyond the limits of the metropolis) seeks to develop his markets in the countries still slightly developed, sometimes using average violent ones. It thus obtains raw materials and means of subsistence at a cheap rate, with the detriment of the economic progress of the colonized countries. The war is used to develop the economy of the winners with the detriment of overcome. Imperialism, without war, conduit with the misery of the colonized countries. It is the shape of war, founded on the power and the absence of economic rights for the overcome countries. Under these conditions, the army is a productive force which instigates national capitalism and internationalism is not the way which leads to the economic development and peace.

Historically, military technology was always a vector of development. It should be said that a number of scientific discoveries were financed by the Armies. The army is a consumer adapted perfectly to the industrial system and the economic interests of the industrialists and soldiers are complementary. Like showed it Sombart, industry learned much from the war. The fundamental principles of the American industrial system as regards machine tools, from mass production,

spare parts were extended to the civil sector. With the Manhattan project, the great military projects received the organized assistance of sciences and modern technologies, at the point to influence the civil sector largely. With the installation of the military secrecy on high technologies, sciences, technologies and the economy became the hostages of the political power. The economic development of today depends mainly on the made military choices fifty years earlier. Technology is not apolitical. It is influenced by the political and social forces dominant.

Two analyzes (among others) give to the war and its preparation a decisive function in the contemporary economic development. For Bouthoul, the war is irreplaceable in what it ensures the functions of rebalancing or socio-demographic readjustment. For Ernest Mandel, by creating the artificial shortage, "the armament and the war exerted in the modern history an important function like engine of the acceleration of the industrialization and the widening of the outlets".

## **1.2. The war, economic power-factor**

Geopolitics highlights the reports/ratios of forces between the powers. A sufficient economic development, the control of progress communication energy, a State extremely able to impel a true diplomatic policy, a reliable currency of instrument of reserve and international transactions, the capacity to be acted out of its own borders to ensure the transfer of the vital resources (water, oil or networks), the provision of a nuclear strategic force and a sufficiently universal cultural life to constitute a force of attraction constitute the principal criteria.

For the mercantilists, the interest of the Prince is the fundamental objective of any national economy. The State initially continued like an organization of power devoted to reinforce the prosperity of the national economy. The foreign policy of each State aims at cutting down all the unfavourable forces, by all the means of trick and violence, by colonization, control, the laws of navigation or the recourse to the weapons. The decision relates not only to the capacity of enrichment of the country, but also on its potential to weaken the enemy. The power and the economy form an indivisible whole. These ideas will be taken up by List, unconditional partisan of the national system of political economy, which suggests that leave-to make it liberal led to the domination of strongest, and by Veblen, for which nationalism and the economic war are essential with the development of the capitalist system. The thesis of the unequal exchange, the theory of the underdevelopment like product of the development of the great powers or the strategic analyzes founded on the game theory are as many reflections which perpetuate this type of economic analysis in terms to be able.

Today, by binding the military effort to the technological development of the information industry, the diplomatic and cultural force with the domination of its economy and its currency, never the American company was not also powerful. Washington, power arbitration of the world, consolidates its world leadership, by the means of the international organizations (charged to transform the law of the strongest into international law) and of the ideology of the globalisation. It is impossible for him to dissociate the objectives of economic and military safety today. The dollar owes its value with the military hegemony of the United States. Many authors underlined the fact that the American economic policy was always marked by geoeconomic considerations, even if the government of the United States defends, in its speech, an impartial and apolitical free trade. This design néo-mercantilist is interested in the unit of the international conflicts, including economic. For the American government, national safety depends initially on the economic

power and each nation is in competition with the others on the world markets. The economic factors often dominate the diary of the strategic considerations. The finality of the Empires is not the war, but the peace which slows down their decline and ensures stability. For Thurow, "the United States will be the military super power of XXIe century. But it is the first of the handicaps if they want to remain an economic super power".

