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A New Containment-Policy

The Curbing of War and Violent Conflict in World Society

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ABSTRACT

We are witnessing a worldwide expansion of war and violence, which should be countered by a new containment, just as George Kennan emphasized as early as 1987: “And for these reasons we are going to have to develop a wider concept of what containment means (...) – a concept, in other words, more responsive to the problems of our own time – than the one I so light-heartedly brought to expression, hacking away at my typewriter there in the northwest corner of the War College building in December of 1946.” Sixty years have already passed, since George Kennan formulated his original vision of containment. Although his original concept would be altered, in application by various administrations of the US-Government, in practice it has been incorporated within the concept and politics of common security, which has been the essential complement to pure military containment. These ideas are still valid – and as Kennan himself pointed out, they are in more need of explication and implementation than ever. The idea behind this concept is very simple: if the “world” is “flat” and something like a global network, the task is to protect our connections in the net and to contain the spreading of war and violence through this network.

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He is the author of “Clausewitz's Puzzle: The Political Theory of War,” Oxford University Press, 2007 and edited together with Hew Strachan the anthology “Clausewitz in the 21st Century,” Oxford University Press, 2007.” His articles include “New Containment Policy: Grand Strategy for the Twenty-first century?” *RUSI-Journal*, Whitehall, London Whitehall Vol. 153 No. 2, (April 2008), pp. 50-55; “The Re-Politicisation of War and Violent Conflict -

The World Powers are Striking Back.” Ralph Rotte/Christoph Schwarz (Eds.), *War and Strategy*, New York (Nova Science), 2010. His last book about Clausewitz (together with Jan Willem Honig and Dan Moran) has just been published, *Clausewitz: The State and War*, Stuttgart, 2011. In 2010 and 2011 he held lectures at West Point Academy about Tolstoy and Clausewitz as well as in Washington about a new containment policy, the emergence of world order conflicts, Clausewitz and partisan warfare and in Oxford about the democratic warrior. Some of his political-philosophical articles are collected in his volume “Lyotard und Hegel: Dialektik von Philosophie und Politik.Wien,” 2005 (Lyotard and Hegel: The dialectics of the political and philosophy). He held his most recent lecture about the last topic at the 29th international Hegel conference in Istanbul in October 2012.

A NEW CONTAINMENT-POLICY

The Curbing of War and Violent Conflict in World Society

Newly elected president Obama has argued that containment is not a reasonable policy concerning Iran, terrorism and even perhaps China. But one question is, what would be the alternatives. Would it be regime change in Tehran? Would it be traditional deterrence? Have those strategies been working in the past? Perhaps a strategy of containment is not the silver bullet, but the previous strategies may be even worse. It must be recalled that the strategy of containment was successfully applied against the USSR and led finally to its demise. The second question then arises. How we can adjust a policy of containment which is applicable as the appropriate strategy in this globalised world.

We are witnessing a worldwide expansion of war and violence, which should be countered by a new containment, just as George Kennan emphasised as early as 1987: “And for these reasons we are going to have to develop a wider concept of what containment means (...) – a concept, in other words, more responsive to the problems of our own time – than the one I so light-heartedly brought to expression, hacking away at my typewriter there in the northwest corner of the War College building in December of 1946.” Sixty years have already passed, since George Kennan formulated his original vision of containment. Although his original concept would be altered, in application by various administrations of the U.S. Government, in practice it has been incorporated within the concept and politics of common security, which has been the essential complement to pure militarily containment.¹ These ideas are still valid – and as Kennan himself already pointed out, they are in more need of explication and implementation than ever. Especially because, what Kennan could not foresee, the developments in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that the aim to gain victory about ones opponent in a traditional manner is no longer applicable in a globalised world.² Instead of such strategies of the past we need one which is concentrating on

¹ Kegley, Charles W. Jr., The New Containment Myth: Realism and the Anomaly of European Integration. In Ethics & International Affairs, 1991, Vol 5, pp. 99-115.

