

Wars over a piece of land or a land of peace? Kosovo and Ukraine

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Understanding the Ukrainian situation through the description of the Kosovo war is the aim of this study. The analysis will revolve around three pairs of concepts: identity and territory, emotions and revenge, memory and forgiveness. It will be discussed whether, in a war, it is possible to speak of personal and social forgiveness in Ricoeur's terms. In this sense, the analysis will focus on the relationship between forgetting and memory, in particular on what birth (of new generations) "could not erase", making an accumulation of memory of the facts that regenerate in an increasingly destructive collective revenge. If, in a war, breaking the rule of reciprocity is the way to forgiveness, this means taking away the power of guilt to oblige the future. Liberation from negative feelings, through *loslassen* or "letting go", opens up a new perspective that changes every kind of relationship, both between individuals and between Countries.

Keywords: war; Kosovo; Ukraine; identity; supremacy; emotions.

Guerre per un pezzo di terra o per una terra di pace? Kosovo e Ucraina

Comprendere la situazione ucraina attraverso la descrizione della guerra kosovara è l'obiettivo di questo studio. L'analisi ruoterà attorno a tre coppie di concetti: identità e territorio, emozioni e vendetta, memoria e perdono. Si discuterà se, in una guerra, sia possibile parlare di perdono personale e sociale nei termini di Ricoeur. Su questa scia, l'attenzione dell'analisi si soffermerà sul rapporto tra oblio e memoria specialmente su ciò che la nascita (delle nuove generazioni) "non ha potuto cancellare" facendo un accumulo di memoria dei fatti che si rigenera in una vendetta collettiva sempre più distruttrice. Se, in una guerra, infrangere la regola della reciprocità è la via del perdono, ciò significa togliere al senso di colpa il potere dell'obbligo sul futuro. La liberazione dai sentimenti negativi, attraverso *loslassen* o il "lasciare andare", apre una nuova prospettiva che cambia ogni tipo di relazione, sia tra persone che tra Paesi.

Parole chiave: guerra; Kosovo; Ucraina; identità; supremazia; emozioni.

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1. War or wars?

[...], if it is true that a sense of identity can welcome and unite people, it is also true that it can exclude many others without appeal. [...]. The calamity of exclusion can go hand in hand with the blessing of inclusion (Sen, 2008: 4).

Here we are again, having to talk about war. Not of a war that has already passed, a war not to be repeated, but of a war that we have at home and a war to which we do not see the end.

The types of warfare are countless and this is reflected in our language, indicating the vast experience the human being has with war. Over the centuries, the terminology and strategies of war have been refined, although the essence has remained the same: *Real wars, total wars, absolute wars, authentic wars, wars en dentelles, civil wars, external wars, good wars, righteous wars, legitimate war, unjust wars, war of overthrow, cold wars, hot wars, invisible wars, proxy war*, and so forth.

If the essence is invariable, i.e. leading to the physical death of many people, does it make sense to talk about all shades of war? However absurd it may seem, the distinction between various types of war nevertheless manages to clarify how and whether the two sides «tend to extremes» (von Clausewitz, 1832; Gerard, 2008: 39). It therefore makes sense to speak of wars in plural.

It is hard to believe, but mankind has not yet found a social agreement that prohibits wars. Wars still occur so easily and with such difficulty we manage to stop them. What drives a person, a group, a State to put everything at risk against all reason? What comes at a higher price than one's own life? We will try to answer these questions through the lens of identity and revenge as two elements capable of overriding reason, feeding violence upon violence within a road that leads to the precipice. Revenge between two people has the same characteristics as revenge between two States. In both cases, unfulfilled expectations lead to shame, resentment and finally revenge that concretises into violence. Since the desire to heal the wounded dignity is the purpose of revenge, violence does not stop until it becomes total.

