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THE POLITICS OF EMOTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY WARS

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Introduction

The literature on war and emotions addresses at least two different questions. The first pertains to how social actors manipulate the emotions of others in time of war. It is the case, for instance, when a given state targets civilian populations in order to generate emotions such as terror or fear, with the aim to produce some interesting military or political effect. Although this war tactic is probably as old as war itself, it was theorized in the 1920s by Giulio Douhet. This Italian military officer prophesized that 'By bombing the most vital civilian centers [an aggressor] could spread terror through the nation and quickly break down its material and moral resistance' (Douhet, 1921; 1942 (1932), p. 37). Nowadays, the 'strategic' bombings and part of the so-called 'psy-ops' (psychological operations) conducted by Western military organizations are based on the same logic. Some non-state actors like Al Qaeda or the so called 'Islamic State' also resort to this war tactic regularly.

The second research question does not approach emotions as 'objects' but, rather, as 'subjects' of war practices. The focus is on how emotions may 'move' - as per the etymology of the word emotion¹ - the soldiers' bodies towards violence (or the refusal to perpetrate violence). For instance, an important thread in the literature has documented how 'negative' emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment fostered, on all sides, the 'culture of violence' that characterized both world wars (Bartov, 1998; Dower, 1986). In parallel to this, several authors have demonstrated that a consent to violence does not only take root in 'negative'

¹ The word emotion is based on French verb 'émouvoir' (excite) which stem from Latin verb 'emovere'. The latter as the same root as 'movere' (to move).

emotions but, also, in the neutralization of 'positive' ones, particularly compassion. It is, typically, the case when the other is envisaged as an unimportant entity in bureaucratic thinking (Arendt, 1963) or as a remote 'thing' one hardly sees, hears or experiences (Neitzel & Welzer, 2013).

Both questions are equally interesting. However, since they are mostly unrelated, it seems difficult to address them both in the same text. In this chapter, I have chosen to mainly focus on the second question, namely that of the role of emotions in the naturalization or regulation of war violence.

As in the other chapters of this book, I will approach this question using a critical perspective. Critical theory (Roach 2007; Brincat, Lima and Nunes 2012) is based on the assumption that reality – in this case war and emotions – is 'socially constructed', meaning that nothing is 'taken for granted, natural or inevitable' (Basham, Belkin, & Gifkins, 2015, p. 2). Not only is this assumption a claim about the ontology of the social world, but it also meets the critical view that one needs to de-essentialize reality to pave the way for emancipation from power structures (Cox, 1986 (1981)). The second characteristic of the critical approach is a consequence of this stance. Critical scholars posit that one cannot study a given practice by using the very *episteme* (assumptions, conceptual categories, etc.) that contributes to its naturalization. In other words, one has to exercise 'epistemological vigilance' (Bachelard, 1938) vis-à-vis the mainstream discourse, either by approaching this discourse as an object of investigation (Bourdieu, Chamboredon, & Passeron, 1983) or by opening oneself to all voices, including that of those who have no access to discourse (Spivak, 1988).

When applied to the question of the politics of emotions in contemporary wars, this critical approach implies taking some distance from a profane discourse that has become loud, in the West, since the attacks of September 11, 2001: the discourse on the 'war on terror'. This discourse opposes two ideal-typical characters: the hateful 'terrorists' and the compassionate modern fighters. As pointed out by Chamayou, this mirror-game takes an extreme form when the authors of the "war-on-terror" narrative oppose the suicide bombers who (allegedly) hate all lives (including their own) and the drone operators who (allegedly) kill without hatred and suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) after accomplishing their lethal missions (Chamayou, 2013, p. 154). Like Chamayou, most critical scholars do not view this discourse as an analytical one. Rather, they interpret it as a discursive practice that contributes, along with all discursive practices, to constructing reality.

I will present the literature on the politics of emotions in contemporary wars in four steps. The first section examines more closely the constructivist ontology of emotions found in the critical literature. I will argue that Judith Butler's concept of 'frame of war' helps to conceptualize this ontology (Butler, 2010).

The three following sections will present the main theories on the politics of emotions in contemporary wars. Section two will elaborate on the most intuitive account of the emotion/violence nexus: the paradigm of 'racist' violence. It states, in line with conventional wisdom, that 'negative' emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment are a driving force of violence. Although it has mainly been used in order to characterize the 'culture of violence' of past wars, this approach does have some heuristic power in present-day wars as well.

In section three, I will talk about a slightly less intuitive set of theories that is sometimes called the paradigm of 'bureaucratic violence'. This constellation of works builds on the assumption

that violence does not only take root in negative emotions but, also, in the neutralization of 'positive' ones (love, compassion, sympathy, etc.).

In the last section, I will present a set of theories that has emerged more recently: the paradigm of 'humanitarian violence'. The proponents of this approach try to understand how one can be violent whilst displaying some sympathy for the victims. The general argument is that this can occur when one conceives of one's violent actions as a necessary means in order to avoid a 'greater evil' (Weizman, 2012).

Identifying the 'frames' that mediate the actors' emotional relation to violence

I mentioned in the introduction that critical scholars tend to conceive of reality as a social construct. This idea is not entirely intuitive when applied to emotions. Indeed, one may spontaneously assume that emotions are 'natural', 'biological' phenomena that transcend all cultures and all times. Critical students of emotions challenge this view by emphasizing the importance of historical and social contexts. They argue, furthermore, that most emotions are mediated by discursive structures (narratives, images, frames of interpretation) that are political through and through. This holds true, in particular, when talking about war emotions.