### **I.3. The war, necessary to the economic system**

For Marx, the war belongs to the field of the superstructure, it is conditioned by the antagonistic social reports/ratios of capitalism. Only, the revolutionary fight of classes leads to peace. These analyzes were continued in particular by Rosa Luxembourgangand Lénine. For the first, the military effort is very useful for the development of the capitalist economies, like catalyst of the primitive accumulation, instrument of colonial domination and hegemonic factor of fight between the capitalist countries to divide the world. For the second, the systemic character of the wars is into inherent in the mode of capitalistic production. The imperialism, stage supreme of capitalism, is necessarily characterized by the all-out wars and the capitalist exploitation of the world. Competition between the States developed for the division of the markets external and export of the capital is a need for the laws of the trend fall and equalization of the rates of profit, fatal disease of capitalism. The international conflicts are a consequence of contradictions of capitalism, for the new divisions of the external markets between the great capitalist powers. If the thought Marxist is especially marked by the concept of class struggle (which refers rather to a civil war), the concept of imperialism explains, which at a certain stage of its development, capitalism is a also producer of conflicts between the middle-class States. More radical, for Jaurès, capitalism it was already the war.

For Baran and Sweezy, capitalism secret a surplus, definite like the variation enters the production and the solvent request. This surplus can be absorbed by the consumption of the capitalists, the wasting, the civil governmental expenditure, but the military expenditure is more effective in this role. They comply with the rules of capitalism, by not redistributing incomes with those whose productivity is low, and they stimulate the collective values, which ensure the perenniality of capitalism. An important military expenditure, major solution with contradictions of capitalism, thus takes part in the prosperity of the United States. In the same order of idea, Gunder Franckconsiders that colonialism is the original and permanent cause underdevelopment. If on a world level, the military expenditure constitutes an enormous wasting, the military power allows the exploitation of the other nations, either by the occupation of the territory, or by the intimidation, or by the installation with the capacity of national collaborators. The conflicts are immanents with capitalism, only their expressions evolve/move.

### **I.4. Preparation with the war, factor of social regulation**

For J.K. Galbraith, the threat of war constitutes an essential element of control of the social dissensions and antisocial tendencies. The proposals in favor of a transformation of the production of war into projects of public works of benevolence are not realistic, except calling into question the economic system. There does not exist, in American capitalism, of valid substitutes to the military functions of the conflicts. The threat of war, instrument of stability of the governments, provides the most effective means of realization of the stability and the control of the national economies, by the subordination of the citizens to the State and the control of the

social dissensions. The system based on the war showed its effectiveness since the beginnings of the history.

For Jacques Attali, the war is the extreme demonstration of industrial competition. The conflict led to the revival of the production, it transforms the modes of consumption and the practices social. The phase of not-battles supports the rise of the military expenditure and the development of automated networks of self-monitoring. The phase of wide war allows the redistribution of the control of the capacity in favor of the dominant industrialized countries. Capitalism implies the emergence of a brutal phase which, if it does not give place to a military war, led with the development of alienation symbolic system. Today, the latter could be found in the modern ideology of the globalisation. The war provides the most effective means of realization of the stability and the control of the national economies, because the permanent possibility to resort to it is the base even of the stability of the governments.

## II. The war like economic burden

For Sun Zi, those which do not include/understand the damage that the war can cause will not never include/understand the advantages of them (article 7). Today, the wars thus prove particularly destroying and very expensive. The preparation with the war can prove to be destroying, as the failure of the Soviet Union in door testimony. The potential attacker must know that it will undergo losses (economic sanctions and destruction of men and materials) and will know a reduction in its profits (resistance, industrial sabotage, terrorism). Because of extreme gravity of the use of the nuclear weapon, the States used the economic weapons. The costs related, important, are seldom highlighted. The use of the economy at ends of power is connected with the decision of a war. Moreover, the concept even of "economic war" is used by those which apply the means of them.