As the war in Ukraine progresses, scientific research goes back almost two centuries to revisit von Clausewitz's textbook on the mechanisms of war. The two forms of warfare that von Clausewitz presents (ibid.: 9) – 1. destroying the political opponent and then manoeuvring the defeated party towards one's own interests and 2. trying to gain some advantage, like a piece of land, without completely defeating the other State – represent the two extremes that encapsulate every other form of war.

If, according to von Clausewitz (ibid.: 9), “War is but the continuation of politics by other means”, violence is nothing but an extreme means of communication. Can the war in Ukraine be seen from this point of view? Is Russia trying to communicate something? Communicating to say what? To say that it has a thirst for supremacy? That so many choices made by the United States of America, since 1999, have been seen by Russia as a personal offence? Here we enter the sphere of power, legitimacy and the monopoly of force. According to Miglio (2022: 16-17), only the strongest has a monopoly of force that sees it become legitimate. Therefore, legitimacy comes with the monopoly of force. Whoever therefore loses legitimacy, means that he ceases to be the strongest. Is this the case for Russia?

When dealing with a complex phenomenon like war, studying its elementary forms (von Clausewitz, 1942 [1832]: 19; Durkheim, 2001 [1912]) may be the easiest way to approach it with caution. At this point – although in completely different contexts – Durkheim meets von Clausewitz in his statement “War is nothing but a duel on a larger scale”. It is in this perspective that this paper will be presented. Turning war into something graspable, reducing its dimensions, considering societies as individuals, allows us to think in this discussion that a clash between two individuals can be compared to a clash between two States.

The interpretation of war will be in terms of identity as an instigator of violence. Identity conflicts, as Sen argues, exclude a common identity, namely belonging to the human race. In this segmentation, in this “organized distribution of identity”, the clash can become fierce and full of consequences (Sen, 2008: 5).

The concept of identity is often misused and manipulated because it denies people choice and responsibility. Various types of discrimination survive through the unconditional acceptance of certain ideas (Sen, 2008: 11). Identity and national pride can become an anchor that keeps an entire people trapped in the past.

Since we have reduced the social dimension to the individual, in this context of war, an individual decision can change the fate of entire peoples, indeed of the whole of humanity. How? “Loslassen” (Ricoeur, 2004) may be the way to release the past and obtain forgiveness.

2. The social meaning of emotions

All understanding is always emotional, argued the sociologist of emotions Hochschild (1979). In this sense, we wonder whether emotions can be a variable that can change the outcome of a conflict or war for better or worse. For the bad,

in the sense that they become fuel for a war that becomes total, for the good, in the sense that they can promote peace, as for example in the case of “restorative justice”, which can take place *now* as in Ricoeur’s assertion,

The present is also the now of the initiative, of the beginning of the exercise of the power to act on things, hence the initium of imputability; finally, it is the perceived intensity of joy and suffering (Ricoeur, 2004: 31),

after reaching the state of *enlightenment* (Hawkins: 2012), as a moment from which to start again. Emotions are therefore relevant because they can both trigger and catalyse a process by modifying its outcome.

In the next paragraphs, we will examine some emotions such as shame and pride and their relationship to the elementary forms of conflict.

2.1. *Shame and pride system*

Shame has been defined by Scheff (2003) as “the master emotion of everyday life”, but despite this, he points out, this emotion is undervalued especially in modern societies. Expectations are strongly correlated with shame. When individuals fail to achieve a certain status, they feel shame and sadness. Conversely, when they are proud of something they acquire power and status (Kemper, Collins, 1990). When individuals feel that others are the cause of their failure, they feel *anger*. Cooley (1902) in his “looking-glass self” theory, emphasises the importance of four emotions: embarrassment, humiliation, shame, and pride. Repressed shame can lead individuals or peoples «to feel anger and to pursue violence, whether external warfare or internal prosecution of perceived enemies» (Scheff, 1994; Scheff, Retzinger, 1991; Turner, Stets, 2006: 31). Furthermore, «When negative emotions are repressed, they increase in intensity and often become transmuted into new kinds of emotions that further disrupt normal interaction» (Turner, Stets, 2006: 31). As Bericat (2016: 502) noted, “The system of social control” depends on “four key emotions: fear, anger, shame and pride”. For our purposes, we will consider the last two: shame and pride.

