

Axis 8 - Polemology and military issues

Professor supervising the research axis: LCL Olivier Entraygues

Associated researchers: Prof. Martin Jones (formerly terrorism), Dr. Camino Kavanagh (formerly cyber), Dr. Carl Horn (formerly cyber), Prof. Pascal Chaigneau (formerly innovation dynamics), Prof. Gary Brown (formerly cyber), Sinisa Malesevic, John Raine (formerly terrorism)

A critical history of war cannot be limited to an event-driven and hegemonic history, centered on a simple battle history carried by a few great captains and a product of the history of tactics and the history of weaponry. Fuller reminds us that "the chapters of battles are the crests of the waves, the chronicles represent the troughs, the two remaining linked in the ebb and flow of three and a half thousand years of the practice of war". Under the prism of the long term, war must be made intelligible as a driving force that underlies -in European civilizations- the development and then the functioning of the State. Such a history breaks with this history of the military insofar as it seeks to incorporate social, economic and cultural dimensions as well as intellectual, legal, ethical, literary and artistic fields. In this framework, the centrality of the permanent interaction between the State (polis and politea) - whose three pillars in the Weberian sense are the tax, the bureaucracy and the army - and the war must be fed jointly by the history of the State and the history of ideas, fundamental elements of the analysis grid. A critical history of war is then perhaps a history of the use of violence -state or not- in order to dominate men. This thematic history becomes a historical reflexivity, i.e. a critical reflection on what determines our relationship to the understanding and interpretation of war by apprehending its constants and its changes. It must also be based on a theoretical field that seeks structures of repetition. In this sense, the epistemic structures already defined in the first chapter change at variable rates; they allow us to grasp innovation and to rethink the temporality of war. This structural approach to history subsumes three main pairs of opposition: "friend-enemy", "before-after" and "victors-victims". Its interest is also to be able to go beyond political, economic, legal, philosophical, religious, cultural, etc. cleavages in order to exclude any judgment on the value of the object studied: the reality of war as an expression of duality, a duel and an act of violence. The author thus adds his principle of polemological neutrality already outlined in his foreword. Such a postulate embraces the injunction of the sociologist Max Weber to suspend all values (Wertfreiheit[2]) as a deontological framework for studying war. Ultimately, a critical history of war becomes a euristics that invests history as an integrating discipline of the humanities. It must allow for a critical reflexivity whose usefulness for the development of military intelligence is, on the one hand, the theoretical contribution to warfare and, on the other, the field of possible histories, that is, the experience of what is not yet known to have happened or even will never happen. However, such studies must never be considered as completed because war is an object in perpetual movement.

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