One can approach the political dimension of emotions by reflecting on how compassion is unequally distributed in war time (Butler, 2004, 2009, 2010). Butler takes the example of how most people in the West related to the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the ensuing 'war on terror'. Although the bombings and invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq killed way more innocent people than the attacks of 11 September 2001, few Westerners can claim that they reacted with the same degree of compassion to the news that Afghan and Iraqi innocents had been killed as they did towards the victims of New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. Butler interprets this as the sign that one should distance oneself from the view that emotions are triggered by the mere receipt of news or experience of violence. 'Moral horror in the face of violence', she argues, is underpinned by implicit schemes of interpretation: as long as one ignores the existence of these schemes, one remains unable 'to give an account of why the affect of horror is differentially experienced' (Butler, 2010, p. 49).

At first sight, these schemes of interpretation seem to be based on the classical realist opposition between the domestic and the international sphere. According to this line of thought, one sympathizes with the people of one's national community and shows little concern for the lives of those who do not belong to the community. Reality, however, is more complex. To start with, not all members of the national community receive the same amount of public attention and compassion. In all OECD countries, for instance, sexist domestic violence kills way more women than the so-called 'terrorist' violence. However, only the latter is framed as an existential threat that calls for the mobilization of all security agencies. Besides and symmetrically, compassion sometimes extend beyond national borders (Fassin, 2005). It is the case, typically, when a country intervenes militarily for 'humanitarian' reasons (Butler, 2010, p. 37). In order to deal with this complexity Butler proposes to call 'frames of war' those

elements of 'discourse' - in Foucault's sense² - which mediate the social agents' emotional relation towards violence in a given war context. This notion helps to grasp at least two characteristics of the discursive structures that underpin war emotions.

Firstly, the concept of frame of war is useful for revealing their selective and arbitrary nature. In this regard, Butler notes that 'frames of war' are like photographic frames. They do not represent the whole reality. Rather, they are 'always throwing something away, always keeping something out, always de-realizing and de-legitimizing alternative versions of reality, discarded negatives of the official version' (Butler, 2010, p. xi). Butler argues that the arbitrary and selective nature of 'frames of war' is perceivable in the fact that they divide populations into two categories: the 'grievable' and the 'ungrievable' lives. She defines the latter as follows: 'Ungrievable lives are those that cannot be lost, and cannot be destroyed, because they already inhabit a lost and destroyed zone; they are, ontologically, and from the start, already lost and destroyed, which means that when they are destroyed in war, nothing is destroyed' (Butler, 2010, p. xix).

She illustrates this by taking the example of how the Israeli mainstream media presented the war in Gaza in 2008-2009. Each of the 13 Israeli deaths (combatants and non-combatants) were reported in the media in an obituary-like narrative. The 1400 Palestinian victims, however, received no such attention. Men were presented as combatants, women victims as 'collateral damage', and the children as 'human shields'. Butler notes that this last expression undermines all chances of identification: 'We are asked to believe that those children are not really children, are not really alive, that they have already been turned to metal, to steel, that they belong to the machinery of bombardment, at which point the body of the child is conceived as nothing more than a militarized metal that protects the attacker against attack' (Butler, 2010, p. xxvii).

Secondly, the concept of 'frame' appears useful in conceptualizing the fact that the discursive structures that mediate the agents' emotional relation to violence are like the interpretive 'frames' studied by Goffman: they are vulnerable. In this respect, Goffman discusses the possibility of 'frame breaking' (Goffman, 1974, p. 345). According to Butler, situations of frame breaking occur 'if soldiers fail to be interpellated by the visual and narrative accounts of the wars they fight'. When this happens, Butler argues, 'they start to lose faith in what they do, claim to be ill, go AWOL, request a transfer, stop working, or simply leave' (Butler, 2010, p. xv).

One may fairly object that soldiers rarely behave like the ideal-typical 'citizens in uniform' that the Bundeswehr — today's federal defense force of Germany—officially presents as its trademark (Leonhard, 2017). Indeed, they rarely 'go AWOL, request a transfer, stop working, or simply leave' when they are at war. This has led MacLeish to assert that 'soldiers are caught

² The Foucauldian notion of 'discourse' has led to many misinterpretations. Foucault does not use the term 'discourse' in a literal way, in the way that one terms a social actor's speech or writings 'discourse'. Foucault uses the notion of 'discourse' in a metaphorical way. The metaphor opposes "language" - the medium that allows us to make an infinite number of statements - to 'discourse', the finite number of statements that are actually made. This leads him to observe that the reality we live in - i.e. all that seems natural to us (our beliefs, the things we say or do, the instruments we use, etc.) are made up of 'statements', i.e. words or things which carry social meaning. Methodologically, this entails identifying and interpreting the semiotic elements entailed in both 'discursive' (words, sentences, etc.) and 'non-discursive' practices (technologies, human artefacts, routinized actions, etc.). See: (Foucault, 1969, p. 41)

in the middle of some of the most restrictive, over-determining, and glaringly vulgar power structures that it is possible to conceive of' (MacLeish, 2013, p. 14).