² Kennan, George, F., Containment: 40 years later. In: Containment: Concept and Policy, edited by Terry L. Deibel and John Lewis Gaddis. Washington: National Defense University Press, 1986 pp. 23.

transforming military achievements and success into a lasting political order.

The disinhibition of war and a new containment

The triumphant advance of democracy and free markets in the wake of the Soviet collapse seemed to be unstoppable, to the point where it appeared for a time as if the twenty-first century would be an age defined by economics and thus, to a great extent, peace. However, these expectations were quickly disappointed, not only because of the ongoing massacres and genocide in Sub-Saharan-Africa, but also by the return of war to Europe (primarily in the former Yugoslavia), together with the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the U.S. and the Iraq war with its on-going, violent consequences. A struggle against a new totalitarianism of an Islamic type appears to have started, in which war and violence are commonly perceived as having an unavoidable role. Both are also perceived as having become more “unbounded” than ever before - both in a spatial sense, for terrorist attacks are potentially ever-present, and temporally, since no end to these attacks is in sight. One can also speak of a new dimension to violence with respect to its extent and brutality - as exemplified by the extreme violence of the ongoing civil wars in Africa. Additionally, we are facing completely new types of threats, for example the possession of weapons of mass destruction by terrorist organisations or the development of atomic bombs by “problematic” states like Iran and North Korea. The potential emergence of a new Superpower, China, and perhaps of new “great” powers like India may lead to a new arms race, which presumably have a nuclear dimension as well. In the consciousness of many, violence appears to be slipping the leash of rational control, an image the media has not hesitated to foster, especially with respect to Sub-Saharan-Africa.³ Will there be “another bloody century,” as Colin Gray has proposed?⁴ Hence my conclusion is that we need a new strategy of containment, which must be different from that of the Cold War, but is based on some similar principles.

As compared to the Cold War, there is no longer an exclusive actor to be contained, as the Soviet Union was. Even if one were to anticipate China’s emergence as a new superpower in

³ The problem for example is, whether there is really a overall increase of wars after the end of the Cold War, or even a decline after a short period of increased violence in the early nineties: see *Chojnacki, Sven*, *Wandel der Kriegsformen? – Ein kritischer Literaturbericht*, in: *Leviathan*, 2004, issue 32: 3, pp. 402-424.

⁴ Gray, Collin S, “Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare.” London, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2005.

the next twenty years, it would not be reasonable, in advance of this actually happening, to develop a strategy of military containment against China similar to that against the Soviet Union in the 50th and 60th of last century, since doing so might well provoke the kind of crises and conflicts that such a strategy would be intended to avoid.⁵ The attempt to build up India as counter-weight to China and facilitating its nuclear ambitions, for instance, might risk undermining the international campaign to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the world.

The second difference is, that current developments in the strategic environment display fundamentally conflicting tendencies: between globalization and struggles over identities, locational advantages, and interests⁶; between high-tech wars and combat with “knives and machetes” or suicide bombers; between symmetrical and asymmetrical warfare; between the privatisation of war and violence⁷ and their re-politicisation and re-ideologisation as well as wars over “world order;”⁸ between the formation of new regional power centres and the imperial-hegemonic dominance of the only Superpower; between international organised crime and the institutionalisation of regional and global institutions and communities; between increasing violations of international law and human rights on one side and their expansion on the other. A strategy designed to counter only one of these conflicting tendencies may be problematic with respect to the others. I therefore stress the necessity of striking a balance among competing possibilities.

⁵ See for example, U.S. denies new containment policy against China, in: http://english.people.com.cn/200511/24/eng20051124_223692.html, 15 Mar 2006.

⁶ Zygmunt Bauman has already labelled these contrasting tendency as “Glocalisation,” which means a combination of “Globalisation” and “Localisation”: Bauman, Zygmunt *Glokalisierung oder: Was für die einen Globalisierung, ist für die anderen Lokalisierung*. In: *Das Argument* 217, 1996, pp. 653-664; Bauman, Zygmunt, *Globalization*. London: Polity Press 1998.

