Peace and Security

Reflections on the 80th Anniversary of the End of World War II

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LECTURE NOTES

Preliminary remarks:

World War II – background: World War I and its aftermath

World War II,

***different* war-related events/*experiences* (individually and collectively)**

***different* stories (*narratives*) about the war and about what we could learn from it.**

Geopolitical developments (short reminder):

'*World* War II'; started as **a *European*** war:

(i) Central/East-Europe (changing borders: Czech-Republic/Sudetenland, Poland; 1938-1939); Sept. 1939, UK declared war, soon after the German attack on Poland;

(ii) North-West Europe (strategically, and economically; occupation of Denmark, Norway, collaboration with Sweden, spring 1940; the German attack on France, Be-Ne-Lux, summer 1940). Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (Germany and Soviet Union; fall 1939, until summer 1941);

(iii) Southern Europe (Spain, Franco – 30s, civil war; supported by Germany and Italy; Italian attack on Ethiopia, 1935; in Balkan, spring 1941)

Then, North Africa (for oil; Suez), 1940-1943 (Rummel).

British and French colonies, involved in WW2 in various ways (Africa, Asia)

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Japan, occupation Manchuria, parts of China (1937 – e.g., massacre in Nanjing, 1938-1939); further on, in Asia.

Then, Japan, attack on Pearl Harbor, 7. Dec. 1941: USA joined the war, militarily. Stayed there till Japan surrendered 2.9.1945, after Atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, 6. and 9. August 1945.

Different *experiences* (individually and collectively):

(i) casualties (including civilians) – e.g., Soviet Union versus USA
(ii) military occupation (civilians) versus military personnel fighting abroad (soldiers)
(iii) being on the 'right side' or on the 'wrong side' (socio-culturally and militarily), as to severe guilt-questions (on the winning side or on the losing side)

Different *conceptions (narratives)*, *post*-WW2:

ad (ii) and (iii): e.g., (a) Richard Rorty versus Karl-Otto Apel (at the *World Congress for Philosophy*, in Vienna 1968); also, (b) John Rawls versus Jürgen Habermas. (E.g., Gunnar Skirbekk, 'The Epistemic Status of the Principle of Justice in Habermas and Rawls', *Acta Universitatis Lodziensis*, 38/2021, p. 7-14; available on homepage)

Remark: Rorty and Rawls, in USA, early years, after WW2; versus USA today, with dramatic tensions (also within and between Western states, e.g. USA and EU): What then, as to 'reasonable persons', 'reasonable disagreements', and 'overlapping consensus'? - versus the need for, and possibility of, a (reasonable) epistemic defense of basic principles, coping with political and geopolitical tensions, conflicts and crises (as in Apel and Habermas).

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Terminology (words, concepts): ‘East’-‘West’ (‘T_0’)

– ‘West’ ?:

USA or Europe?

Northern Europe or Southern Europe? – Eastern Europe or Western Europe?

E.g., there are major institutional and socio-political differences between Scandinavia and the Anglo-American world. (Cp., e.g., G.S. *Multiple Modernities. A Tale of Scandinavian Experiences*, 2011; Chinese version, 2013. Available on homepage.)

‘East and West’: some historical reminders:

The ‘first (Greek) philosopher’, and thereby founder of ‘western thought’, Thales, lived in Melitus, in Asia – on the coast of Asia Minor; same for Anaximander and Anaximenes; and for Heraclitus. In that sense they were ‘Asians’.

Greek culture was influenced from the East, from Asia: e.g. alphabet (from the Phoenicians), parts of mathematics (from various sources);

and Greek culture influenced neighboring parts of Asia: e.g., the eastern realm of the Roman Empire, around the Mediterranean (*Mare Nostrum*, Our Ocean) – including (today) 3 continents: (large parts of) Europe, (large parts of Eastern) Asia (especially during the rule of Alexander of Macedon, 356-323 BC), and (Northern) Africa (cp., the library in Alexandria).

Moreover, Christ, and his Jewish disciples and early followers, were Asian - under Roman rule (recall Pontius Pilatus); and the Evangelists, from that region, wrote (what we call the New Testament) in Greek;

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Common **concerns and reflections**, about WW2 – *despite* different events, experiences and narratives

1945: ***nie wieder!*** Never again!

United Nations (1945): to secure **peace** and **human rights**!

(UN, at the beginning, around 50 member states. For one thing, before decolonization of British and French colonies. For instance, few Arab/Muslim states had a seat when it was decided to establish a Jewish state in Palestine, November 29, 1947. At that time, there were 53 member states; 33 voted for a Jewish state, side by side with a Palestinian state. Today, there are more than 190 member states.)

Nuremberg trials – international justice, according to **universal principles** (not 'winner, against loser'. However, no one on the allied side has been brought to trial; not Churchill- cp. bombing of civilians, as in Dresden; nor Stalin – cp. Gulag.)

First period (1945-1991) – 'Two Powers': USA versus Soviet Union

Early post-war period, from the beginning (broadly speaking): **two paths**, **two narratives**.