However, soldiers are not the only agents of war. Civilians also play a role and their relation to war is, presumably, more subject to change. Besides, it is important to acknowledge the possibility of 'frame breaking' from the (critical) perspective of the critique of violence. One can illustrate this by taking the example of the 'enhanced interrogation methods' used by the Bush administration in the context of the 'war on terror'. In 2002, the Bush administration justified the use of violence against prisoners by putting forward a utilitarian argument: it would help to collect intelligence that would help to prevent future attacks. The Pentagon explained, in addition, that these 'enhanced interrogations' would be conducted in a 'humane', if not a fully legal way (Richter-Montpetit, 2014)³.

This frame of war was partly broken in 2006 when the U.S. magazine *Salon* published 1325 photographs and 93 videos that showed another aspect of the 'enhanced interrogation methods'. The images showed detainees being abused and forced to perform sexual acts that conservative morality condemns: oral sex between men, sodomy, sex with animals, etc. The frame was further challenged when some detainees of Guantanamo managed to write and circulate poems on their own experience of those 'enhanced interrogation methods' (Falkoff, 2007). Far from presenting these interrogations as a means of collecting information that would help to stop (terrorist) violence, the poems of Guantanamo reversed the perspective on who a perpetrator is and who a victim of violence is (Butler, 2010, pp. 55-62).

Butler's concept of 'frame of war' is useful for understanding all these aspects of war emotions. However, it says nothing about their 'color'. Do 'frames of war' generate and/or minimize 'negative' emotions such as hatred, anger, revengeful feelings, etc.? Or do they, rather, impact 'positive' emotions such as love, compassion, empathy, etc.? I shall discuss these questions in the next three sections.

When perpetrators are driven by 'negative emotions': the paradigm of 'racist' violence

Scholars disagree when assessing what particular emotions play a central role at war and how they operate in present-day wars. The first approach emphasizes the importance of negative emotions such as hatred, anger, and revengeful feelings. The general idea is that this kind of emotions contribute to 'moving' - as per the etymology of the word 'emotion' - the soldiers' bodies towards violence. At the level of representations, the key mechanism lies in the logic of 'othering'. The latter can be defined as 'the act by which difference is constituted as an inferior other' (Guillaume, 2011, p. 3). The logic of othering is pervasive in most war propaganda discourses that demonize the enemy.

³ This narrative has been popularized by the Hollywood movie 'Zero Dark Thirsty'. More generally speaking, it is a central element of the 'Military-Industrial Media-Entertainment Network' (Der Derian, 2009).

This approach has also been used in order to shed some light on those contemporary wars that have a strong ethno-nationalist basis. This paradigm fuels, for instance, the mainstream explanation for the genocide of the Tutsi in Rwanda. The narrative states that the Hutu and Tutsi identities, constructed during the colonial period, exacerbated in the early 1990s when the 'Hutu power' government launched an intense propaganda campaign that portrayed the Tutsi as 'under men' and animals, notably 'cockroaches'. According to Jean-Pierre Chrétien and Marcel Kabanda, this propaganda campaign formed the discursive underpinning of the genocide that took place between April and July 1994 (Chrétien & Kabanba, 2013). These authors further point out that the propaganda campaign drew upon an imaginary – the 'Hamitic ideology' – which reproduced the old European racist opposition between 'Aryans' and 'Semites' in the Rwandan context.

The logic of 'othering' does not always draw upon such racist schemes. It can also be based on the notion that some groups are culturally inferior to others. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein have coined the notion of 'cultural racism' or 'neo-racism' to account for those world visions which hierarchize populations by positing that some cultures are superior to others (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991, p. 21). A typical example is the (neo)colonial view that Europe is more developed, culturally, than most other parts of the world, and that it is her 'burden' - or the White man's - to correct this inequality by exporting civilization overseas (Hobson, 2012).

Now, several post-colonial theorists have highlighted that the present-day wars waged by the U.S. and its allies often result from this logic of othering where 'scientific racism has receded (though not disappeared) with cultural racism forming the mainstay of Eurocentrism' (Hobson, 2007, p. 105). It is the case, typically, when the Western war rhetoric presents the Western soldiers as 'white men saving brown women from brown men'. This Orientalist (Said, 1979) trope was not only central during the British colonization of India (Spivak, 1988) but also contributed to justifying the US-led war in Afghanistan in 2001 (Ayotte & Husain, 2005). More generally, as noted by Barkawi and Stanski, 'the public discourses of the War on Terror are suffused with orientalism. Law abiding, Christian and Western civilization is threatened by 'mad mullahs' who hail from an East ever-resistant to modernity and who use violence in ways that violate the most fundamental ethical protocols of armed conflict' (Barkawi & Stanski, 2013). This neo-colonial logic of othering generates a neo-colonial politics of emotions, 'a combination of cruelty and compassion that sophisticated social institutions enable and encourage' (Asad, 2007, p. 3).

The aforementioned studies posit war rhetoric as an important vector of the current politics of negative emotions. These studies have been criticized, but also complemented, by those authors who have called for a more sociological and pragmatic approach to the emotion/war nexus. Their general argument is that emotions are not only constructed by civilian powers before the decision to go to war, but are also 'generic to wartime' (Barkawi, 2004, p. 135).