⁷ Munkler, Herfried, *The new wars*. London: Polity Press. 2004; Kaldor, Mary, *New and old wars. Organized violence in a Global Era*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999.

⁸ I have put forward the thesis, that after the break down of an empire, a system of world order, there has been nearly always a tendency to a privatization of war and violence, to a level beneath of that, which has broken apart, just as it happens after the fall of the Soviet Union and the bipolar order of the Cold War. But in the long run, I’m estimating, that the importance of politics and ideology is even increasing; see Herberg-Rothe, Andreas, *Privatized wars and world order conflicts*. In: *THEORIA*, No 110, August 2006, pp. 1-22.

The third difference is, that the traditional containment was perceived mainly as military deterrence of the Soviet Union, although in its original formulation by George Kennan it was quite different from such a reductionism. Our main and decisive assumption is that a new containment must combine traditional, military containment on one side, and a range of opportunities for cooperation on the other. That's not only necessary with respect to China, but even to the political Islam, in order to reduce the appeal of militant Islamic movements to millions of Muslim youth.

The perspective of a curbing of war and violence in world society implies the expansion of non-military zones to which the Kantian conception of democratic peace is an example, but it also implies the active containment and limitation of the expansion of war and violence. Such an overarching perspective has to be self-evident, little more than common sense, because it has to be accepted by quite different political leaders and peoples. The self-evidence of this concept could go so far that one could ask why we are discussing it. On the other hand, such a concept must be able to be distinguished by competing concepts. Last but not least, it should be regarded as an appropriate concept to counter contemporary developments. Finally, taking into account, that Kennan's concept would not have succeeded, if it had been directed against the actions of the international community or the United States, it should be to some extent only brings to expression, what the international community is already doing anyway. "Other states are instrumental in interrupting the flow of finances from one institution to another, in restricting the movements of terrorists, in eliminating their safe havens, in tracking down and arresting their principal leaders and in driving a wedge between the terrorist groups and the various populations they purport to champion."⁹ Which strategy these states are already pursuing? Nothing else than a strategy of containment!

The question of course remains, how to deter the true-believers, members of terrorist networks or people like the current President of Iran, for whom even self-destruction may be a means of hastening millenarian goals. Of course, the "true-believers" or the "hard-core terrorist" could hardly be deterred. But this is just the reason, why strategy should not be reduced to a strategy of deterrence. The real task even in these cases therefore is to act

⁹ Echevarria, Antulio, Fourth-generation warfare and other myths. Carlisle 2005, pp. 5-6.

politically and militarily in a manner, that would enable to separate the “true believers” from the “believers” and those from the followers. This strategy can include military actions and credible threats, but at the same time it should be based on a double strategy of offering a choice between alternatives, whereas the reduction to military means would only intensify violent resistance. Additionally, even the true believers could be confronted with the choice, either further to be an accepted part of their social and religious environment (or to be excluded from them) or to reduce their millenarian aspirations. Of course, by following this strategy, there is no guarantee, that each terrorist attack could be averted. But this is not the real question. Assuming, that the goal of the terrorists and millenarian Islamists is to provoke an over-reaction of the West in order to ignite an all-out war between the West and the Islamic world, there is no choice than trying to separate them from their political, social and religious environment.

Competing concepts

The function of this conception can be clarified through the example of democratisation. The limitation of war and violence lays the foundations of democracy. If the single counter-strategy to the proliferation of violence were a general, worldwide democratisation – in the meaning of implementing democratic elections, a necessary, but not sufficient precondition of establishing real democratic societies – implemented (as would be necessary) through force, this would almost certainly lead to counterproductive results. This is particularly clear in those cases where fully developed constitutional democracies are not yet present, but states and societies are undergoing the initial process of transformation. It is more justified to speak of the “antinomies of democratic peace” in the latter cases than when referring to developed democracies.