'UNITED NATIONS' ('UN') versus 'COLD WAR' ('CW')

'**UN**'

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(some) *interstate collaboration* and (both peaceful and militant) *decolonization*, (some) *economic and technological growth*, and thereby, some *geo-political optimism* (despite 'oil-crisis' and an early awareness of 'limits to growth', in the 1970's).

'**CW**'

Cold War, between *USA* ('*West*') and *Soviet Union* ('*East*')

typically: 'the free world' against 'communism'

NATO (*North Atlantic Treaty Organization*), founded in1949; ***Warsaw Pact***, in1955

Various **peace movements** - strengthened by the **Vietnam War** (1965-1975).

Initiatives against the use of **nuclear weapons** – such as the **Russell-Einstein Manifesto,** 1955, and **Pugwash** (founded by Joseph Rotblat and Bertrand Russell, 1957).

Dubrovnik as an **intellectual meeting place** between 'East' and 'West', 'North' and 'South' ('Non-Aligned States'; Non-Aligned Movement, NAM) - from the early 1970's to the 1990's and the outbreak of the war on the Balkans, with NATO interventions from 1994, without a UN mandate.

During this 'post-war' period: **various political and military conflicts**, such as Iran 1953, Algerie 1954, the Suez-crisis 1956, the Cuba-crisis 1962, conflicts due to Zionist expansion and colonization in Palestine (as in 1967), the Vietnam War 1965-1975 (USA defeated; a war visualized by new media, a war that strongly influenced the 'youth revolt' of 1968).

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The **Fall of the Wall** in Berlin, on the 9th of November 1989; the **collapse of the Soviet Union** and the **dissolution of the Warsaw Pact**, in 1991.

Neo-liberalist '**shock reform**' in ex-Soviet Union in the 1990's – **no success**; from Yeltsin to Putin

Second period (1991-2021) – 'One major power': USA, 'international police': 'War on Terror', 'Axis of Evil'

(broadly speaking) a **widespread optimism** (in 'western' countries): (i) **economic growth** by **global capitalism** and (ii) **peaceful coexistence** between **democratic states**:

'Fortunately, we all move in that direction, becoming more like the US – the dominant and attractive hegemon!'

Hence, *The End of History* (Francis Fukuyama, 1992).

Once the Warsaw pact dissolved and the Soviet Union collapsed (1991), **then: why NATO**?

Dissolve NATO?

On the contrary:

1. NATO, **redefined and reorganized**: '**NATO out of area'!**
2. NATO – expansion: **new member states**, also former members of the Warsaw pact.

From now on, not just a **North Atlantic** military **defense** organization; from now on: a military organization capable of **successfully attacking** potential enemies in other countries and regions – **either** (i) to prevent

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possible unfriendly interventions from these countries ('preemptive strike'), **or** (ii) for humanitarian reasons: **either** (ii, a) defending groups of people who are badly threatened by some foreign regime, **or** (ii, b) intervening in order to install a stable democracy in that country.

E.g.:

Yugoslavia 1999: (ii,a) [in comparison: what about Gaza 2025?], and, gradually, (ii,b)

Iraq 2003: (i) [the argument about nuclear weapons turned out to be a lie], and (ii,b)

Libya 2011: (ii,a) [with UN mandate; in comparison: what about Gaza 2025?], and gradually (ii,b) [without UN mandate]

The switch **from** military defense, against a military attack by hostile forces, **to** militarily attacking other states, possibly in foreign regions, this switch is quite demanding, **epistemically** and **normatively.**

Epistemically:

Military defense: needs, primarily, instrumental capabilities (natural sciences and technology, and socio-administrative capabilities).

Attacking a foreign country, in order to install a modern democracy: then, there is also a need for humanities (socio-cultural and institutional capabilities, required by complex modern societies).

As to the latter, cp. this kind of failures, in Western military inventions (initiated after 9/11, as a war against terrorism), intending to change a foreign regime, to become a reasonable modern state, though mostly without success, as in Afghanistan (2001-2021), Iraq (2003), and Libya (2011).

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Similar failures, in the idealistic and optimistic 'Arab Spring' around 2011: in general, underestimating the need, in modern science-based and institutionally differentiated societies, for institutional differentiations with related learning processes and constitutive roles, norms, identities and capabilities. (Cp. G.S., *Multiple Modernities*, 2011, Chinese 2013; short version, 'Processes of Modernisation: Scandinavian Experiences', *Transcultural Studies*, 14(2018): 133-149. Available, homepage)

Normatively:

United Nation, General Assembly, Sept. 16, 2005: '**Responsibility to protect'** - protection of civilians, against violations of basic human rights, such as massacres and ethnic cleansing - if necessary, with military intervention, as done in the Balkans in the 1990s and in Libya in 2011 (but not in Gaza in 2025).

At least, Aristotle on justice: consistency - **treating equal cases equally**!

