

PEACE AND WAR ATTITUDES OF THE AUTHORITARIAN STATES

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We take today a bitter delight in our political philosophy. We are often occupied in devil chasing and in heretic hunting, for ours is a time of strong feelings. As in the past there is a Holy Land to be recovered by a crusade, but our Holy Land and our crusades are modified to suit the times. Democracy, Fascism, communism, and other violent reactions for and against utopia are as vital today as predestination was in the lives of the sixteenth-century Calvinists, or as Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, in the thought of the Jacobins. As significant issues, our own emotional clusterings no doubt await the same fate as those of the past.

In turning directly to my subject, it seems that gradually an important truth is coming to light, and that the proposition is: all authoritarian states or nonliberal regimes are basically alike, just as all historic liberalisms are fundamentally akin. Ideology is often a deceptive façade. It warms our feelings of difference, but political process and technique, which we can observe every passing day, is like the gang of brutal facts that on one occasion is reported to have slain a beautiful theory of Herbert Spencer. In this discussion, therefore, I am not primarily concerned to point to differences in ideology or to tarry long with the interpretive efforts of competing ideologists with each other's brain children. That surely can be left to the apostle and the prophet. To observe how people behave in the authoritarian state is sufficient, in my opinion, to establish the case for the similarity of the authoritarian regimes.

We must admit, it seems, that there are basic differences between democracy and liberalism, on the one hand, and the authoritarian system, on the other. But in regard to peace and war attitudes, is there any difference between liberalism and the authoritarian protagonist of the attack on democracy? Various answers may be given, and some have said the world of fact is broad enough for all to make their case. Let us suppose for the moment that there is no difference between liberalism and authoritarianism as to peace and war, and as to significant and relevant attitudes. What then is the nature of the argument?

In the first place, we must explore briefly some general ideas about war. What ideas may be drawn from the history of war in the West? The greatest of all wars was fought, from 1914-1918, at the end of a

brilliant period of constitutionalism; it came in a time when the triumph of liberalism was conceded by all. In a sense one may call the World War the baccalaureate of liberalism. But these observations illustrate a point of great importance. There is little correlation between the history of war and the changing forms of government and regime. Sometimes war has become more significant in Western history and sometimes less. There is fluctuation but hardly any rhythm. Motives for fighting change, of course, as one may see in contrasting the ostensible motives of the crusades and the dynastic wars of absolutism. Some have urged that there are no data to show that democracies are less belligerent than autocracies. England was relatively more warlike than Spain in the twentieth century, and France relatively more than Austria or Russia in the same period; much the same may be said for the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries.

Sorokin studied 967 wars in Western history to reach something like the above conclusions. However, in the late nineteenth century there was a decline in war and internal disturbance or revolution and in this period, before the contemporary authoritarian states, we find a remarkable flowering of theories that war as an instrument of nations would be used no more. In the twentieth century, however, the World War became a sharp denial of these ideas, for this war was higher than all previous ones in army strength and casualties. The twentieth century so far rates higher than any previous century in warlike activity and in army strength it is higher than the six centuries from the eleventh to the seventeenth taken together. Sorokin declares at the end of his study of nearly a thousand wars and seventeen hundred revolutions:

On its face value, as the figure shows, the first quarter of the twentieth century, 1901-1925, was not only the bloodiest period in the entire history of the international conflicts of mankind, but also, when internal disturbances are considered, was one of the very turbulent periods.¹

The twentieth century is thus one of the cruelest and least humanitarian in the history of Western civilization and perhaps in the chronicles of mankind in general.

In brief, the history of war presents data that would tend to minimize any particular significance as to war and peace of the authoritarian states. War itself is older and deeper than these regimes. There have been many authoritarian states before, but they cannot be correlated with any particular trend in warlike thought and behavior.

In the second place, peace and war attitudes in relation to the authoritarian state may be considered in a context of cultural change. Periods of cultural transition have been branded as more belligerent than times of

¹P. A. Sorokin, *Social and Cultural Dynamics*, Vol. III, 1937, p. 487.

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²*Ibid.*, p.

social stability. But it may be urged that in periods of transition both the authoritarian state and a decreased emphasis on peace are symptoms of change but not primary causes. We have noted that authoritarian states have occurred from time to time, but we may observe that in periods of cultural disintegration it is easy to make an appeal to the Caesaristic mentality. War itself may be a product of the same forces that have produced the contemporary revival of the mind of Caesar. The motives may have become altered, and there may be a greater degree of acceptance of the secular, empirical, sensate rationalization of political power. Yet greater nakedness in motive can hardly make a fundamental difference in the total situation. If Spengler's hypothesis has any value, we are in the period of cultural decay in the West when great wars are to be expected. One should not forget that the first draft of *The Decline of the West* was finished before the outbreak of the World War in 1914. If Sorokin's theory is correct, we are in a period of transition from the sensate culture of the last four centuries. Like all periods of transition there will be conflict, both internal and international, as well as the development of transitional political forms, which, like liberalism, are striving to effect a continuation of the cultural mentality of the past.

Broadly speaking, we may say that wars have occurred in both prosperity and depression; they have been associated with both autocratic and democratic regimes; with literacy and illiteracy; and with both liberal and conservative regimes. All factors that tend to bring about a breakdown of the organized relationship between states must be noted as making war possible and probable. Perhaps the main weapon against war is not any particular panacea, but "the crystallization of the system of cultural values and of social relationships."²

We have been discussing the argument that denies there is any difference between liberal and authoritarian states in relation to peace and war attitudes. Let us now take the other point of view. Let us consider the problem of difference. If there is a difference between liberalism and authoritarianism, where should we look for it? It may be sought in three approaches: in ideology, in the form of government, and in the current policies of governments.