Thus, it is possible that a one-sided demand for democratic processes without regard to local conditions in individual cases might even contribute to the creation of totalitarian movements. The historical experience that corresponds to the change from democratic to totalitarian processes is embodied in developments during and after World War I. In nearly all of the defeated states there was at the beginning a process of democratisation, including, in some cases, democratic revolutions. Yet almost all ended in dictatorships. In Eastern Europe and the Balkans, the “right of national self-determination” proclaimed by U.S.

President Wilson was interpreted in a nationalist rather than in a democratic way, so that it entailed the exclusion of entire populations, and even the first genocide of the twentieth century, committed against the Armenians, which already began before World War I.¹⁰

From the overarching perspective of the containment of war and violence, however, it can be reasonable in particular cases to renounce democratisation in favour of disarmament. Thus, in the case of Libya (a former “rogue state”) the U.S. had abandoned a policy of enforced democratisation by military means in favour of Libyan nuclear disarmament. Clearly, this example does not exclude the possibility that in other cases the processes of democratisation promoted from the outside might involve the use of violence. Historically speaking, one must remember that after World War II there were a number of democratisation processes following militarily disastrous defeats, for instance in Germany and Japan, and then in Serbia after the Kosovo war.

The central approach developed here, in contrast to other theoretical conceptions of peace, can be described as follows: conceptions of democratic peace following Kant, those belonging to theories of equilibrium, and conceptions of hegemony and empire, have all been used to bring about a limitation of war and violence in world society. But these means have often become ends in themselves. In my approach, the containment of war and violence itself becomes the overarching aim of political and communal action. Proceeding from this *political aim*, one can then judge *which* goal and *which* action are the most appropriate. This determination applies both to the notion of just conduct in war (*jus in bello*) and to the notion of the “right to war” (*jus ad bellum*) in the case of interstate wars. In the European experience, the acknowledgement of the foe as an equal with the same rights proved to be a central precondition for curbing war following the disaster of the Thirty Years War (Carl Schmitt). Both conceptions succeeded in curbing warlike violence between European opponents, although irregular and unrestrained forms of violence persisted on the margins of the European world. During the crusades of the Middle Ages and in the course of colonial conquests from the 16th to the 19th centuries, non-European opponents were not merely fought but often exterminated.

¹⁰ Diner, Dan, *Das Jahrhundert verstehen*. Frankfurt: Fischer, 2000.

In both cases, however, the normalised, intra-European forms of violence ended in disaster. The idea of a just war, which contributed to a limitation of war and violence for long periods of the Middle Ages, dissolved in the religious conflicts of the 16th century and the Thirty Years War. The interstate wars of the Westphalian era, which was based upon a right to wage war between equal opponents, resulted in the catastrophes of the First and Second World Wars.

Yet the beginning and end of any historical development cannot be separated from each other insofar as they rest upon the same principles. One cannot idealise the model of a limited war within Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries, because this same model, when combined with the industrialisation of war and new nationalist and totalitarian ideologies, ultimately resulted in the two world wars. Similarly, there are no grounds for dismissing the idea of the just war simply in view of the religious wars and the Thirty Years War. Rather, the curbing and “protecting” (preserving) effects of war during long periods of the Middle Ages should be borne in mind.¹¹ “In accordance with the Christian tradition of the major denominations, [the concept of just war] should not promote military violence, but rather hinder it or at least help to limit it. It is appropriately understood only against the background of fundamental reservations about war for the purpose of peace (which can be applied to the concept of the Islamic “jihad”, too). This means that the threat and employment of military force can only be justified conditionally — as instruments for preventing, curbing, and moderating violence.”¹² Despite this ideal definition of just war, three fundamental problems of this conception have appeared in the course of history: the disinhibition of violence on the grounds that any measure is acceptable in a just cause; the consequent stigmatisation of the opponent as an outlaw and even criminal; and a pronounced tendency, at least in Europe, for polities to choose violence when they feel themselves to be acting under profound moral compulsion (and not merely in the pursuit of “interests”).

¹¹ Stephan, Cora, *Das Handwerk des Krieges*. Berlin, 1998.

¹² Fuchs, Albert, *Gerechter Krieg? Anmerkungen zur bellum-iustum Lehre*. In: *Wissenschaft und Frieden*. Issue 19 (3), 2001, pp. 12-15.

