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"Military Ethics and War: What is Changing and What Remains the Same?"

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War spirit rides again! Should that be taken as a surprise? *Are we surprised?* Do we think that what has been happening now, and for the last two years, is something that had never happened before? Do we think that some other people, in the past, were not surprised in similar situations? All these questions have direct relevance in the context of the theme of our conference. We might have a feeling that this is different. Is it?

We can remember a rather different kind of surprise after collapse of the USSR and the end of the "Cold War" – such a big change on the global scale went without much ado, without big visible actions of what perhaps was expected: a public manifestation of victory. Victory was there, but somehow as in incomplete and unconsumed form. Has the victory of Cold War remained unconsumed, perhaps until now? Does this make the situation we have now, the pandemics, the end of "Afghanistan", and finally this war in Ukraine, different in comparison to previous wars and situations of political crises and catastrophes?

My main thesis in this expose will be that the nature of war does not change, but it's perception and the attitude toward it can change, even radically. It is the same with Military Ethics.

What has changed, indeed, is the world in which we live. The world is not the same as it was recently, although the nexus of causes of everything happening is longer, sometimes much longer, than the word "recently" may cover. On one side we have enormous technological change in our time, a change that might be compared with the changes after "discovery" of wheel, or even fire. But the changes we might perceive as the most perplexing are those occurring on a social, political, and civilizational level. These are the changes that are at the center of our interest in this Conference. Somehow, we take the world, the political world, that we had for previous several decades, as the paradigm of normality and as the frame in which the world should and must be articulated, - having its causes in clear parameters of key events we take for signs of entering in this era of normality, parameters in certain events, places and years which have a constitutive role for us. Is this paradigm exhausted and nearing its end, similarly to the way in which the idyllic world created at Vienna Congress 1814 ended 1914? (One may protest it's too soon; the century has not yet passed!)

We might have the feeling that the causes, and the reasons, for some of the most important changes in the world we face now originate from the year 1989 which marked the end of "Cold War" and is the year of the Berlin Wall demolition. But what happened then has also its causes in the time prior to that year, not only 1945 but also in some previous years, most notably 1918, 1917, 1914, and, in the distance, 1789. Those are the years that determine the paradigm of life we live in now. The world did not begin to exist yesterday. Causes have their own causes, and although we might adore simplifications, which are mentally very comfortable

and often irresistible, they cannot replace serious investigation into the complexity of causes if we sincerely and seriously want to understand, and explain, what we deem important.

Anyway, although causes work slowly, the changes sometimes come at an astonishing speed. Now seems to be one of such moments. It is obvious that the world conspicuously is not what it was only 2 years, or even 6 months, ago. Deep causes coming from the dark and forgotten or never really known or understood past triggering what now has started to evolve are very complex and, possibly, undetermined (or even undeterminable), in what their consequences are now and, especially, what they finally will be. One thing seems probable to me, and that is that that current battle of narratives might radically change to the point of unrecognizability by the end, which, the end, might be very far in the future. Sometimes I think that we are at the beginning of a new “Peloponnesian War” (which lasted 20 years!). Also, it might seem that those deep causes that started what has now become possible could produce many long-lasting consequences.

When we started to think and talk about what should be the theme of our 11th conference – and that was some three years ago, immediately after we determined that the topic for the 10th conference will be “Urban Warfare” (cities always were, as they are now, key space in wars), to be held in Berlin in May 2020, on the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII – we hardly could imagine three big events that will shake our perceptions about the very essence of the subject of Military Ethics, and the theme of our present conference: what is changing and what remains the same in the relationship between warfare and military ethics. Those three mutually very different but all huge events were the following:

1. In an indirect way, world Covid-19 pandemics, and then,
2. Quite directly, the end of campaign in Afghanistan, and,
3. Brazenly directly, Russian invasion in Ukraine.