2.2. *Shame, pride and blood feud*

Previously, we mentioned duelling as one of the elementary forms of warfare (von Clausewitz, 1942: 19). What is meant by a duel? A duel is defined

as a formal combat with weapons fought between two persons in the presence of witnesses.

Besides the duel, there are also other forms of fighting between two people that gradually involve other people: this is the so-called blood feud, practiced in the Balkans, especially in northern Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, etc. The first difference between a *duel* and a *feud* is that the duel is organized before it happens, while the feud is organized afterwards, when blood feud takes place. The second difference lies in the presence of witnesses. In the case of a duel there are witnesses, in the case of blood feud witnesses are not necessary, the rules take over later in a very organised manner.

Revenge is as old as human existence, yet we keep asking “Why do people take revenge?” (Jackson *et al.*, 2019). Do emotions play a role in this decision? For Kemper (1978), negative emotions such as guilt, shame, anxiety, and depression are the product of socialization. They depend on the way the punishment was inflicted and the type of relationship with the punisher (Strongman, 2003: 267). Moreover, «The culture defines what, when and how we should feel» (Hochschild, 1978; Bericat, 2016: 497). For example, in almost all societies «Women are encouraged to feel and express powerless emotions, such as fear and sadness, while men, [...], instead feeling and expressing powerful emotions, such as anger and pride» (Bericat, 2016: 503).

From a sociological perspective, it is essential to know the duration of the emotions of shame and pride. Psychologists (Cattel, Scheier, 1961; Spielberger, 1961; Izard, 1977: 5; Jackson, Choi, Gelfand, 2019) have shown that emotions have two forms that depend on their duration: trait and state. This is important for our analysis because «People vary in not only how they take revenge, but also for how long they take revenge» (Jackson *et al.* 2019: 331). Time and the ability to handle a given emotion are both determinants. If an emotion is expressed but its expression does not last long it is more of a trait, with a long duration it becomes a state. The trait of emotions recalls biological patterns, innate instincts; while the trait recalls cultural patterns, socialisation, and the opportunity to shape emotions. Knowing how to manage emotions is essential because «Emotions are distributed across macrostructures» (Turner, Stets, 2006: 48), they are present in all social phenomena, including wars.

The distinction of revenge into five categories offered by Jackson *et al.* (2019: 330-32) can be helpful: *covert revenge*, *overt revenge*, *displaced revenge*, *vicarious revenge*, and *blood revenge*. The authors emphasise that revenge occurs when “people in relationships feel that they have been treated unfairly, especially when they feel unfairly rejected or excluded within a relationship”. This sense of injustice stimulates anger. The sense of righteous

anger, i.e. anger specifically related to perceived injustice, has been identified as a strong predictor of revenge. But anger is not the only predictor. Shame and humiliation also play a crucial role (Jackson *et al.*, 2019: 326-328).

In the *Kanun*, the book of customary laws – the guide-book of blood feuds – anger is not mentioned. Instead, *shame* and *pride* are mentioned. Blood revenge or blood feuds in Albania are interesting from a scientific point of view, because in the Kanun there are rules that guide the revenge of cold-blooded men. Yes, anger can commence the initial killing, for example after a fight between two young men. But the blood revenge, most of the time, is not driven by anger. It is a matter of pride and every step must be taken according to precise rules. The man who carries out blood revenge must be sane, as he has to fulfil several formalities in a ritual manner to give credibility to his actions. In the following articles of the Kanun, we can note the steps a man must take after killing someone:

Art. 119 § 844:

After the crime has been committed, the murderer must notify the murdered family so that no errors may arise in the search for the offender.

Art. 119 § 845:

The murderer must send someone to the murdered family to ask *Besa*.