The Reideologisation and Repoliticisation of War

One can point to developments in Afghanistan as an example of this reideologisation and repoliticisation. After the victory over the Soviet army, a civil war between warlords and tribes began at the end of the 1980s. The conflict was reideologised, and the Taliban seized power. We can see here that civil wars do not always become increasingly privatised until the smallest possible communities wield Kalashnikovs, communities, which are only held together by the violence itself, and in which fighting is becoming independent from any purpose.¹³ There have also been a number of cases in which civil wars have been ended by reideologisation and repoliticisation. Afghanistan is a good example because one can use it to illustrate the new quality of privatization of war and violence (Heupel/ Zangl 2004, in their case studies), and at the same time it reveals very clearly the reideologisation and repoliticisation of the conflict with the rise and eventual victory of the Taliban. Claiming that the privatisation of the war in Afghanistan proves the new quality of the “new wars” in general therefore leads to the paradox if the claim has to be restricted to the period up until the Taliban victory in 1996. This case therefore cannot be used to demonstrate a general shift towards the privatisation of war (Heupel/Zangl 2004). In fact, what it shows is that this development, though genuine, lasted for only a limited period (at least in this case). A new phase, the phase of world order conflicts and wars, began in 1996.

One can supplement the periodisation I am proposing by adding a geographical-hierarchical classification of the two phases. The privatisation of violence can be observed in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and in traditional conflict regions such as the Balkans and the Caucasus. The development of world order conflicts can be seen in the conflict between the West and militant Islam, and in the future it can be anticipated in relations with China and, perhaps, with Russia. It follows that events are moving away from the level of interstate war and conflicts in two directions simultaneously: downwards towards privatised war, and upwards towards supra-state war, world order wars. This distinction is more fundamental

¹³ This image symbolizes the “new wars” discourse better than any other, and also symbolizes Hobbes’s war of all against all.

than the attempt to distinguish between “new” wars (or as some label it, privatised wars)¹⁴ and those fragmented wars arising in the course of globalisation, and to use this as a way of challenging the legitimacy of the first set of concepts (Chojnacki 2004). Waging war to promote values (Joas 2000) and as a way of ordering the world (whether this order is conceived of as universal or particular) is something quite different from privatised and fragmented wars. In practice, of course, these two levels are interlinked with one another and also with inter-state wars, but the analytic distinction is a significant one. States do still wage wars; however, for the most part they are now doing this not in pursuit of their particular interests but for reasons related to world order, as can be seen in the use of concepts like US empire and American hegemony .

Processes like the technological, economic and communicational saturation of the world intensify this dual movement dramatically, because they often link spaces of action directly with one another. During the civil war in Somalia, for example, bands of fighters could be seen using computers to buy and sell their Wall Street shares. The decisive factor, though, is the contradictory dual movement, towards the privatisation of violence and simultaneously towards existing and also future world order wars and conflicts that can be either global or regional. Although it may not at first glance appear to do so, globalisation does in fact re-politicise violent conflicts.

Humanitarian Intervention and Civil Conflict Management

Humanitarian intervention and civil conflict management are fundamentally contrasting forms of action, even though it is certainly the case that, ideally, their goals are very similar: the prevention of large-scale violence. There have been very heated debates between people who favour these different approaches (especially in connection with the war over Kosovo), and this has a good deal to do with the fact that the two sides in this dispute are using strongly moral arguments to make the case for almost identical goals. In many cases, “policy alternatives based on different moral principles are put forward in such a way that

¹⁴ The concept of new wars is most vividly described in *Munkler, Herfried, The new wars. London:Polity Press.2004*; Kaldor, Mary, *New and old wars. Organised violence in a Global Era. Stanford:Stanford University Press, 1999.*

political judgments can only have a modest role to play.”¹⁵ It seems that one of the central problems here is that the two sides are using primarily moral arguments to make the case for the form of action each of them considers morally appropriate, and not much effort is spent on working out which form of action is likely to be more effective.¹⁶