This idea is central, for instance, in a component of René Girard's theory of 'mimetic violence' built in a series of his books, among which *Violence and the Sacred* and *The scapegoat* (Girard, 1979, 1989). Girard's point of departure is that many conflicts take the form of 'vicious circles of violence'. He explains this common pattern by pointing to a general mechanism: Most conflicts are violent interactions in which it is difficult to determine who "cast the first stone", and in which most parties tend to interpret the enemy's violence as primary and unjustifiable. As a result, one tends to represent the enemy as a cruel person and, consequently, develop resentment, anger or even hatred. According to Girard, this symmetrical pattern quickly leads

to a vicious circle. Furthermore, he posits that this vicious circle has no reason to stop unless violence is directed towards a scapegoat or appeased through rituals of justice or reconciliation.

In an article published in the French newspaper *Le Monde* in November 2001⁴, Girard pointed out that this cognitive mechanism is at play in what is called, in the West, the 'war on terror'. It is this mechanism that explains the 9/11 attacks. Indeed, from the perspective of their perpetrators, these attacks aimed at responding to the U.S. military presence in the Middle-East and the violent operations conducted in the Muslim world, such as the bombing of the Al Shifa pharmaceutical plant in Sudan in 1998. However, the U.S. government did not interpret it that way. Rather, it framed the violence of the 9/11 attacks as 'primary' and non-sensical and decided, consequently, to take revenge by invading Afghanistan.

Girard did not believe that in the case of the crisis that followed the 9/11 attacks, violence could be contained through a scapegoat mechanism or some legal action. On the contrary, he anticipated that a vicious circle of violence would ensue. So far, he has not been proven wrong. Indeed, the US and some of its allies have continued the 'war on terror' in Iraq. In response to the military actions of the U.S-led coalition, two attacks were subsequently carried out in Madrid and London in 2004 and 2005. Thus, the frequency of 'terrorist' attacks has increased (Braithwaite, 2015) and new counter-terrorist wars have been launched in Pakistan, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and other countries. Today, no end to this vicious circle of violence is in sight (Bertrand & Delori, 2015). As Souillac pointed out, following Girard, mimesis has reached the point where 'the cycle of defense, attack, and counterattack allows the conflict to take on a separate life, and even value, of its own, beyond the original cause of the conflict' (Souillac, 2014, p. 346).

When actors cannot positively identify with the victims: the paradigm of 'bureaucratic violence'

In the previous section I presented the studies that assume that 'negative' emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment are the driving force of violence in war time. These approaches have been challenged by authors who argue that one does not need to hate the other to feel able to kill the latter. This ability can occur through cold-dehumanization or, to put it differently, through the neutralization of the 'positive' emotions (empathy, sympathy, compassion...) that one experiences when one 'recognizes' the other as an *Alter-Ego* (another self).

This alternative account of the emotion/violence nexus emerged in the 1960s when some European thinkers tried to understand the process that led to the Holocaust. These scholars wanted to gain a more precise understanding of what seemed specific to this genocide, namely, its organized, planned, industrial and bureaucratic nature. Arendt made an important contribution to this debate in her famous essay 'Eichmann in Jerusalem' (Arendt, 1963#276).

⁴ Girard, R. (2001). 'Ce qui se joue aujourd'hui est une rivalité mimétique à l'échelle planétaire', 5 novembre, entretien avec Henry Tincq. *Le Monde*.

The famous subtitle of the book - 'Essay on the banality of evil' - stems from the notion that Eichmann was neither particularly sadistic nor racist. Rather, he was, according to her, a typical bureaucrat who obeyed orders and had no reflective thought on the moral consequences of his actions: 'The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal'. Arendt's account of Eichmann's behavior was very much based on Eichmann's line of defense during his trial in Jerusalem in 1961. When facing his judges, Eichmann claimed no agency and minimized his knowledge of the violence perpetrated against the Jews.

Arendt's book led to important debates within academia and, also, in the mainstream media. Some historians and intellectuals thought that her argument concerning Eichmann himself was not absolutely accurate. According to Jacob Robinson, for instance, Arendt committed a moral and epistemological error by presenting Eichmann as a mere bureaucrat who obeyed orders. Indeed, this was Eichmann's very line of defense. Yet there might well be a gap between justifications and motivations, especially when the former are made in a court of justice. In reality, Robinson argued, Eichmann was far more anti-Semitic and sadistic than what he said to his judges (Robinson, 1965).

Arendt did not entirely discard this critique but argued that her study helped to understand a more general mechanism, namely the fact that human beings often participate in violent operations because they simply lose sight of the moral consequences of their actions. She argued, moreover, that modern bureaucracies contributed to this logic: 'The greater the bureaucratization of public life, the greater will be the attraction of violence. In a fully developed bureaucracy there is nobody left with whom one could argue, to whom one could present grievances, on whom the pressures of power could be exerted' (Arendt, 1969, p. 18). In this debate, Arendt found an ally in the person of Stanley Milgram. From 1960 to 1963 Milgram conducted experiments on how people reacted when someone in charge asked them to inflict suffering to a defenseless person. Milgram's findings validated Arendt's argument: only few rebel when they are told to be violent against others, even when the justifications do not make any sense (Milgram, 1974).