Although the last two have directly involved huge engagement of armed forces they both are suspicious in their designation as “war”: “Afghanistan” was designed at first as a punitive action after Taliban regime in Kabul rejected US request to deliver those responsible for attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11th 2001, and then gradually became a long-term military engagement still not easy interpretable as “war” – until its rather strange abrupt ending 20 years later. Regarding the Russian invasion in Ukraine, a part of the “battle of narratives” (to which I will return shortly) is “waged” precisely over the words suitable to name it: Russians proclaimed it to be a “special military operation”, while the West promptly designated it as an act of aggression. In neither case it is not clear if it is a regular *war*. I will elaborate a bit on that later too, trying to show how complicated is the web of its causes and how immense is the scope of possibilities that might evolve from that event, which opens the room for too many radically different interpretations: from its being an act of aggressive and reckless breaking international law and order, irresponsible attack on another country, act of revenge and fear, or yet as a “military intervention” (in Russian view even humanitarian in its nature), to “punitive action, to hidden civil war, to some even more complicated schemes like the one implying its religious roots or civilizational ramifications. The plausibility of any of these interpretations will depend on what will happen in the future, possibly the farther future. It is strange and hard to

bear this idea that future should have such counter-causal impact. Part of our discontent certainly comes from this, not only in the way in which uncertainty produces nervousness and discomfort. But we also might sense a kind of arrogance in the assumption that the future is not open but determined in advance.

All this talk about interpretations might appear as a semantic matter and not of real significance, but it is of direct relevance for the topic of our conference: has the concept of war changed, and in what sense and direction. However, this also is not a new problem – it is something we have had with many, if not most, armed conflicts from 1945 (but also for many before), always producing perplexity on what it is about, *war or something else*. Military interventions always tend to be interpreted as police actions (and many American soldiers engaged in Iraq or Afghanistan were saying “action” rather than “war” - as if it will be easier for their wives, mothers and families to endure their absence, taking “war” to be something much more dangerous and latently wrong. But, as Michael Walzer writes – in the Introduction to his fabulous short book *Arguing About War*,– “we can’t change reality by changing the way we talk about it, as we can see in the original case::: The UN police action in Korea in 1950 is called a war by all historians”. Is it – only – the magnitude of that particular “action” (or its duration, in Afghanistan) – that matters or is there something more specific in the definition of a particular conflict that designates it as a „war“? For example, in Korean so called “UN police action” we had “the UN air force” has napalm bombing a stretch more than 200 kilometers long and 30 kilometers wide, in which all living things were burnt, all men, women, children, animals, and plants – with a purpose to cut off Chinese supply chains from behind: Can we possibly designate and name “cutting supply chains”, even of less magnitude than this one, to anything short of “war”?!

When we started talking about the theme for our Budapest Conference we were motivated by quite different concerns from those that we encounter now. Also, we are now in a mood, if I may say so, regarding the context in which we are talking now quite different from the one we had envisaged then. I remember John Thomas suggesting, in Paris, 2019, that the very definition of military ethics should be explored in terms of its facing changes we were convinced are so big that they might change the very nature and essence of human conflicts, including warfare, presuming that warfare is something on a declining line in our time, and even that conflicts should be surmountable and mastered, of course after we find the way how to control the growing development of technology that, although it sometimes seems to get out of hand, should make the regulation of life more efficient and better. We were tempted to even conceive that wars and massive armed conflicts are becoming obsolete and, being unnecessary, might be replaced by something like “*security management*”, opening the perspectives of policing the world. The sentiments were much more optimistic than they are now.