One objection to humanitarian interventions is that in this case the method employed, i.e. using force oneself; contradicts the express purpose, i.e. bringing about peace. It is argued that violence does not solve conflicts, but rather makes them worse by giving rise to further violence. In extreme cases, those who argue in favour of humanitarian intervention are accused of using this argument as a pretext to disguise their pursuit of their own power-political interests. This argument can be turned around, and one could make the case that in emergency situations where excessive violence is being used, the insistence that only non-military options be considered amounts to a more or less conscious acceptance that there will be a large number of victims, even though at least some of them could be saved by such modest measures as setting up protected zones). Michael Walzer describes this perspective as a “policy of salvation”¹⁷ It would be especially unconvincing if we were to condemn a limited military intervention designed to prevent genocide as an act of aggression simply by virtue of its military character. It is not meaningful to reject murder on a massive scale without permitting the international community to intervene to stop it.¹⁸

A violent humanitarian intervention can be evaluated immediately, either as a positive or a negative action, or at least it can be more unambiguously evaluated than a civil conflict management plan, which usually needs more time. “Peace work requires patience, it needs

¹⁵ Münkler, Herfried, Menschenrechte und Staatsräson. In: Gustenau, Gustav (ed.): Humanitäre militärische Intervention zwischen Legalität und Legitimität. Baden-Baden:Nomos, 2000, pp. 141-165, here p. 144.

¹⁶ This dilemma is clearly emphasised in most of the contribution in Holzgrefe, J.L./Keohane, Robert (eds.), Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. 2003.

¹⁷ Walzer, Michael, Just and Unjust wars. A Moral Argument with Historical illustrations. New York: Basic books, 2000; Walzer, Michael, Die Politik der Rettung. In: Berliner Debatte Initial 6, 1995, pp. 47-54.

¹⁸ Jahn, Egbert, Intervention und Recht. Zum Widerspruch zwischen dem allgemeinen Interventionsverbot und einem Interventionsgebot bei Völkermord. In: Albert, Mathias/ Moltmann, Bernhard/ Schoch, Bruno (eds): Die Entgrenzung der Politik. Internationale Beziehungen und Friedensforschung. Festschrift für Lothar Brock. Frankfurt, 2004, pp. 65-94.

time (...), and it must be allowed to grow from below. Unlike military action, peace work cannot claim to offer immediate solutions, bring these solutions about, pretend that they have been achieved, or enforce them. And experience teaches us that immediate, victorious solutions themselves create new injustices and fail to bring about peace.”¹⁹ There are arguments for and against both of these approaches. An act of “emergency assistance” by a superior military power may make societal tensions and conflicts worse, and risk escalation. Civil conflict management may collapse when large-scale violence can no longer be prevented by the methods used up until then. However, the decisive way of looking at the problem should always be the question of what is appropriate in this particular case; in other words, what can be done and what is likely to be effective? This should take precedence over moral debates about the causes of the conflict.

The great variety of wars and conflicts makes it impossible to make a generally valid decision in favour of one approach or the other. Any insistence on either a general right or necessity to intervene would have paradoxical consequences. In effect, intervention in the affairs of the great powers is already prohibited, to the extent that they possess weapons of mass destruction and, in particular, nuclear weapons mounted on long-range delivery vehicles. A general *obligation* to intervene would lead numerous states to develop their own nuclear weapons and the appropriate delivery systems, as a way of countering the threat of intervention.²⁰

At this point, we can see clearly how the clash of moral principles I have already mentioned comes into play: “Two crucial norms of international law, and also of political morality, seem to contradict each other: the obligation to act peacefully in inter-state relations, and the community of states’ obligation to protect human rights, if need be by employing violent, warlike methods.”²¹ The conclusion we are forced to reach as a result of the variety of

¹⁹ Voß, Reinhard J., Leitbilder eines christlichen Pazifismus. Vortrag auf dem 8. Friedenspolitischen Ratschlag in Kassel vom 01.-02.12.2001