To begin with we should look to ideology. Liberalism postulates the possibility of a rational harmony between the complex factors in society. In this it is like Christianity, which early, as in St. Augustine, discussed the problem of war and peace at some length. The secular doctrine of liberalism is, however, purely rationalistic. It is the belief in progress toward the time of liberty and peace and general well-being among all members of the

²*Ibid.*, pp. 371, 379-80.

population. In criticism of this point of view, the authoritarian thinker urges that war is no uncommon development between liberal states; he points to the nineteenth-century liberal struggle for power, for influence, for territory, for markets, for the protection of the race, in fact, to all of the bases of struggle now being attributed to the authoritarian state. In brief, the dictatorial thinker suggests that the liberal ideal is pretty remote from reality.

Communism continues the liberal ideal of ultimate peace, but only after Armageddon, and the end of class struggle and economic exploitation. Immediately, however, communism sees war as a necessary outgrowth of the present situation. The class war is the primary social reality. Yet under the principle of the United Front there is developing in communist or Stalinist thought the notion of the immediate preservation of peace against Fascist powers. In the Soviet Union the firing squads have, during the last few months, been busy establishing internal peace, and it is reported that the Red Army is well fed.

In national socialism the love of peace has a prominent place, alongside the grim necessity that wars may have to be fought for the protection of the Fatherland. War for the Fatherland is heroic, like the class war which is also heroic (witness the heroes of Loyalist Spain), and like the valor of the liberal who dies in defense of liberty. In Germany today peace is ideologically an object of leadership, but at the same time there is willingness to fight for certain things, particularly the isolation of communism and the defense of the Reich. War is recognized as a historical reality. As many books of early liberalism were written by soldiers or war leaders, so the literary output of national socialism has something of a military flavor.

Il Duce in Italy asks for peace, but like the more militant days of liberalism he prepares for war. War is a test of individual and national courage, and indeed it seems that the principle of struggle occupies a more prominent place in Fascist ideology than is the case with the authoritarian states we have already mentioned. The state itself is more glorified, and military service under the banner of the state is correspondingly more exalted. Il Duce, some critics say, has a harder job teaching the Italians to be good soldiers than has Der Führer.

If we examine the form of government as a source of difference as to peace and war attitudes, we must observe, first of all, that both liberal and authoritarian states have many political techniques in common. All modern leaders say they are democratic; Russia, says Stalin, is the only democratic country in the world; in Germany, opines Hitler, is the honest Germanic democracy; and Mussolini considers Italian Fascist democracy the best on the market. Of course, from our point of view our government is the really democratic one. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the

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authoritarian state is better organized and can therefore fight more effectively at the outbreak of war. Its leadership is coherent; its general staff and armament problems are logically considered in their totality; the psychic state of the people is, as a result of government propaganda, oriented toward war; and the economic life of the country is in peace put on a semimilitary basis. Liberalism is slower in getting started at outbreak of war, although in the end it too becomes authoritarian and loses its passive and incoherent management of military affairs.

Finally, we may seek the difference between liberal and authoritarian states in the realm of policy. It is here, I think, that the basic difficulty is to be found. Liberalism and democracy, say the authoritarians, are fat and bemused with nineteenth-century loot from the far corners of the world. The authoritarian states have the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mind in this regard; they think loot is a good thing. If the liberal states will not divide up, then they will have to organize robbing expeditions on the former model presented by democracy and liberalism. Is liberalism afflicted with the decadent imperialism, with imperialism as a technique sucked dry, and does it now sit complaining to the rest of the world that the age of international exploitation is over? Manifest destiny as a practice is changing its geographical and political situs, but as a doctrine it seems to be marching on very much as before. Alas! It may be that liberalism is simply no longer able or willing to fight for the old advantages and is still unable to realize that it should fight for new advantages.

But one thing is of pervading importance in the policies of the authoritarian states. These policies are not new; all of them have been implemented in times past by liberal states and even by the authoritarian states before they were so. Russia, as under the czars, marches on to the Pacific; it moves with determination in Mongolia, while it gropes as before in the Near East. Italy was in Ethiopia before Fascism, and her African policy has nothing novel about it, although in Spain today she is reversing the sixteenth-century role between Spain and Italy. The policies followed by the Third Reich have much in common with the policies of previous times. Japan continues in Asia as she has for a generation.

Authoritarian foreign policies do make for war, yet these policies are not uniquely authoritarian. The dictatorial "real democracies" of today continue the policies followed by their countries in former times and the policies of the last two centuries adopted by liberal governments. Authoritarian states have in part carried on policies surrendered for whatever reasons by the liberal states. It would seem there is nothing inherently connected with political regimes in the policies of either group of states, although it is obvious that certain policies may be worth supporting today by the authoritarian states. In part at least, the difference between liberalism

and authoritarianism is one of time and situation rather than ideology, the form of government, or the substance of policy.

As a word of conclusion, may I express some of my own convictions? Peace and war are problems that are deeper than the intricacies of ideology, however interesting they may be. War and peace as idea and practice are older than any extant political structure or living political mentality. We are losing today both internally and externally the bases of social coherence, and in these circumstances war and revolution are appropriate types of behavior. Yet when cultural mentality is coherent and economic life is correspondingly stable, peace can be positive and enduring, although even now it may well be that war may be postponed or avoided.

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