The changes we were thinking of then were directed to questions how to cope with technological challenges in two ways – once, firstly, in the sense of *ius in bello*: how to regulate what has not been regulated yet - new practices (drones, autonomous weapons, remote control, visibility and hiding, etc.), but also, secondly, in the sense of *ius ad bellum*, with the question if the very nature of warfare has changed so much that not only its needed articulation but its very nature becomes more controllable and avoidable. I think that John, on at least two of

our meetings in Paris, indicated to this second aspect of what is possibly new in our dealing with warfare. I will later return briefly to the issue of *ius ad bellum* because its understanding, or the lack thereof, is the source of some misunderstandings in our approach to the phenomenon of war – not its bad regulation but our one-sided and distorted perception of what leads to decisions upon which wars start, and how they might become unavoidable because of that. It is not the lack of regulation, or bad articulation of the regulation of the conduct of warfare, but it is our understanding that the very nature of those three events we faced in the meantime made us believe that we are witnessing something that is not only unexpected but also something that, according to those optimistic sentiments, shouldn't happen at all.

[There is an interesting question here regarding how much our obsession with so called “Just War Theory”, with its far-reaching Manichean implications and idolatry of our perceiving ourselves as striving for “perfection” and “justice” independently of really existing interests of real people, is what prevents us from understanding the deeper logic of human agency and the need for coordination and cooperation within it – not only to be morally right but also to be functional and sustainable].

But at that moment then, three years ago, we wanted to explore if the nature of warfare changed “paradigmatically”: do we have a change of the very paradigm of it. The normative aspect, or content, of that change might have been perceived very differently – for example some apparently perceived and took drones, and the enhanced precision on the operational level, as a betterment because the ratio of death and damage might decrease, while others perceived the same as worsening and even evil because it reduces personal experience which, according to that approach, has a dehumanizing effect and transforms engagement in war into something rather mechanical and impersonal, something we can be indifferent to, destroying those feeling upon which we base our conception of attributability of responsibility for what we do. It is much more than the issue of regulating warfare (which is the domain of *ius in bello*, and which depends in great part on prevailing and accepted sensitivities at a particular time – presuming that we are very sensitive).

It is strictly an issue of *ius ad bellum*: does perceived change of the paradigm of warfare require change in the scope of justifying war as such, or even disallows it entirely independently of any regulation? Something seems to be lost there. For example, the intimacy of war, and of battle, is not only a condition for the virtues of warriors but also the condition of its human permissibility (preserving some respect to others and to oneself, respect and care for those whom we might kill in the process of maintaining the business of war). It might seem that impersonal character of modern warfare, through the dehumanization it implies, makes participating in such inhuman practice senseless and unacceptable. If modern warfare excludes any confrontation with the enemy, if it reduces the enemy to something like insects, or like hunting targets, the nature of war might be seen as changed, and to the extent to which our perception determines what is the reality of what we can do, it changes the very nature of what we are doing then. Hunting and warring are not, and should not be, or taken to be, as same. It reduces persons to mere means, something that persons rightly or wrongly should not be reduced to. The very difference between right and wrong would be lost.

So, we had a good theme, independently from those three big events that might change our original intent regarding our 11th Conference.

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But then, in this short period of two years we faced those three events that change the whole reality as we perceived and experienced it before them occurring. These events were not results of those changes we noticed before and took as the reason for the theme of our conference – changes brought by technology, environmental issues, or perhaps by our enhanced sensitivities which lead us to arrogantly believe that we are better than those who lived on Earth before us. On the contrary, these three events follow the same deeper logic that we may find already in Herodotus: making decisions in borderline situations. Still there is a question: Do they really change the topic of our Conference? They could be the results of some developments quite independent from what we perceived as relevant and exciting changes that lead us to formulate the topic of our conference in the way we did – and still make such an impact on us to make us refocus our attention to them from what was our focus before. As I listed them above, they are, in the order of their appearance: Covid-19 pandemics, withdrawal from Afghanistan, and Russian invasion on Ukraine. Let me make some remarks about all of them, in that order.