²⁰ Müller, Harald, Frieden zwischen den Nationen. Der Beitrag der Theorien von den Internationalen Beziehungen zum Wissen über den Frieden. In: Albert, Mathias/ Moltmann, Bernhard/ Schoch, Bruno (eds): Die Entgrenzung der Politik. Internationale Beziehungen und Friedensforschung. Festschrift für Lothar Brock. Frankfurt, 2004, pp.40-64, here pp. 43

²¹ Jahn (footnote 34), pp. 92

conflicts is that there can be no binary counter-strategy that comes down exclusively on one side or the other as it seeks to hinder the escalation of violence and the broadening of zones of war. Rather, what we need is an ethically informed but in the last instance *political* consideration and weighing up of the costs and benefits, risks and prospects of success of humanitarian intervention and civil conflict management.

One must stress that the possibility of humanitarian intervention is foreseen in the idea of limiting war and violence, but this does not mean that this possibility takes priority over the ideas of prevention or civil conflict management, or that it is accorded a lower priority as a matter of principle. Leaving open the possibility of a humanitarian intervention corresponds to the traditional idea of using military force as a last resort. With this single exception, it does not seem to make any sense to accord primacy to any one of these three levels of action, since the levels are distinguished by different time dimensions. If acute, large-scale, and excessive violence is already being employed, it is too late for preventive measures. If humanitarian intervention or civil conflict management were generally treated as the primary form of action, this would make it too easy for the forces intervening from outside (whether these are states or NGOs) to favour one of the conflict parties (or to be instrumentalised by one of them). It is only the combination of uncertainty with the realistic expectation that third parties may take action that opens up political space for conflicts to be dealt with in non-violent ways.

This combination of certainty and uncertainty was a decisive factor in the ending of the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. Similarly, in spite of all the rhetoric and the launching of medium-range missiles against Israel in 1991, Iraq did not attack Israel with weapons of mass destruction. This too is likely to have been based on a combination of certainty and uncertainty. It was reported that Israeli planes armed with nuclear bombs were on the way to Baghdad, but were ordered back just before they reached their targets. Regardless of whether this report was accurate, it is precisely this combination of assumed certainty and uncertainty about how one's opponent will react that can have a self-deterring effect and prevent escalation. As Clausewitz puts it, this is why we must admit that "imperfect knowledge of the case must, in general, do much to stop military action and to moderate

the principle of such action.”²²

The idea of limiting war and violence has an advantage over the idea of pure humanitarian intervention. In different public debates, the interventions supported by the UN in Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo were frequently perceived to have been unsuccessful overall. However, this assessment only follows if these interventions are associated with unrealistically high expectations. In the case of the intervention in Somalia, for example, it fails to take account of the fact that the intervention made possible the delivery of assistance which, in the short term, saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. In order to counter such negative evaluations of humanitarian interventions, there is not only a need for the UN and transnational NGOs to put in place a “post-intervention policy”, but also for a clear awareness of what can and cannot be achieved by military interventions.²³

The concept of containment and contemporary warfare

The advantage of my concept could be additionally demonstrated by considering the nature of the end state for which end the war on terror should be fought. Trying to find terrorists and rooting all of them out, as Donald Rumsfeld stated?²⁴ The further question is: how to fight organisations, which are not hierarchically structured, but as it is often mentioned, are functioning like networks? Here the conception of limitation could provide some thoughts. I conclude, that the goal of the war on terror should not try to gain victory, because no one could explain, what victory would mean with regard to this special war. Moreover, trying to gain a decisive victory about the terrorists would even produce much more of them. The additional problem is not only, how we ourselves conceive the concept of victory, but even more important, in which ways for example the low-tech enemies define victory and defeat. That is an exercise, which requires cultural and historical knowledge much more than it does gee-whiz technology.²⁵

²² Clausewitz Vom Kriege, pp. 206.

²³ Zangl, Bernhard/ Zürn, Michael, Frieden und Krieg. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, pp. 273-274.