Art. 122, § 854:

Besa is that period of freedom and security that the murdered family grants to the murderer and his family, forcing himself not to pursue them for the purpose of revenge until the agreed day.

Art. 122, § 856:

When the *besa* is granted the murderer by the family of the murdered man, he although murderer of the dead, will have to take part in the funeral and accompany the corpse to the sepulcher, also staying at the funeral. This respite lasts 24 hours.

Art. 122, § 857:

If then the killer, despite the respite, he had refused to take part in the ceremony and the funeral, it is not a dishonorable act if the family of the killed withdraws the respite, because the killer in that way adds shame to shame.

Art. 119, § 847:

The murderer will not dare to appropriate the murderer's weapon: if he does this infamy, he is guilty of two murders¹.

Art. 122, § 857 clearly shows that shame is the fundamental emotion based on blood-feuding system in the Kanun. Based to this statement, it seems that the family of the person killed suffers more from shame than from human loss. Shame is also the reason of a missing *besa*.

Art. 119 § 847 states that a person's honour is more important than life itself. There is a common saying in Kosovo and Albania that reinforces this article: *Vdekja me nder është kapak floriri* (Death with honour is a golden lid). In Kosovo and Albania, «The value of honor is perceived as the most important part of society», and «Blood-feuding is a tradition that is held with high honor» (Cyril *et al.*, 2018: 15).

The aforementioned articles have shown that blood feud is a culturally stable emotional state that is carried on from generation to generation. Emotions such as shame and pride are initially recognized as having the lowest and highest value, carrying negative and positive consequences such as disrespect in the former case and social respect and prestige in the latter.

3. Emotions and topophilia

Returning to the context of war, it can be said that there are some common elements between Kosovo and Ukraine. First of all, the type of war and the resistance of the Kosovars and Ukrainians, despite being smaller than Serbia and Russia. Another common element is the fact of the two wars: the one between Serbia and Kosovo and the one between Yugoslavia and NATO-USA. Respectively, Russia versus Ukraine and Russia versus NATO-USA (although not as directly as in Kosovo).

In both cases, Kosovo against Serbia and Ukraine against Russia were, objectively speaking, lost wars at the start. Yet, Kosovars and Serbs (against the US) waged a “serious” war. How is this possible? What was the energy

¹ Translation is mine.

that fueled them? (John A. Vasquez, 2002: 106). To give an idea, in 1999 Kosovo had 1.76 million inhabitants, while Serbia had 7.96 million. In 2022, the population of Ukraine was 43.2 million, while that of Russia was 145.8 million. The Russian population is thus three and a half times larger, just as in 1999 the Serbian population was four and half times larger than that of Kosovo.

The difference in population numbers is visible. Nevertheless, the Kosovars fought with “seriousness” and hope and resisted tenaciously against the Serbs. The same can be said for the Ukrainians. Thus, objective calculations are therefore not a factor of confidence in the war. Other factors, such as emotional ties to the places where they self-identify, are more reliable. In fact, according to geographer George White (2000), the national identity of a people strongly depends on its territory through emotional ties. Along with White, therefore, objectivity cannot interpret conflicts and wars: “Ethnic groups and nations are composed of human beings, and the human condition is not an objective one” and often political leaders fail on this point (White, 2000: 3). The reason why rational choice theories cannot interpret the wars in Kosovo and Ukraine is the fact that both sides, Kosovo-Ukraine and Serbia-Russia, knew *a priori* that the wars would not bring immediate wealth (hence not profit) and that there would be many deaths. This statement can be reinforced by the view of Aron, who argued in 1966 that the warring parties measure each other, as the main objective is precisely to defeat each other. But one of the things that neither side has access to is the “will to resist”. That *will*, that factor that changes everything, becomes the engine that drives the war forward and, if necessary, takes it to the extreme, without bowing to the enemy even if the other has more objective means to its advantage:

War is won only when the adversary submits to our will. If necessary, we measure the means at his disposal and determine our own effort accordingly. But the will to resist cannot be measured. The adversary proceeds in the same fashion, and each side augments its preparations to allow for the hostile intent, so that the competition once again leads to extremes (Aron, 2017: 22).