Firstly, we faced the strange situation resulting from Covid-19 pandemics, postponing our “Berlin conference”, which was eventually held online with a year of delay. That conference was successful, although it brought some unexpected experiences to us regarding its virtual character which, probably, would have not happened if it was held “in person”. It happened that the consequences of this different format of last year’s conference consumed a lot of our energy and time, producing even more directly the need to explore the topic of this year’s one – independently of the big events we encountered as we entered the process of defining our mission and, within it, attempting to define what military ethics is now, and what we, as a professional organization, are supposed to do – how we perceive ourselves and our mission in the actual world. One of the questions raised was if a professional association dealing with military ethics has any possible role in facilitating or preventing such “evils” as “the catastrophe of the Fall of Kabul”. I am inclined to say both “No” and “Yes” here: “No”, it is not the business of military ethicists to behave like activists, even in the weak sense of the word “activism” that might be applied, for example, to the activities of Red Cross (who also are not activists, in the sense in which participants in warfare, or pacifists, or other partisans, are). “Yes”, in the sense that part of our mission is to help in proper interpretation of what happened in “Kabul”, demonstrating that it was not a “catastrophe” and not even a “defeat” but a logical and even belated decision that might even be recognized as an example of “imperial wisdom”. I will return on this issue shortly.

The pandemic itself was important for military ethics. First, it was, and was perceived so, a catastrophe, not a simple crisis. It produced an enormous amount of security concerns, but also unprecedented global solidarity. The world was united during pandemics in a way in which perhaps it never was before. A specific feature relevant for military ethics was the obviousness that in a situation of extreme need most or all other constraints must fall back. This image of seriousness is something specific for military, more than other human activities, and armies

around the world followed the demands of that seriousness very thoroughly and better than any other part of human societies and its structural parts (shown in confusions and misunderstandings of what “rights”, civil, individual and other are possibly imperiled, producing very obscure anti-vaccination movement). The logic of necessity unveiled in the pandemics was of the same type as that present in the logic on which we base our feeling that military, and then also military ethics, is something needed and useful: the continuity of life as supreme commandment even if in collision with accumulated rights and established expectations that, perhaps, to some extent have spoiled the humankind. In the context of huge progress in knowledge, wealth and well-being, surpassing any previous epoch, the global pandemics was confined in a much more comfortable version of “quarantine” than ever before.

Second, Afghanistan – it came to most of us as a surprise, but it is interesting to understand why? As I said, it also may be interpreted as an example of imperial wisdom. Should Americans and their allies have stayed there for ever? It is ethically interesting and relevant for several reasons. One is the speed of withdrawal for successful military interventions aspiring to be justified: should such interventions be quick? (It was the case with three such events which in literature are almost universally uncontested: India’s intervention in East Pakistan, when Bangladesh was born, Tanzania’s in Uganda, when the sinister dictatorship of Idi Amin was abolished, and Vietnam’s in Kampuchea [who remembers still this name?!], when Paul Pot’s regime was pushed back into the jungle). The second is the relation between justification of entering and exiting: it might be easy to enter and start but difficult to finish and exit. Unlike Iraq, where such justification is absent in both aspects, in Afghanistan might be the opposite: while in Iraq there was no proper justification for “entering” (WMD was never found), Afghanistan was different – it’s not easy to reject that some strong justification for it was present then in the Fall 2001. The justification to exit was achieved rather soon, and certainly after the so called “war on terror” was relocated, or when Al Qaeda lost its monopolistic role therein. There were at least two such moments: after killing Bin Laden, and after American engagement against ISIL. What is interesting from the ethical point of view is that in Iraq there was no proper justification neither for leaving, which might indicate how the situations might be complex and hard to discern: the fact that intervention was unjustified doesn’t imply that you are automatically justified to leave. In the meantime, there were consequences produced by the intervention and those consequences might be a matter of direct responsibility for the intervener – in this case the result of leaving was leaving civilians unprotected, the rise of ISIL, and Mosul was just one of the consequences. There is an interesting comparison in a paper by David Rodin: the fact that we unjustifiably (or accidentally) have thrown somebody out of the window at high elevation does not imply that we have a right to allow them to fall: we might *have a duty* to hold them as firmly as we can in an attempt to prevent the disaster of them falling down. So, while the exiting Afghanistan might be an example of “imperial wisdom”, it is not easy to say the same for Iraq. I may be wrong here but the only issue for me is why the West did not leave earlier? However, they were justified in both, entering and exiting, and “Fall of Kabul” was not a moral catastrophe (taking some details aside). You have not to be a cultural relativist to admit that.