²⁴ Rumsfeld, Donald, You can only defend by finding terrorists and rooting them out. Interview with Donald Rumsfeld. In: The Daily Telegraph. 25.02.2002.

²⁵ Kaplan, Robert D., The story of a war. In: Atlantic Monthly, November 2003.

Instead one could argue, that the goal is “to contain terror”, which is of course something quite different from appeasement. An essential limitation of the dangers, posed by terrorist organisations could be based on three aspects: first, a struggle of political ideas for the hearts and minds of the millions of young people; second the attempt to curb the exchanges of knowledge, financial support, communication between the various networks with the aim of isolating them on a local level; and finally, but only as one of these three tasks, to destroy what the Israelis call the terrorist infrastructure. In my understanding, trying to achieve victory in a traditional military manner would not only fail, but additionally would perhaps lead to much more terrorism in the foreseeable future.

The concept of the “centre of gravity” in warfare can provide another illustration of the way in which my conception makes a difference. Clausewitz defines war as an act of violence to compel our enemy to do our will. This definition suits our understanding of war between equal opponents, between opponents in which one side doesn’t want to annihilate the other or his political, ethnic or tribal body. But in conflicts between opponents with a different culture or ethnic background, the imposition of ones will on the other is often perceived as an attempt to annihilate the other’s community and identity. Hence, for democratic societies, the alternative is only to perceive war as an act of violence where, rather than compelling our own will to the opponent, your opponent is rendered unable any more to pursue his own will violently, unable to use his full power to impose his will on us or others. Consequently the abilities of his power must be limited, that he is no more able to threaten or fight us in order to compel us to do his will.

The purpose of containing war and violence, therefore, is, to remove from the belligerent adversary his physical and moral freedom of action, but without attacking the sources of his power and the order of his society. The key to "mastering violence" is to control certain operational domains, territory, mass movement, and armaments, but also information and humanitarian operations. But this task of “mastering violence” should no longer be perceived as being directed against the center of gravity, but to the “lines” of the field of gravitation of his power. Instead of an expansion of imposing one’s own will on the adversary up to the point of controlling his mind, as the protagonists of Strategic

Information Warfare put it,²⁶ the only way of ending conflict in the globalised 21st century is to set limits for action, but at the same time to give room for action (in the sense, Hannah Arendt used this term) and even resistance, which of course has the effect of legitimising action within those limits.²⁷

Containing war and violence in world society

The overall political perspective on which the concept of the containing of war and violence in world society rests therefore consists of the following elements, the “*pentagon of containing war and violence*”:

- the ability to deter and discourage any opponent to fight a large scale war and to conduct own pin-point military action as last resort,
- the possibility of using military force in order to limit and contain particularly excessive, large-scale violence which has the potential to destroy societies;
- the willingness to counter phenomena which help to cause violence such as poverty and oppression, especially in the economic sphere, and also the recognition of a pluralism of cultures and styles of life in world society;
- the motivation to develop a culture of civil conflict management (concepts which can be summed up with the “civilisational hexagon”, global governance, and democratic peace), based on the observation, that the reduction of our action to military means have proved counterproductive and would finally overstretch the military capabilities;
and
- restricting the possession and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their

²⁶ Lonsdale, David, The nature of war in the information age. Clausewitzian future. London: Frank Cass 2004, pp. 208.

²⁷ Although there are some similarities between the military part of the concept of a new containment and “Coercive military strategy”, the main distinction may be, that in my concept ones own will is not directly imposed to the foe. Instead of that, there are ‘only’ boundaries, limits drawn to his actions, within which he is free to roam his own will; see Cimbala, Stephen J., Coercive Military Strategy. Texas A&M University Press. 1998.

delivery systems, as well as of small arms, because the proliferation of both of them is inherently destructive to social order.

The position I have put forward is oriented towards a basically peaceful global policy, and treats the progressive limitation of war and violence as both an indefinite, on-going process and as an end in itself. The lasting and progressive containment of war and violence in world society is therefore necessary for the self-preservation of states, even their survival and of the civility of individual societies and world society.

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