3.1. National and territorial identity - Kosovo

From White’s perspective, human identity is inseparable from places and territories, yet very often they have been considered separately. The term “Homesickness”, according to White, gives an idea of the bond that exists

between man and the territory he considers his home, a bond that is so strong that it even has an impact on the physical and mental condition, such as depression (White, 2000: 4). This strong bond, for White, may seem absurd but it is by no means irrational because the territory is the first source of survival.

In this vein, let us consider the significance and importance that Kosovar-Albanians give to territory in the Kanun. This set of rules, in a sense, has shaped the lives of Kosovar-Albanians since the 15th century, a period in which they have established themselves and regulated the lives of Albanians, being transmitted orally from generation to generation for five centuries.

In Albanian culture, hence also Kosovar culture, there is the concept of “memory of the border”. This concept means that “once fixed (the border, ed.) it remains immovable forever” (§242). The Code, in §243, clearly states that “Boundary marks and the bones of the dead, before the Code, have the same value. Uprooting boundary marks is like digging up the bones of the dead”. The territorial boundaries for Albanian culture are linked to ancestors and thus to a sacredness. Sacredness is deeply linked to the concept of sacrifice.

White is in the same line with Gerard when he argues about conflicts, namely that it is the passions that drive conflicts and wars (White, 2000: 3; Gerard, 2008: 37). According to Gerard (2007: 42), the intensity and intention of taking a war to the extreme depends on the actions of both sides. If both respond in the same way, there is a risk of going to the extreme; if, on the other hand, one side is slower and takes into account other variables (such as human losses, actual conditions, weather conditions, etc.), there is a greater chance that the war will not go to the extreme. In any case, in a war, both sides are protagonists.

Identity is much more than territorial ties. Although circumscribed, it has very broad boundaries, as Ait Abdelmalek (2005: 51) argues, “the question of identity cannot be separated from politics, just as it cannot be separated from the role of institutions: the construction of identity is, to be sure, an eminently private affair, but it is, at the same time, a public affair, and therefore political in the strongest sense”. Identity is thus an interpretative key to politics, international relations and even wars, as extreme means of communication.

3.2. Intertwined identities and “loslassen” concept

The Battle of Kosovo Polje (north Prishtina) is an event that binds the memory of the past to a place as if time had stopped in that year (1389) for Serbia. The myth of Kosovo or the myth of Heavenly Serbia are myths built on concepts such as martyrdom, betrayal, revenge. Here the concept of

revenge returns as central in the Kosovar-Albanian and Serbian culture. Since the Kosovo Battle Hill had witnessed the oath of the Serbian ruler Lazar, it is regarded by Serbs as the cradle of their identity. Attempts to demystify Serbia have been tried politically, but without great success because the desire to regain Kosovo, as their right, still burns (Ćolović, 2017).

We are connected to what Ricoeur (2004) calls the duality of no longer being and having been. «The representation of the past influences that of the future» (ivi: 36). Kosovo Polje represents for the Serbs the founding motif of their national identity, the myth of defeat. In Ricoeur's words (2004: 11), the object of the past, insofar as it is passed, is a lost object (of love, of hate) that has not, however, reached that *loslassen*, the internalisation of loss.

On the other hand, despite the many occupations that the Albanians (Kosovo-Albania) suffered, «Empires came and went, and passed over the Albania as does water off a duck's back» (Durham, 1909: 11), they never gave up their identity, culture and language, keeping them alive to this day. This is a source of great pride for them. The Kosovar-Albanians, direct descendants of Illyrians with their own culture and language (Hutton in Hasluck, 1953: XV), as an independent branch of the Indo-European family (Sundberg, 2015), have a high Albanian national pride, as a sign a loyalty and perseverance. Indeed, several scholars have highlighted this characteristic: Albanians have a very strong sense of national identity and pride (Durham, 1909; Hasluck, 1953; Young, 2000).

