



***“There was never a good war, or a bad peace”? (Benjamin Franklin)
Historical, legal, political and ethical aspects of contemporary military and non-
military conflicts.***

Conference commemorating the centennial anniversary of the end of World War I

Warsaw, 12-13 March, 2018

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November 11th 2018 marks the hundredth anniversary of the end of World War I – one of the bloodiest military conflicts in the history of mankind; the first of the two World Wars that swept the globe in the first half of the 20th cent. Triggered by an apparently consequential, though relatively local, act of political violence, it finished four years later as an unprecedented international hecatomb, taking the lives of millions of people - both soldiers and civilians. It is that previously unheard of scale of bloodshed, vividly epitomised by the number of casualties on a single day of the Battle of Somme (over 57, 000 British casualties on July 1, 1916) which to a large extent has forged the collective memories of the war, widely prevalent and firmly embedded to this day in most Western societies. The public remembrance of the events of 1914-1918 is profoundly affected by the dreary numbers of the non-combatant victims of the war, whose deaths and suffering are attributed to the unbridled unfolding of the military operations.

What makes it even more difficult to rationalise the historic showdown of the post-Viennese global powers is the ambiguous evaluations of its outcome: the final end of hostilities in 1918 is often said to have been marred by the emergence of the world order that was doomed to precipitate the greatest humanitarian disaster of the 20th cent. – World War II. It is most probably this sentiment that is articulated by German philosopher Jurgen Habermas as part of his warning about the dire consequences of a possible failure of the post WWII European project: “When [the German Revolution of 1848] failed, it took us [Germans/Europeans?] 100 years to regain the same level of democracy as before.”

All these caveats notwithstanding, there can be no denying that for a whole group of peoples inhabiting the region of Central Europe, the autumn of 1918 meant the beginning of a twenty year period of a relatively untrammelled exercise in freedom and democracy. In the case of some of them – the re-emergent Republic of Poland being but one of the illustrative examples – the newly regained independence was the culmination of a several-generation-long struggle – at times exceedingly bloody and severe - against the more or less oppressive dominance of their political supervisors (or, at least in some cases most unequivocally, their countries’ illegitimate occupiers). For these nations/political communities, it was the outbreak of the second global conflict of the 20th cent. which was the greatest calamity of the age - one that undoubtedly extended – despite Habermas’s claim to the contrary – far beyond the ultimate defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945.

A hundred years after the Armistice of Compiègne, the ever-increasing tensions running across the international community raise anew most serious concerns about the prospective stability of today’s world order. It is sufficient to remember a remark about the alleged origins of WWII in the Treaty of Versailles, made at the celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the Nazi

invasion of Poland – i.e. 5 years before Russia’s annexation of Crimea - by the then Prime Minister of the Russian Federation to recognize how parallel these concerns may be to the apparently historical deliberations on the restoration and (inefficient) maintenance of world peace in the period of 1918-1939. While commemorating the heroism of ordinary soldiers as well as the tragedy of innocent victims of World War I, one cannot avoid confronting a whole set of ethical, political, and legal issues which – expressed in both classic and revisionist terms – still seem to retain a lot of universal relevance:

- * What is the relation between the emergence of potential threats to world peace and the theory and practice of liberal democracy?
- * Are military resolve and a strategy of de-escalation mutually exclusive or essentially complementary measures for preserving international security?
- * What are the cultural, political, and military implications of (radical) pacifism?
- * What are the most plausible conceptions of just peace?
- * How is the concept of state sovereignty to be (re-)construed in today’s legal, political, and philosophical discourse?
- * What are the deepest sources of contemporary political/international violence and aggression?
- * What situational contexts (if any) could make preventive war justifiable/mandatory?
- * In what circumstances is unilateral/multilateral/international engagement in defence of world peace/human rights permissible?
- * Are there any necessary constraints on the membership in alliances aimed at eliminating specific threats to world peace?
- * To what extent are modern redefinitions of the classic concepts of war and warfare necessary?
- * Is the classic theory of just war still applicable to contemporary military conflicts?
- * Is there a need for a separate theory to cover non-classic (“not-yet-military”, “hybrid”, “cyber”) forms of state-to-state aggression?
- * How should one tackle organized violence perpetrated by non-state agents (terrorist groups, guerrilla fighters)?
- * What is the impact of the newest military technologies on the ethical/legal understandings? of military action?
- * Does the capacity of modern warfare imply the need for redefining the concept of collateral damage?
- * What is the responsibility of civilians for the aggressive policies of their state leaders?
- * What are the implications of the prevalence of media coverage of today’s military conflicts?
- * What is the role of the military ethic in shaping skills/attitudes/moral competences of military personnel?

Answers to these and other related questions will be discussed during a conference held in **Warsaw at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński Campus on 12-13 March 2018**. Accepted papers will be considered for publication in an edited volume on the conference theme.

Timeline:

Jan 15, 2018: Abstract submission

Jan 31, 2018: Notification of abstract acceptance

Feb 20, 2018: Registration and payment

Mar 12-13, 2018: Conference

Please submit your abstracts/papers to: **justwar2018@uksw.edu.pl**