### II.1. The war and its preparation, a <sup>game</sup> ~~play~~ with negative sum

For the Physiocrats and Traditional English and French, the war and its preparation are explained variables of the spirit of monopoly. The wars are presented in the form of basically political phenomena. To ensure the sovereignty of the States, it is necessary to constitute military forces, in order to dissuade covetousnesses from the other States in their predatory inclinations, but, for Ricardo, the uninterrupted growth of the military expenditure leads ineluctably to the war. Malthus makes the assumption according to which the war is initially the result of an insufficient economic development compared to the growth of the population. If a military increase in expenditure can, in the short run, to increase the total request, in the long run, with the impoverishment which it generates ineluctably, it becomes a fundamental source of conflicts. If the control of the population is ensured, the forces of war will be controlled.

For Walras, national defense is rejected field of study of economic science. However, if all the countries adopted free trade, the standing armies would be removed and the international disagreements would be regulated by arbitration. The economic theory must lead to the refusal of the wars, which constitutes an objective with the range of the generations to come. In a general way, the liberal economists consider that the war does not have any more future in a developed company. The military expenditure, with effects of the weak and debatable drives, constitutes a waste and an unbearable cost. Moreover, Pareto will rise against the militarist drifts of the European governments. Opposed to the intervention of the State in the life economic and

convinced of the spoliation of the people by the leading classes, it considers that the ill-considered, illegitimate wars in the developed countries, lead to the decline of civilizations. The goal of dissuasion is to affirm with the opponent that, whatever its objective, its action will not be crowned success. The analysis of Richardson shows that the increase in the budgets of preparation of war increases the probability of this one. Three factors play simultaneously: military evolution of the expenditure of the potential adversaries, objections and consecutive economic "fatigability" at the enormous cost of the military expenditure (which reduces the potential of development thus). In this context, the arms race is producing of war. The economy plays a rather moderating part, but if the objections are strong, the war can intervene, causing a human and economic disaster.

Keynes, pacifist convinced, wants éradiquer at the same time the war and Communism (this "insult with the intelligence"). If rearmament can lead to a provisional revival of the economy, it is only about one solution of makeshift because, not meeting in oneself the social needs, it in the long term slows down the national potential of economic development. It is preferable to engage the public investments towards the building or public works which are socially useful. The military expenditure is the most unproductive form of the public expenditure. The production of armament is not turned towards the production, it is an unproductive consumption. Safety is also spring of the economy, because the economic crisis leads sometimes to the inversion of the democracies and the application of policies of power. The threat of Communism on the peace of Europe could not be circumvented without an economic development of the European countries. It is for this reason that Keynes condemns the excessive allowances required by the Allies, because economic exhaustion and the humiliation of a great Nation do not constitute good bases for a company of peace. The economic crisis of Germany is a threat for the economic development of Europe and the democracy. Lasting peace is inconceivable without an international economic solidarity of the democracies. Against the enemies, one should not hesitate to use the economic weapon. The scientific knowledge of the economy is a factor of peace, vis-a-vis totalitarian temptation and with the personal and random plays of the politicians. Peace is also a condition of the economic development.

## **II.2. The economic war**

The economic war always existed, of the seats to the embargoes, in situation of war (scorched earth policy or of economic terrorism) or of peace (boycott or embargoes). The primacy of the economy in the new international relations is marked. The economic war can also aim at the weakening of the military power of a State, either in situation of war (blockade), or in situation of relative peace is often required. There are two objectives with the economic war: to force the enemy and to dominate the partners.

Several economic strategies do not aim at the wellbeing of the national economy, nor its development, but rather the weakening or the control of another economy. The sanctions in order to cause important economic damage with a country so that it changes policy (apartheid, violation of the rights of the minorities, tyranny or war) constitute essential instruments of economic power. The economic factors become permanent weapons which however, to regenerate itself, cannot constantly be deviated their essential functions. The insecurity depends at the same time on the arms race, the inequalities, of the international dominations, even of the social exploitations. The economy became an instrument of being able. The direct strategy (or soldier) is made difficult because of power of the nuclear forces. The States are thus led to have a strategy



of “indirect operation” which is defined as the exploitation of the narrow margin of freedom escaping nuclear dissuasion by other means. The oblique strategies of dissuasion, economic measurements of retortion, the embargoes, the boycotts are as many powerful weapons, of which the economic and political effects depend on measurements of self-defense, international solidarity and the potential of substitution. If the economy provides the average soldiers of fight against the enemy, the economic weapon, intended to weaken the potential enemy, is often registered in the warlike conflicts.