Arendt and Milgram's paradigm of 'bureaucratic violence' was further developed by thinkers from the Frankfurter school of sociology (Roach 2007) such as Axel Honneth (Honneth, 2007) and, more generally, by 'recognition theorists' (Levinas, 2001; Ricoeur, 2005). These authors have revisited the Marxist notion of 'reification'⁵ and argue that the latter does not only affect the Self, who becomes unable to act as a creative agent but, also, how individuals relate to each other. Following this line of thought, reification is the discursive process through which a person becomes framed as a 'thing', i.e. as something that one neither hates nor empathizes with. French philosopher Levinas made an imaginative contribution to this approach by putting forward the metaphor of the face. By erasing faces, modernity contributes to undermining the ethical obligation to consider the other as another self (Levinas, 2001).

Now, several critical scholars have relied on this framework and emphasized that the recognition of Alter as an Alter-Ego has become unlikely in contemporary wars. Many of them

⁵ In Marx' work, reification refers to a historical process whereby individuals lose their subjectivity and expressive power. So defined, the notion of 'reification' appeared as by-word for 'alienation'. It is best exemplified by the shift from handicraft to industrial production and from the craftsman to the worker. Whereas the craftsman can see the result of his work, the worker's expressive power gets lost into the division of labor.

have done so by uncovering how language can contribute to preventing the non-violent and ethical encounter conceptualized by Levinas. For instance, C. Cohn has conducted an ethnographic study among the civilian 'defense intellectuals' of the Rand Corporation who developed the American nuclear deterrence theories at the end of the Cold War. At the time, the U.S. and the Soviet Union possessed more than 10,000 nuclear warheads which were, on average, 400 times as destructive as the Hiroshima bomb. Consequently, Cohn takes a critical perspective on these nuclear theories and asks the following question: in which world does one have to live in order to believe, as nuclear deterrence theorists do, that 'it is safe to have weapons of a kind and number it is not safe to use' (Cohn, 1987, p. 687). Her main finding is that nuclear deterrence theories make sense within a particular sociolect, the 'techno-strategic language', whose main characteristic is its high degree of abstraction. She points out, for instance, that defense intellectuals talk about nuclear explosions by using periphrases such as 'first strikes', 'counterforce exchange', 'limited nuclear war', etc. (Cohn, 1987, p. 688). She argues that this language is the antonym of poetic language. It euphemizes violence and says nothing about the potential human and emotional consequences of a nuclear explosion (Cohn, 1987, p. 689). She notes, reflexively, that this language impacted her own framing of nuclear warfare: 'The more conversations I participated in using this language, the less frightened I was of nuclear war' (Cohn, 1987, p. 704).

Hugh Gusterson's study on 'nuclear rites' provides additional insight into another vector of the reifying trends at play in nuclear weaponry, namely technological fetishism (Gusterson, 1998). Gusterson conducted an ethnographic study among the scientists and engineers of the Livermore laboratory (California), i.e. the institute where most U.S. nuclear weapons are produced. Like Cohn, Gusterson observes that these agents of the nuclear weaponry system believe in nuclear deterrence: 'The laboratory is organized ideologically around a central axiom, accepted by liberal and conservative weapon scientists alike, that nuclear weapons are weapons so terrible that their only function is to deter wars, not to fight them, and that it is therefore ethical to work on them' (Gusterson, 1998, p. 220). Gusterson addresses the question raised by Cohn a decade earlier: he investigates the social construction of the representation of nuclear weapons as 'deterrent' and, therefore, 'peace' weapons. He observes, in line with Cohn's seminal study, that language plays a central role in this respect: 'The discourse makes it hard for scientists to identify with the vulnerability of the human body in the nuclear age because this discourse, eschewing references to pain and suffering, euphemistically figures damaged bodies as numbers or in the imaginary of a broken machinery, while encouraging a romantic identification with the fetishized power of high technology machines' (Gusterson, 1998, p. 220). Yet Gusterson brings an original and additional contribution in his analysis of what he calls the 'nuclear rites' of scientists and engineers. He defines 'rites' as sociologists of religions would do, namely as repetitive behaviors through which believers 'embody' their beliefs. Gusterson shows that the scientists and engineers who work at Livermore laboratory perform ritual practices on various occasions: when they join the laboratory, when they get their security clearance, when they attend their first nuclear test, etc. During each rite, the faces of the potential victims of nuclear explosions are, literally, absent. Indeed, the nuclear rites work like religious rites. Their function is not to represent the reality they refer to but, rather, to delineate the borders of the community of those who believe in the moral character of the bombs.

Starting from similar premises, Christophe Wasinski has shown that reification is not specific to nuclear deterrence theory but a key feature of 'strategic thinking' in general. More

precisely, Wasinski has studied the key texts of 'Euro-Atlantic' strategic thinking since the 17th century, particularly those which addressed the issue of the 'art of war'. He observes that this literature shows a high degree of homogeneity and that it 'borrows much from the Renaissance' geometrism" (Wasinski, 2010, p. 84). Far from being neutral, this framing of war 'generates the social conviction that the use of military force is not only technically possible but, also, potentially useful' (Wasinski, 2010, p. 11). Like Cohn before him, Wasinski proceeds by observing that this distortion becomes noticeable when one thinks of what the frame does not show, namely violence and, more precisely, its consequences on human beings: 'the social belief in the utility of the use of force may not only stem from the accumulation of factual evidence (the fact that some given military operations 'worked') but also from a particular way of talking about military violence, which proves to also be a way of keeping silent about suffering' (Wasinski, 2010, p. 12).