Third of three big events that made a change in the atmosphere here and everywhere around us now is the most complex and, despite all excitements and despair it produces, the most obscure and also the most significant of the three. Russian invasion on Ukraine is a game

changing event. It would be such even if Russians succeeded in their alleged original intent – to promptly bring Ukraine to order after years long provocations and bad and undetermined internal and international realities in those areas - but now it is becoming a matter that has less and less connection with direct causes of the conflict, acquiring features of what I defined at the beginning as a new “*Peloponnesian war*”. We always knew, or at least should have known, that the most basic characteristic of wars is their *unpredictability*. [Desire to avoid, or at least diminish, the impact of this parameter of unpredictability produces our efforts to devise schemes like “JWT” on the theoretical level, or schemes of “asymmetric warfare”, “humanitarian interventions”, or RTP, on doctrinal and ideological level]. Although Russians at first started to rationalize their operation by using the vocabulary of JWT, it is rather obvious that none of the current theoretical or doctrinal schemes is satisfactory. The only thing that seems certain to me is that what’s going on there cannot be reduced to a semantical or marketing level, nor to, e. g., who is louder in shouting their narrative (or more efficient in silencing their opponents, “deplatforming” as they say now). It cannot be settled by burning on stakes a number of Giordanos Brunos. It doesn’t seem fit in any available scheme. So, what is it?

Many would say now that it came as a surprise. Certainly, there were no ultimatums, but warnings were not missing, so that sometimes it seemed that it was only a matter of timing. It started as “a special military operation” defined in essence partly as a humanitarian intervention and partly as a punitive action (like the one in Afghanistan in the Fall of 2001). But the picture is not that clear. What is it really? Is it a punitive action against “unruly Kiev regime” or pure and, as we could have heard countless times, “unprovoked aggression”? Was it a pre-emptive attack countering what was threatening either as impermissible discrimination within Ukraine against a part of their own population or was it a strategic threat to Russian security manifested in Ukraine’s desire to become a member of NATO pact (which is a military alliance encircling Russia)? Those two characterizations are rather different from each other.

Besides, regarding the timing it may be perceived as either belated or premature, the first showing some potentially important insecurities, the second manifesting impatience to wait until when the clear *casus belli* would be more, or at all, visible for all? [Was that impatience a result of despair, or just vanity and irresponsibility?] Is it a “proxy war” of the West (using Ukraine as its “proxy”), or is it more a hidden civil war evolved from who knows which accumulated causes rolled beneath deposited layers in who knows which dark past of those areas? Is it just the continuation or remnant of Cold War, its final ending stage, localized, perhaps only temporarily, on the part of the territory of former USSR – we may recall that USSR was a nameless state created on the territory of former Russian Empire, on the crossroads between Asia and Europe, but by not having a proper name that political structure might be anywhere (we should not forget that communism also was a sinister and far reaching – anti-Russian?, anti-European? - experiment of enormous proportions)? Is it perhaps an attempt to revise the outcome of the Cold War? Or to reestablish the main feature of the Cold War: its Manichean black and white character of “Two (opposite) Worlds”, a picture which might look comfortable at first glance. Does it, or will it, have an impact on the issue if Russia is in essence “European”, or not really? If not, what’s her essence then (and what is the essence of “Europeanism”)? Finally, is it quite a different kind of conflict, for example a global civilizational conflict between imperial democracy with its optimistic ideology of accumulative progress in

universal happiness of unidentified individuals (construed as Nozickian pleasure-machines), on the one side, and traditional world based on in the past accumulated but in the meantime become to be felt or perceived as obsolete and backward, even reactionary, set of virtues manifested in various kinds of identities, heterogeneous and variable, on the other?) Might it be some homeostatic reflex or impulse coming from some very deep but not very visible, even unknown, layer of reality indicating a cardinal crisis of humankind? The plausibility of any of these interpretations, or any of combinations thereof, will depend on what will happen in the future, possibly farther future.