Moreover, in a modern science-based and institutionally differentiated world, with serious and complex challenges, there are various 'constitutive' (inherent and necessary) *normative requirements*:

- There are '*constitutive norms*' for discussion-oriented, self-reflective and self-critical rationality, inherent in modern scientific activities, including the humanities.
- There are various *institution-constitutive norms and roles* in modern institutionally differentiated societies - including different science-based professions and institutions.
  (Cp. e.g. G.S., *Timely Thoughts*, 2007; also in Chinese.)

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2.

NATO, expanding, with new member states, also former members of the Warsaw pact: then, what about Russia and Russian geopolitical interests? (Mind the Cuba-crisis, 1962)

NATO: new members, from East Europe and former Soviet Union: Poland, Cheque Republic, Hungary (1999), Romania, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, (2004); Croatia, Albania (2009), later Montenegro, North-Macedonia, and recently Finland and Sweden.

2021: After 20 years, 'Western' defeat and withdrawal, from Kabul /Afghanistan. For USA (and the 'West'), a change, **from** the pretension of acting as a humanitarian 'international police' and fighting a 'war on terror', **toward** an emphasis on nationalism and national interests ('America first').

Third period (2021-2025) – ambiguously multidimensional; new challenges:

growing nationalism ('America First') and rivalry between major geopolitical powers (primarily USA and China)

By **2022**, **war in Ukraine**

Russian invasion of Ukraine, 22.2.2022 – avoidable? and if so, how? – For instance, is there something to learn from the Cuba-crisis, an acute crisis between USA and the Soviet Union, solved by negotiations, 1962.

A **game changer**: war in Central Europe – rooted in national interests and geopolitical positions. (Moreover, is Greenland for sale, or should it be invaded?)

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By **2023**, war in **Gaza**.

By, **2024**, **Trump** re-elected

2025: geopolitically, **new constellations**: e.g., US versus China; US versus EU

Modern societies: multiple modernities!

But also: there are some **common** conditions and challenges – and in that sense: **one common modernity**, **for all of us** – in short: modernity as **science-based, institutionally differentiated, in complex crises**

E.g., scientific (scholarly, philosophical) requirements: constitutive norms, roles, identities – partly job-related and special, partly universal (in principle; such as, self-reflective and self-critical virtues – see my books, referred to below)

'New' challenges: various kinds of challenges, but also a need for knowledge – for adequate knowledge, for various kinds of knowledge (sciences, also humanities); and various competences – with their 'constitutive' (required) roles and norms, and identities – for scientific/humanistic activities (e.g. self-reflective and self-critical discussions – open for alternative perspectives/concepts and for counterarguments)

Avoid: epistemically simplistic approaches (lack of humanities, etc.)

Need for: informed, self-reflective and self-critical 'theory (philosophy) of science (and humanities)'

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1. Problematic **military interventions** (i. defense, 'security': preemptive strike; or ii. [supposedly] humanitarian intervention) – as to cases, post-WW2, cp. Afghanistan 2001-2021, Iraq 2003, Libya 2011: in these cases, simplistic epistemic (scientific) approaches – and fatal consequences!

2. Problematic **politized religion** – as to cases, post-WW2, cp. Islamist terror (e.g., Twin Tower 2001, Samuel Paty 2020, Israel October 2023); North American evangelicals, e.g. John Hagee, Robert Jeffress; with uncritical reading of the Old Testament: e.g. 'Praying for Armageddon' (cp. the film, e.g. at NRK; Norwegian television): politically (unconditionally) pro-Israel; these days, disastrous actions by the Israeli government in Gaza and on the West Bank: hence, an urgent need for epistemic (scientific/humanistic) critique of religion (in a Kantian sense)!

3. Problematic **economic development** – as to cases, post-WW2, cp. *Limits to Growth*, 1972, and the present development, not fulfilling the UN sustainability goals; generally: short term economic gain; lack of long-term economic perspectives, lack of ecological perspectives/concepts (institutional and socio-political perspectives): mostly, a simplistic epistemic (scientific) approach!

4. Challenges in **democracies**, not least in modern complex societies (often with extensive and long-term decision-making): (i) how to fulfil the 'constitutive' requirement, for democratic voters, of being *sufficiently educated citizens* (e.g., by a well-established public school system, a suitable public space, and reflective, discussion oriented and multi-disciplinary universities); and (ii) how to reduce the (possibly fatale) *difference between voters and those concerned* – since democratic voters, here and now, do not include future generations, hence: do not include 'everybody concerned' – often with fatal decisions (or lack of fair decisions), for instance on vital environmental issues!

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With these challenges: *Not perfectionism!* – that easily leads to *pessimism!*
Instead: **Gradualism** and **meliorism!** … trying to make things somewhat less miserable than they otherwise would have been! … and with *reverence for vulnerable life*, a basic precondition for it all!

Info:

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Timely Thoughts, 2007 (in Chinese, 2007).

Multiple Modernities, 2011 (in Chinese, 2013).

Epistemic Challenges in a Modern World, 2019.

Religion in Modern Societies, 2024.

(freely available on my homepage)

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