This approach, which consists in uncovering the reifying power at play in modern fighting, has met with new success in the context of the so-called 'revolution in military affairs'. This expression refers to the fact that Western warfare has undergone some changes since the introduction in the 1990s of new technologies such as remote-control systems and guided munitions which make it possible to wage war and kill from a distance. Although armed drones provide an ideal-typical illustration of this tendency, it is important to note that several other technologies make it possible to wage war and kill from a distance. For instance, fighter-bomber jets were and have been used extensively by countries like the USA, Britain and France in Yugoslavia (1995), Kosovo (1999), Afghanistan (since 2001), Iraq (since 2003), Libya (since 2011), Mali and Sahel (since 2013) and Syria (since 2014). During each of these wars, the U.S., British and French air forces have dropped bombs from altitudes such that they made it almost impossible for their enemies to inflict any damage on them. This has resulted in a highly asymmetrical distribution of violence. Whereas they have dropped hundreds of thousands of bombs and probably killed as many people, not a single American, British or French airman has been killed during any of these operations. Consequently, it is possible to talk about a 'new Western way of war' (Shaw, 2006) whereby air power in general (not only drone warfare) has become the main instrument.

Hence, several critical scholars have tried to understand how drone operators and air force pilots make sense of the violence they perpetrate (Allinson, 2015; Chamayou, 2013; Gregory, 2015; Hippler, 2014; Holmqvist, 2013). Part of this literature has addressed the question of de-humanization and reification. Most of these studies converge in assessing that the aforementioned new war technologies add another dimension to the reifying dynamics encapsulated in the 'old' way of war. Thus, Frédéric Gros has highlighted that these new technologies shape an economic framing of war where 'death is no longer exchanged. Rather, it is distributed, sowed, calculated' (Gros, 2006, p. 223). Parallel to this, Der Derian and Kaplan have argued that these new technologies contribute to erasing the boundary between reality and fiction (Der Derian, 2009; Kaplan, 2015). a similar argument is found in the literature on the 'play-station' mentality of drone operators. Thus, a plethora of books and articles point out that the victim of drone strikes is 'reduced to an anonymous simulacrum that flickers across the screen' (Pugliese, 2011, p. 943) or that drone operators are 'morally disengaged from [their] destructive and lethal actions' (Royakkers & van Est, p. 289).

Showing a degree of compassion to everyone: the paradigm of 'humanitarian violence'

The previous sections presented the most classical approaches to the dialectic of war and emotions dialectics. To a certain extent, one could say that the figure of Eichmann haunts this critical scholarship. Like Eichmann (the ideal-typical character portrayed by Arendt or the real person) the agents of war are said to be unable to see the 'human face' of the people they kill, either because they hate them (section 2) or because they reify them in a colder way (section 3). In the following paragraphs I will present an approach that has emerged more recently: the paradigm of 'humanitarian violence' (Weizman, 2012).

Agents of 'humanitarian violence' do not hate the people they kill. Nor are they entirely indifferent to their fate. They know that they perform an evil act when they kill innocent people, but they consider that it is sometimes necessary to do so in order to prevent a greater evil from occurring. The reason why they can (logically) think in that way lies in the fact that they have an economic approach to morality and violence. They reject the Manichean view that actions are either good or evil and adopt, instead, the principle of the lesser evil. Weizman defines this rationale as follows: 'The principle of the lesser evil is often presented as a dilemma between two or more bad choices in situations where available options are—or seem to be—limited. The choice made justifies harmful actions that would otherwise be unacceptable, since it allegedly averts even greater suffering' (Weizman, 2012, p. 6).

Weizman shows that this rationale works at all levels of present-day Western wars. In terms of war rhetoric, the most obvious illustration is the discourse on the 'humanitarian wars'. Indeed, the notion of 'humanitarian war' implies that it is morally justified to wage war against a given state if this violence helps to prevent or stop greater violence framed as human rights violation. Although this rhetoric is hardly new, a more modern and powerful formulation emerged in the 1980s when some French doctors and other humanitarian activists coined the notions of 'right to intervene' and, then, 'duty to intervene'. In the 1990s, this rationale was used to justify the U.S./NATO wars in Somalia (1994), Yugoslavia (1995), and Kosovo (1999). It was given a legal basis in 2005 when the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the principle of 'responsibility to protect'. It was further used when NATO intervened in Libya in 2011, France in Mali in 2013, and the USA, France and Britain in Syria in 2014.

The humanitarian principle of the lesser evil is also central in the justification of some war practices. For instance, Mélanie Richter-Montpetit has analyzed how the Bush administration developed a legal basis for the policy of torture implemented from 2002 on in the context of the 'war on terror' (Richter-Montpetit, 2014). The legal framework relied, firstly, on the characterization of the detainees as 'unlawful combatant'. As stated in the Pentagon directive of February 7, 2002, this implied that 'none of the provisions of Geneva apply to our conflict with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere throughout the world' (Richter-Montpetit, 2014, p. 49). On August 1, 2002, another Pentagon document specified what U.S. soldiers and C.I.A. officers were authorized to do (or not) when interrogating a prisoner. The key idea was that the amount of suffering and humiliation inflicted was to be proportional to the objective. If the information that the soldiers hoped to collect had little value, they were to use the minimum amount of violence. If it had 'high value', they might go as far as inflicting 'the pain

accompanying serious injury, such as organ failure, impairment of body function, or even death' (Richter-Montpetit, 2014, p. 49).