A bit more of the concept of a new “Peloponnesian War”. Such interpretation seems to be if not the most probable still possible. We can recall Thucydides words that that war was a product of false beliefs and even more unfounded hopes. Hope, says Thucydides, is a dangerous notion. On the other hand, Hobbes says that even the weakest and most stupid may kill the strongest and smartest, by using the instrument of cunningness, which is an essential part of the capacity of reason. That’s the point at which the possibility of falsehood of beliefs enters the context of accepting enticing hopes, assuming that they satisfy Thucydides’ requirement regarding hopes: that we should not rely on them if we do not have at our disposal “enough resources” –but resources are also a vague term. The dangerous word here is the word “enough”, it cannot be determined in advance. And hope and belief conflate their meanings in the belief that the other side is not only weaker but that they also know that they are weaker and that because of that they won’t fight back. As we know, although Athenian imperial democracy was much stronger, economically and militarily, from Sparta, the hubris which led Athenians to rely on hope, based in the feeling of omnipotence, led them to the Syracusan catastrophe. The result was the destruction of one civilization, and making way for another one, perhaps not so good and sublime.

If Russia “cannot afford” to lose, and we have difficulties conceiving her winning – with all the baggage of what the consequences of one or the other would be for the world – we might get the impression of a very long lasting conflict, the one in which the battle of narratives we are so immersed in today may be mostly forgotten, and even so the reasons that led to first decisions that triggered it all. But if the solution depends on hopeless task of getting to the position in which conflicting parties would agree to listen to each other, the perspective does look gloomy indeed: ignoring has been felt as too irresistible. The unpredictability might give the full capacity of its workload then, and the flow of time might make the situation ever worse since what was not known at first, due to refusal to listen, will be even more difficult to grasp, making agreeing on an acceptable solution be very difficult, and making impossible to tell what the resulting paradigm of a new reality will be.

Of course, we may insist on scholastic analysing or on blaming –asking why what is happening is not as it should be. For example, we can, as my colleague Ted van Baarda and I came to in our correspondence regarding this matter, invoke the international law and say that we face a clear case of aggression by violating the article 2(4) of the UN Charter which is taken to be one of the cornerstones of international law in last decades. Or we can theorize that the Russian president got caught in a trap like that of Napoleon III, who was convinced that the wisest move he could make is to attack what was from his perspective an unruly kingdom of

Prussia which obviously was producing a new political reality of Europe at the time. Or we can, as sometimes it seems to me, name new evils with old names, and then be caught in the web of outdated schemes from the past. Or we can attempt to justify, rationalize, ignore or even justify horrible events like the one that took place in Odessa on May 2, 2014. Or, contrary, we may apply the principle *uti possidetis iuris* on present or recent administrative borders, drawn arbitrarily and now producing unsolvable conflicts (as we have seen in many other places in the world, where borders have strong external recognition but often no internal one based in sincere and informed consent, implying that's territory only, not peoples or living persons, what counts)? And so on.

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Our main question – do we need military ethics? – received an unexpected corroboration. Military ethics is more important and needed than ever, in this time where the *normality* of *status quo ante* was taken as something obvious and at the same time is cardinally contested. What has been taken as obvious became suddenly bleak and unconvincing. Instead of normality of established peace, based in trust, confidence, and universal respect, it seems that now to many of us war looks more “normal” than peace. Military ethics has new challenges.