One interpretation could be that Serbia has been trapped in the past and its politics are still “wrapped up” in that cradle on the hill of Kosovo Polje. What Ricoeur (2004: 43) calls the “retrospective illusion of fatality” happened, i.e. the failure to plan for their future, the disappointment of their dreams and hopes. The fixation on the past and the rumination on lost glories and humiliations, again according to Ricoeur, reduce the capacity to project into the future (ivi: 44).

3.3. *Why Ukraine?*

The non-acceptance of the past, which weighs heavily on the future, is what Serbia and Russia have most in common. According to Ricoeur (2004: 36), «guilt is the burden that the past places on the future». Kosovo and Ukraine have paid and are paying for faults they do not have? Moreover, Russia and Serbia share the same cultural and religious roots, and Ukraine and Kosovo were both under their wings. Serbia and Russia do not want these two countries in part, but entirely, for reasons of self-assertion, which

indicates that it is not so much a question of territory as of national pride and claim.

In this vein, Goemans (2022) makes a double reading of Putin's actions: the first is that of the dream of the Russian empire, the second is that of preventing revolutions and preventing a democratic encirclement of surrounding countries. As Miglio (2022: 15-16) argued, one of the four functions of any sovereign authority is the power to decide who are enemies and who are friends. By this logic, Ukraine is an enemy of Russia, Serbia is its friend. Can one be guilty if considered to be the cause of not realising someone else's dream? It may sound paradoxical, but Kosovo and Ukraine are only guilty of not sharing the dream of Serbia and Russia.

Considering our argument about the value of identity and the constructive and destructive power of it, it can be stated that the war in Ukraine is not an economic war, it is rather a war for world supremacy, and Ukraine served as a hook for Russia to start the war against the United States (of far deeper resentments than those between Russia and Ukraine). Somewhere you have to lean the stick to move the world...

Russia's wounded pride, starting with the war in Kosovo (1999), deteriorated with the enlargement of NATO to include countries linked to Russia, the anti-missile shield in Poland, the invasion of Iraq (2003) and Libya (2011). Despite Russia's opposition to the war in Kosovo, Iraq and Libya, NATO did not stop in the face of bombings and aggression. At this point, Russia viewed NATO aggression as an attempt for hegemonic purposes and mainly to weaken Russia, towards which it has behaved and continues to behave with superiority.

As already mentioned, humiliation and shame lead to anger and violence. Why Ukraine?

The War in Ukraine is the consequence of an accumulation of many Russian resentments. The war in Ukraine is a *vendetta*, more precisely it is a full-scale revenge between Russia and the United States. More clearly, the clash between Russia and Ukraine is actually a clash between Russia and the United States to assert its legitimacy and heal its wounded pride.

4. Is there room for peace? Ricoeur's point of view

After having visited the abyss of violence, it is necessary to look again at the horizon of hope and peace.

Ricoeur makes a fine distinction between "the ineffaceability of the facts" and "the sense of what happened". If facts, for Ricoeur, are indelible defamations, the sense that is attributed to facts is not the same forever. For

Ricoeur, the past can be changed and, looking at history from this perspective, there is room for forgiveness (Ricoeur, 2004: 40-41).

Forgiveness can be achieved by breaking the rule of reciprocity, that is, the rule that takes into account all that is given and received (Ricoeur: 115). In a context of war, this is applied in the effort to give a new interpretation to the facts of the past, in a new light, untied from any connection to the past regarding a particular event. Love, according to Ricoeur, turns the enemy into a friend. Simple to say and difficult to apply? The first step towards this “extreme model” is to *undermine myths*. For example, the myth of “Heavenly Serbia” and the “Russian Empire”.