Weizman takes a critical stance vis-à-vis the humanitarian principle of the lesser evil. In line with Arendt (Arendt, 1994 (1954)), he notes that, politically, the weakness of the argument has always been that those who choose the lesser evil forget very quickly that they chose evil' (Weizman, 2012, p. 27). Whatever one may think, philosophically or politically, about the rationale of the lesser evil, it is important to note that it does not only operate at the level of discursive practices but also as part of some concrete apparatuses ('dispositifs' in Foucault's sense) that contribute to naturalizing the notion that it is morally justified to cause evil in order to avoid greater evil.

The notion that concrete apparatuses may convey meaning lies at the core of modern science and technology studies (STS). Indeed, specialists of STS build on the observation that technologies are not neutral. As social artefacts, they carry the meaning(s) that their inventors put into them. Besides, they have some impact on how their users make sense of the world. Finally, their users may attribute all sorts of qualities to them, including moral ones. The reason for this lies in the fact that the terms 'technology' or 'technical' are misleading. Some users do not conceive of the objects that they manipulate as technical because 'the term applies to a regime of enunciation, or, to put it another way, to a mode of existence, a particular form of the exploration of being - in the midst of many others' (Latour & Venn, 2002). The notion of 'moral technology' (Ophir, 2002) is useful in order to grasp how some social agents may project moral values onto the instruments they manipulate.

One 'moral technology' plays a central role in contemporary Western wars: the so-called 'rules of engagement' (Delori, 2014, 2017/2018). These rules take the form of (written) texts which state the circumstances under which the soldiers/air force pilots are authorized to open fire. Belief in the 'moral' value of these technologies stems from the fact that their users perceive them as invitations to "control" or 'moderate' violence. This framing stems from the fact that the rules of engagement translate the key principles of International Humanitarian Law into concrete military procedures. For instance, they provide a concrete and operational translation of the 'proportionality' principle by stating how many 'non-combatants' the Western military are authorized to kill - or put at risk - in order to destroy a given military target. In this regard, the so-called 'non-combatant casualty cut-off value, or NCCV, is a central value in contemporary Western war: the 'non-combatant casualty cut-off value' (NCCV). A NCCV = 0 means that the soldiers/air force pilots should put no 'non-combatant' at risk. A NCCV = 10 means that they are allowed to open fire if they estimate that they will not kill more than 10 civilians.

NCCV depends, notably, on two factors. It depends, firstly, on the subjective assessment of the 'value' of civilians. In this respect, the most important variable is geographical or/and racial. When a 'terrorist' attack occurs on the territory of a Western state, the NCCV used by police and military forces is close to zero, meaning that they do not want to put at risk any French or Western civilian. When they operate in the non-Western world, however, the NCCV rises significantly. This is why Western forces use different instruments depending on whether

they operate in a Western country or in other parts of the world: elite commandos on the ground in the former case, armed drones and fighter-bomber jets in the latter⁶.

Secondly, the NCCV depends on the subjective assessment of the value of the military target. During the US war in Iraq, for instance, the Rules Of Engagement allowed for an NCCV of 29 for each 'high-value military target'. This meant, in practice, that pilots were allowed to kill up to 29 civilians in order to eliminate a high-ranking member of 'Al Qaida' or a senior official of Saddam Hussein's regime. When the target is just a rank-and-file jihadist, the NCCV falls significantly. This means, in practice, that the value of non-western human lives is a function of the target's value. The framing of a person as a 'high value military target' means that more people situated nearby can be killed or, at least, put at risk.

Of course, it is impossible to calculate precisely the number of non-combatant casualties that a bomb will make. There are too many uncertainties: is this the right target? Will the bomb really hit it? Is this moving figure a child or a dog? etc. However, these uncertainties disappear when the 'moral technologies' associated with rules of engagement come to the fore. Since the air war in Kosovo in 1999, most NATO aircraft have been equipped with a software program called 'FAST-CD' (Fast Assessment Strike Tool-Collateral Damage). The software helps to estimate the 'collateral damage' and checks whether it is above the NCCV stated in the ROE. As Pomarède explained, it does so by representing the targeted area through concentric circles centered on the impact point. A number is assigned to each concentric circle. It indicates the probability, for each person located within a circle's radius, of being killed when the bomb explodes. At the impact point, the probability is generally 100%. Along the outermost circle, the probability drops to a few percentage points (Pomarede, 2014). This kind of new technology helps to transform incalculable uncertainty into calculated risk. Weizman notes, in this respect, that the agents of 'humanitarian violence' are 'like the finance specialists who acknowledge the impossibility of prediction but do little else than calculate'. They are 'incessantly weighing their options and hedging their risks under the assumption of unpredictability and uncertainty' (Weizman, 2012, p. 12).

This results in an ambivalent and paradoxical relation to mathematics. On the one hand, and as explained above, agents of humanitarian violence run tons of mathematical calculations. On the other hand, and paradoxically, the actual number of deaths and injuries hardly counts in the assessment of what is moral and what is not. For instance, the fact that the 'moral technologies' used by the Western military kill way more civilians than the indiscriminate violence perpetrated by 'terrorists' does not lead to any 'frame breaking' in Goffman's sense (Goffman, 1974).