- Initially, the State must control the sale of weapons which could be turned over against him. It is a question of developing strategies of control with the export of products dual, semi-civil, semi-soldiers, in order to prevent the opposing army from increasing its economic potential. In a broader way, the reduction of the military and economic force of the potential enemy is required. In this context, the unequal exchange is asserted. However, the defense of the military industrial base undertaken by the Pentagon and the policy of the COCOM, with finality strategic-soldier, proved extremely expensive.

- The collapse of the Soviet economy was undoubtedly supported by the application of the strategy of impoverishment by the effort of preparation to the war. The arms race constitutes a cost, that richest can more easily take into account. The the least developed countries are impoverished more quickly, not having sufficiently “discretionnaires incomes”. Under these conditions, the arms race results in weakening the poorest State, in order to destabilize it socially, politically and economically, up to the point of the renouncement of the power.

- The strategy of the rupture proposes to create economic problems in the rival country in order to increase its political and social difficulties. The rupture of commercial or financial flows destabilizes the target country. The embargo is an instrument of reprisals intended to exert a strong pressure on a sovereign decision of another State. In the absence of a sufficient international consensus, this weapon is dangerous for that which uses it. The principal victims are not always those which are aimed. This policy falls under a “play with negative sum” for the protagonists.

- The strategy of surrounding aims at developing bonds of economic interdependence likely to guarantee peace (Realpolitik). New economic solidarity constitute the best instrument of dissuasion to an aggression. This strategy was not used yet with effectiveness.

- The strategy of political violence consists in seizing the economic power of another country when this one is hostile and to weaken its dominant social layers. It is necessary then to control the political forces of the apparatus of the State and the trade unions, by the nationalization or privatization, the strikes or the riots.

- The strategy of the domination leads the dominant countries to influence the countries dominated in their strategic decisions. The economic weapon allows a country, or groups country, to dominate another country thanks to the capacity conferred by the monopoly of the supply of goods and services vital for its survival. The United States often used the food weapon against the countries in the process of development.

### II.3. The economic conflict for the power

To safeguard a country is better than to destroy it. To subject the enemy without fighting is what there is best (Sun Zi, Art.). Today, the economic war is more underhand, it carries on judged international rules “liberators” in the long term, while ensuring, in the short term, of the fatal inequalities. Today, the whole of the international economic relations must be interpreted under the strategic angle, like result of the complex play of the international reports/ratios of

force. International economic relations (as the external assistance, flows of capital or the trade negotiations) constitute an instrument of pressure (or reaction) political. The external economic policy (protectionism, economic sanctions or control of the strategic products) are with the service of the political objectives of a Nation. Thus, Baldwin considers that, in situation of increasing economic interdependence, the national interest must take into account the overlapping of the national interests. In this context, the distinction between the war and the research of the power are made fuzziier.

The power of the State is also measured by the economic power, at the same time average and fine. For Thurow, the Triad enters an intense economic battle, an economic war that the United States cannot allow itself to lose. The danger is specified. It is necessary to protect the sectors with high technology, to support the American companies victims of the subsidies of the foreign companies, to help the sectors with high added value and to act firmly in the international authorities to support the development of the American economy. This time, the enemy is more pernicious, it is sometimes even a partner. "The United States will be the military super power of XXIe century. But it is the first of the handicaps if they want to remain an economic super power". With the end of the cold war, the United States engaged in an economic war, the military requirements not being often that an excuse to develop an industrial policy, to support the research and development and to subsidize the national companies. The economic factors often dominate the diary of the strategic considerations. For Bill Clinton, each nation being in competition with the others on the world markets, national safety depends initially on the economic power. This idea, fought by Krugman (a country is not a company), however allowed the American government to have an important administrative machinery to act on the economic and strategic relations international, in particular by the economic intelligence. The provision of a cabinet of war (War room) to carry out the economic war highlights the application of principle 102 of Sun Zi, according to which "no spy is loved too much and no reward is too important for them".