Our colleague in EuroSME BoD, Patrick Mileham, has two, actually three essential ideas regarding military ethics of utmost interest for our theme: first, that war is always a battle of narratives, second that war is a kind of experiment, a jump into unknown, that it is a matter of trying and of daring. The function of daring is, of course, a complex issue of conditions, beliefs, contexts, assumptions, prejudices, hopes, etc., but to start a war on both sides one must dare to accept that horrible rule of the game we call war. That game has its constitutive rules, and as all games has the capacity to change reality by creating new facts.

(The third of Patrick basic claims is that there is a difference between ethics and morality, a distinction to avoid so called “Is/Ought Gap”, on which another distinction, that between *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* is based.)

The experimental character of war shows in its feature of unpredictability, i.e., absence of any reliable control of future time. This is a direct implication of freedom as the power to make something that would not exist without free decision. Human position in the universe is characterized by two basic parameters: fallibility and vulnerability (both contributing to moral equality of all persons). Fallibility is contained even in natural science, which is empirical and based in induction, not in deduction. But in the realm of freedom, it is different: there is no reliable predictability what we, and especially what others, will want and decide in future, making uncertainty contained in freedom much more cardinal than that contained in mere fallibility of knowledge as such. That makes experimental character of war very different from other, mere empirical (or scientific) experiments: the calculus of probability there is much vaguer and there is no progress in acquiring new knowledge in it. I am not sure if Patrick has thought of this aspect of experiment in his idea of war as experiment, but it seems to me that this entails a

huge additional responsibility to us, as candidates to be military ethicists, in our efforts to understand, explain and evaluate any particular war as such. (It is much easier within *ius in bello*, the issue there being in compliance with the established rules, which, as in all laws, could have been different but factually are not: the only problem there might be their imprecision and indeterminacy, but other than that they are just the matter to apply).

The other of Patrick's items, the "battle of narratives" is intimately connected with the previous one. Narratives are in essence the interpretations of what is happening. From our fallibility follow some difficulties to achieve an absolutely true description (every description is also an ascription!), but in a situation of conflict, which is based in freedom and additional fallibility, the business of interpreting becomes itself a matter of the conflict, more than the matter of understanding, explaining or justified evaluation of what is the subject of interpretation. And for an ethicist it might be a problem. The business of military ethics is not quite scientific: to study wars as phenomena. It is more normative: to explore its possible justifications (in the context of its *prima facie* unjustifiability). However, the process of justifying must be solid, which it cannot be if not objective and impartial. That implies, at least, not jumping to conclusions, and serious and responsible effort to find and explore causes of what is the matter of analyzing. Causes have two main features: they produce consequences, and they come from the past. Neither of these should be changed in the process of interpreting or reinterpreting. If we do that, we start a strange business of producing miracles: *only miracles are causeless*, and sometimes also reasonless. But in the context of stress, anger, rage, or resentment, it might be difficult to resist such a temptation to replace causal explanation with miraculous fairy-telling that is certainly much more comfortable. Our need to blame is also easier to satisfy that way, but that is too high price - for what? For an illusory option to be able to ascribe stupidity and evil to those whom we hate?

That might be the biggest risk, epistemological and moral: – to come to the position that our blame is based in a strange attitude that those whom we hate are because of that stupid and then, also, evil: we don't hate them because they are stupid and evil, but they are stupid and evil because we hate them. (This does not preclude that they might be really stupid, and therefore also evil, but that doesn't change the starting attitude which invalidates any claim to the objectivity of such analysis). Such position may make any negotiation impossible and totally precludes reconciliation. It may lead to total war, without room for sound thinking and without responsibility. Perhaps it is not impossible but certainly it is not plausible nor right to be a judge in one's own affairs. You cannot take a side and be a judge at the same time. In order to stay in our lane it is necessary not to be lost in the frenzy or hysteria of arrogant propriety, disabling us from sound thinking necessary for seriousness and responsibility in what we do, in deeds and words, especially when the issues are very important as they sometimes are. That's the only way to not only stay in our lane but also to get a chance to move forward.