Two implicit schemes or 'frames' explain this paradoxical relation to mathematics and numbers. According to the first, the 'way' in which violence is perpetrated matters more than the actual level of violence. As Weizman puts it, 'it is the very act of calculation - the very fact that calculation took place - that justifies action' (Weizman, 2012, p. 12). This logic is pervasive in the following excerpt of an interview with a pilot whose bomb just killed civilians. The civilians' death was not accidental. The pilot knew that his bomb would kill civilians. He decided to drop it because the number of civilians was inferior to the non-combatant cut-off

⁶ It is important to stress, in this respect, that the choice between these two security instruments does not result from technical considerations. As the assassination of Bin Laden illustrates, Western governments do not hesitate to send elite troops on the ground when they deem this necessary.

value. Hence, the pilot explained: 'I didn't try to kill civilians. I focused on military targets and tried my very best every day to minimize civilian casualties' (Weizman, 2012, p. 134). According to Weizman, this testimony is typical of 'the way the economy of violence structures the humanitarian present' (Weizman, 2012, p. 134).

The second implicit assumption is at once humanitarian and un-democratic. It posits that although all lives matter in principle, some lives count more than others in practice. A micro illustration of this rationale can be found in Delori's analysis of how French air force pilots recount their 'air support' missions, i.e. missions in which pilots drop bombs to save comrades-in-arms who are caught under enemy fire. These missions may involve killing more 'innocent people' than the actual number of Western combatants caught under enemy fire. However, this does not throw into question the pilots' self-representation as moral agents because the characters in their narratives, i.e. their 'comrades in arms' on the one hand and the 'collateral victims, on the other, are positioned at the opposite ends of 'economy of pity'⁷. They are all deemed 'human' in an abstract way but are not 'equally human'. Whereas 'comrades in arms' must be defended at all cost, the killing of (non-Western) 'collateral victims' can be framed as a tolerable sin through which greater evil can be prevented. As Asad pointed out, this is a reminder that the frame of 'humanitarian violence' is like any other frame of war. It is distorted by heavy power structures: 'The perception that human life has differential exchange value in the marketplace of death when it comes to 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' people is not only quite common in liberal democratic countries, it is necessary to a hierarchical global order' (Asad, 2007, p. 94).

Conclusion

From the above, it emerges that the politics of emotions in contemporary wars take, at least, three different forms. I have proposed to conceptualize them in terms of 'racist', 'bureaucratic', and 'humanitarian' violence. Each logic draws upon a specific representation/emotion nexus. Thus, the logic of 'racist' violence leads perpetrators to frame victims as inferior others and, therefore, as objects of negative emotions such as hatred, anger or resentment. The logic of 'bureaucratic' violence dehumanizes the victims in a colder way by undermining the positive emotions that one experiences when confronted with the suffering of an Alter Ego (compassion, pity, empathy...). Finally, the frame of 'humanitarian violence' draws upon a less Manichean politics of emotions whereby perpetrators show some compassion to everybody whilst identifying more with some people than others.

One may alternatively describe the differences between these three frames of war in mathematical terms by observing that agents of 'racist' violence attribute negative value to

⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville coined the notion of 'economy of pity' in order to account for the fact that human beings experience compassion in a selective way. Tocqueville believed the democratic movement would lead to a democratization of compassion. Therefore, he associated selective compassion to the old regime. In *Democracy, Revolution and Society*, Tocqueville takes the example of Madame de Sévigné, a person that Tocqueville presents as the archetype of the gentle aristocrat of the old regime. Tocqueville argues that Madame de Sévigné does not hate anybody. However, Tocqueville argues, Madame de Sévigné is unable to feel compassion for anyone who is not an aristocrat. (Tocqueville, 1980 (1835), p. 105)

the people they kill, that agents of 'bureaucratic' violence grant no value to their victims, and that agents of 'humanitarian' violence draw upon a more complex weighing of the value of human lives. Contrary to racists and bureaucrats, agents of 'humanitarian violence' grant some positive value to all lives. However, they consider that some lives count more than others. They infer from what that the above that it is rational, and even moral, to 'kill' or 'let die' the former in order to 'enable' the latter to live (Foucault, 1997 (1976)). As shown above, the notion of 'non-combatant casualty cut-off value' encapsulates this positive but un-democratic framing in the 'liberal way of war' (Dillon & Reid, 2009)

It is tempting, at first sight, to hypothesize that these logics operate in different cultures, spaces or times. Indeed, a well constituted narrative states that Westerners used to demonize or reify their victims in the past but that they have stopped doing so in the last few decades. If one was to follow this line of thought, one would consider that racist and bureaucratic violence characterize the old Western way of war and the current non-Western war practices, and that the frame of 'humanitarian violence' is typical of the 'new' Western way of war (Shaw, 2006). Such a conclusion would be misleading. Indeed, it emerges from what precedes that most war practices show a certain degree of racist, bureaucratic and humanitarian logics. To quote only one example, each logic is present in the present-day Western wars although they do not operate at the same level or with the same strength. Therefore, it seems more accurate to conceive of the three aforementioned framings as ideal-types in Max Weber's sense, i.e. as abstractions that help us to shed some light on the different politics of emotions at war.

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