For Labarde and Maris, universalization it is the universal, civil and permanent war. It is an oligopolistic and cartellized organization world, in the respect of the financial logic, which defines a new organization of work of the capitalist company and the freedom of installation of the owners of capital. The capital was always international, stateless person, more financial than industrial, plus speculator that producer of richesses. Universalization can continue only by reducing social protection and solidarity. The policies have a crushing responsibility, by accepting the financial instruments which give the opportunity to the private operators to have the weapon of the international financial war. The multinational firms benefit of this universalization. OMC, the euro, privatizations, the liberalization of the financial markets or the social dumping are well the result of political decisions answering waiting of the markets, with the detriment of that of the workers. The poor countries are weakened by a universalization which does not call nor the world citizenship, even less that of the companies. It is about a daily and generalized civil war, sometimes even sanctioned by collateral conflicts with the important fatal consequences. The economic war seeks to weaken, weaken or destroy the enemy. All the means, as for the true war, are then mobilized. The economic war is a social suicide.

For Arrow, the preceding age of the globalisation, end of the XIXe century, beginning of the XXe century, culminated with the First World War. What shows that the opening of the borders is not a stage necessary towards peace. However, the military authorities of today combine an insatiable request for new weapons and an increased aversion for their use. It is not so much the globalisation which the factors which encourage it which provides the signal of a

reduction of the potential of international wars. However, if for Ohmae, the end of the Nations is registered in the peaceful and rather benevolent logic of the market economy, for Reich, defender of a positive economic nationalism, the inescapable disintegration of the national economies is likely to increase the insecurity and impoverishment. One would attend the rise of the State-areas then, new growth promoters. The nationality of a company loses its direction, because the currency, technology, the factories pass the borders with less and less restrictions. The transnational firms and the markets, from now on the principal actors of the international economy, support the mobility of the capital and the procedures of delocalization and the rise of new technologies, factors of important incomes. The United States proposes to become the only referee of a globalized world economy from now on, by maintaining their hegemony economic and cultural world. For Claude Serfati, universalization goes hand in hand with the regressive dynamics of capitalism. Beside small islands of prosperity, the world economy is in crisis and the ditch grows hollow ineluctably. The globalisation, dominated by the richest countries, based on the inequalities, does not lead to peace, but to a war (without or with weapons) for the distribution of the richesses.

### **Conclusion**

Today, the war, in its strict direction, knows several contradictory theories. The war strictly speaking (thus armed) is not any more one instrument of management of the conflicts between the States. Initially, because it is too expensive, then because the rise of the democracy is a factor of peace. Lastly, the war "is not recognized any more" socially like a mode of management of the crises, fact even of the existence of the nuclear weapon. The appearance of new wars is the debate object. Thus, Jacques Attali considers that the multiplication of the number of the States, the absence of a supranational nature and the incapacity to make respect the Right everywhere, open a beautiful future with the war. For Brzezinski, the technological requirement orders the political refitting of planet. The American company, first total company of the history, escapes the imperialism. It is a total model of modernity, with the universal techniques, founded on the information industry, which will modify the institutions inherited the industrial company.

The economy, causes war, is also a means of the wars. The "war" changed nature, it is not the principal concern of the companies of today, but it is a recurring threat. It does not set up battalions any more on a battle field. It becomes diffuse, founded on political and economic variables. The economic war is with the terrorism of State, which the warlike destruction is with the wars. It is a question of using the suitable weapons, of some nature that it is, to see itself recognizing a right or a domination. For this reason, the blockades, the seats or the actions of power of the mercantilists type are likely, in the long term, to become again of the techniques of war or conflict recognized by the States.

In this direction, that in this context, the costs of the man (to nourish the men, to look after the men, to release the slaves), base even of the economy, are not satisfied.

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