

REVIEWS

TWO APPROACHES TOWARDS WAR AND PEACE: THE ETHICAL EVALUATION AND THE DISPASSIONATE ANALYSIS.

The two books which are going to be reviewed in the following pages speak about related matters containing as they do important reflections on nuclear deterrence. While one takes a moral stand by rejecting nuclear deterrence for ethical reasons, the other is simply fascinated by the intricate and paradoxical structure of war as such. For a reviewer who is convinced that "is" should be tied to "ought" both approaches are incomplete in themselves and should be brought together. Nowhere, perhaps, will this step be more difficult than in this field. One has only to compare the cool, intelligent detachment of the strategist to what, at first sight, appear as the ludicrous ethical convictions of the moral philosophers. And yet, the impossible has to be made possible. This was the motivation to bring these two reviews together: the conviction of the necessity of *both* approaches to war, and the frustration caused by their closeness and yet their imperviousness to each other.

Edward N. LUTTWAK, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Harvard University Press, 1987.

The purpose of the book is to show that a "paradoxical logic" dominates all levels of strategic thinking ("the art of the dialectics of wills that use force to resolve their conflict", as Luttwak defines strategy taking over General André Beaufré's succinct definition - p. 241) standing opposed to which is "the linear logic" that, according to him, guides our practical life. Luttwak observes (p. 188) that there is an obvious similarity between the Hegelian dialectic and the paradoxical logic proposed here. The influence of Carl von Clausewitz (who is also cited the most) is unmistakable throughout the book and culminates in the theory of the nuclear deterrent — the very prototype of the "paradoxical weapon" (only effective if and when not used). It starts with the simple example of tactical surprise. Suppose that we attack an enemy by means of one of the two following methods: the first is easy, efficient and obvious and, for that reason, anticipated by the opponent; the second is insecure, difficult and, for that reason, perhaps overlooked by the enemy. Then, "strategic reason" will attempt to obtain the advantage of surprise by

executing the weakest strike (that may prove victorious but risks, by its very definition, defeat). But the enemy may be led "to expect the unexpected": the Israeli army, having been condemned due to its structural weakness to consistently follow "the line of least expectations", was finally, in 1982, expected by the Syrian enemy in Lebanon where it "should not have been" and therefore (as usual) "was". So, the dialectic continues, even the "surprising" must be mixed with "linearity" (method of least resistance) in order to remain effective. The problem is: How to select the mixture? Does an answer to this question exist? Carl von Clausewitz is famous for pointing out the dangers of victory and the superiority of defense relative to an increasingly victorious enemy: defeat is by far the better teacher, and the extension of the lines, battle fatigue, mechanical failures exhaust the advancing victorious enemy. At the end of the 1940 Campaign, German Panzer divisions, completely exhausted, were only saved by the weakness of their opponents and the lack of space in Europe, where as the equally victorious Panzer divisions, for the very same reasons, were finally defeated in virtue of the larger space of Russia. Victory or defeat are determined not by superior use of reason and force, but by the moment in the sinusoidal wave of transformation of force into weakness, weakness into force. One of the enemies is compelled to end the struggle. What holds true for campaigns as wholes, is also valid for technical devices: highly successful for a period, they always stimulate the enemy to invent even more successful counterdevices. (28-29) Tanks and large aircraft carriers have been efficient spearheads in an attack for very long. Consequently, counterdevices like anti-tank missiles, exocets and submarines have become so powerful now that the protective forces needed to defend tank attacks or aircraft-carrier deployments are very prohibitive in cost. The result is a seriously weakened offensive potential -- "the failure of success" (p.47). Luttwak makes a very effective use of historical examples: Verdun, as well as Dien Bien Phu are shown as serious defeats for France, precisely due to the initial success.

The book demonstrates the truth of these core ideas, which are expressed in the first part, in the second and third part on five different levels. Conflict occurs

1. on a *technical* level: weapons are opposed to weapons
2. on a *tactical* level: groups of combatants using those weapons maneuver against each other
3. on an *operational* level: in a campaign, commanders use series and groups of confrontations as instruments against each other
4. on a *strategic* level: on a theater of operations different

campaigns are combined

5. heads of state and governments plan *grand strategy* over long periods and in global space.

The "paradoxical logic" holds *within* each level, and *between* all levels. The paradoxical transformation of success at one level into defeat at the other, spreads out from top to bottom and inversely (vertically). And on each level (horizontally), it determines the shifting relationships between enemies. Luttwak is working in the center of USA war planning (as a senior fellow of Center of Strategic and International Studies) and one is not astonished that he illustrates his themes by frequent allusions to the eventual defense of Europe against the countries of the Warsaw pact. It would be desirable to illustrate the same reasoning by references to the defense of the East against European or USA aggression. But the - conscious or unconscious - "partisanship" of Luttwak does not really determine, as far as I can see, the substantial content of his remarks.

The reader will be well rewarded by a patient analysis of the multitude of examples. The present reviewer has two main critical remarks:

1. The infinitely complex texture of real life is well presented. However one asks if the "reversals" and "coming together of the opposites" on each level and between levels can be classified in natural kinds? Are the causes of the reversals all similar or are there distinct classes or/and types of causes? Luttwak is so fascinated by the concrete that he rarely ascends to this level of abstraction.

2. The first reaction after finishing the book is horror. If this thesis is true no rational behavior in war is possible. The author seems to concur with this in his chapter 15 "there are reasons to hesitate in applying general theory" (p. 231). All useful applications have to take the two dimensions and the five levels of paradoxical logic into account. The planning is extremely complex; the theater of execution is far removed and so filled with fiction that it necessarily escapes control; especially for democracies *really paradoxical planning* is impossible (this is one of the more frightening - and yet convincing - conclusions). However if the historical and logical study of conflict shows that no rational planning of war and execution of it is possible then, mankind as a rational agent, should eliminate this type of activity!

At many points I have read the book as confirming Tolstoi's account of war in "War and Peace". The author himself does not draw such conclusions however. The reflective reader who derives radical pacifism as the natural conclusion from the totally

illogical logic of strategy expounded here *will have to fight to implement his policy of pacifism*. And having to fight (with or without weapons) he will again fall back into the implacable laws of strategy, if this deep but horrifying book is correct.

For this reviewer, it is not yet possible to come to a definite conclusion on the matters so masterfully expounded here. But, of course, one should try to see if there is some method in this madness. (Beginning, perhaps, with the task indicated in my first critical remarks and hopefully referring to the sketches of dialectical reasoning present in the literature.) If no method can be discovered, then there is no other choice than to embark in the nearly hopeless endeavor of persuading others to abandon their murderous attempts of solving the unsolvable problem of strategy.