Ricoeur is aware of the difficulty of obtaining forgiveness, especially social forgiveness between peoples. Indeed, Ricoeur recognises that forgiveness is difficult on two occasions: when conflicts between two parties are insurmountable. In this case, justice is achieved through revenge and violence takes over. The second case is when the damage done is valued and is present on both sides. The memory of the damage is faithfully transmitted from generation to generation, depriving new generations of the chance to start a new relationship and thus a new history.

Can we live, «remember, forget and forgive» (Ricoeur, 2004) a war?

Earlier we saw the mechanisms of revenge at a personal and group level, in its elementary forms, Durkheim would say. This helps us to think also at the social level. The experience in these countries where revenge is practiced teaches us that reconciliation between families can only be achieved through peace brokers along a process of preparation that crowns itself in the display of forgiveness at the community level. [*Specifically, they went to a church and in front of all the two representatives of the families involved in revenge embraced each other, forgave each other and swore on the Bible that there would be brotherhood between them in the future*].

Why is this gesture of reconciliation important from a sociological point of view and especially in a context of war? This gesture is important because just as blood feud or war is started for reasons of pride, so too can peace be achieved for reasons of pride. In this profoundly sensitive transition, communication and the people who communicate play a fundamental role.

In his book *Letting go*, Hawkins (2012) points out that the answer to the problems we face lies within ourselves. He proposes the mechanism of surrender, “the letting go technique which is a pragmatic system of eliminating obstacles and attachments”. On a personal level, this surrender mechanism has benefits on four levels: physical, behavioural, interpersonal relationships, consciousness/awareness/spirituality (pp. xxi-xxiv).

To be free of inner conflict and expectations is to give others in our life the greatest freedom. It allows us to experience the basic nature of the universe, which, it

will be discovered, is to manifest the greatest good possible in a situation. This may sound philosophical, but, when done, it is experientially true (Hawkins, 2012: 19).

The mechanism of surrender relates to Ricoeur's concept of *loslassen*. Can entire peoples reach the state of "loslassen"? This can happen if their leaders reach this state, "letting go" of memories of the past that applies the rule of reciprocity, and start afresh.

Conclusions

This paper excluded *a priori* the idea that human beings are prone to violence. On the contrary, it put forward a pro-life and pro-peace argument. The attempt to understand the current war in Ukraine through the mechanisms of the war in Kosovo has focused on the relationship between identities, territories, emotions, revenge and the legitimacy of power.

In our view, rational choice theories are unable to interpret the motivations of individuals or States involved in war.

The long experience of war confirms that we are still unable, despite development, to master our passions. Emotions are strongly linked to motivation. Human beings are motivated to affirm and obtain different types of positive emotional states, power, prestige and so on. Strong emotions drive human behaviour and are also able to maintain a lasting state, as in the case of States at war.

What seems to work rationally is inapplicable in reality. Governments, like individuals themselves, often make decisions based on emotions. As long as emotions are positive, we talk about construction, but when negative emotions take over, such as anger, pride, shame, social revenge mechanisms can be triggered that last for generations. Emotions are also the basis of territorial boundaries, they are the glue of topophilia, of identity.

In light of the evidence described in this article, the answer to the two basic hypotheses is that the energy that fuels the former war between Serbia and Kosovo and the current between Russia and Ukraine is emotional, nostalgic, based on myths that feed nationalism on both sides. A gradual demystification through the process of "loslassen", "letting go", a release from the past, could open the door to the reconciliation process. Revenge occupies an important place in these two wars, as both sides are willing to take the wars to the extreme, sparing themselves, with a sense of sacrifice for their homeland and in the name of freedom and peace. A partial peace, to put it bluntly,

because where there is conflict death, at that instant the concept of peace ceases to exist. The lust for power is what drove Russia to war. Ukraine is not the goal, but a way to communicate its revenge to the United States.

Are we far from what Morin (2020) calls a “deep feeling of shared motherhood”? Perhaps so, but a part of humanity will never stop seeking peace, even if we cannot master our passions for power and supremacy.

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