

# War and Conflict in a Globalising World: Governance or Empire?

Chiara Bottici

## Abstract

The paper analyses the role that war and conflict play within two models of world order: governance and empire. After reconstructing the genealogy of concept of governance, the paper analyses the contemporary transformations of war and conflict and show why mainstream readings of governance are unable to come to terms with them. The concept of empire, as it has recently been reformulated, seems to be *prima facie* better equipped to this task. On the other hand, the paper argues that biopolitical reading of the governance not only largely converge with the concept of empire, but also provides a less rhetorically charged analytical tool.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> events have put an end to the dream of a "belle époque" of globalisation. The idea that this latter could have opened a new epoch of peaceful and spontaneous submission to the rule-system of the new world order collapsed with the ruins of the Twin Towers. If the wars that followed the end of the Cold War could still be (mistakenly) seen as residual or peripheral to the new world order, the attacks on New York rendered manifest that the forces of globalisation can be a source of conflict as well as a source of order.

The phenomenology of the attacks to the Twin Towers, indeed, only make sense within the new scenario opened up by the advent of globalisations - here understood as a complex of phenomena involving all spheres of social life, from economics to politics and culture. The crucial role of information and communication technologies, with the hegemony of networks that they brought about, the porosity of borders together with the elusion of territorially defined constraints, which have led many authors to speak of an end to the state sovereignty, they are all features that are associated with the term "globalisation" and that are epitomised by the dynamics of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks.

The aim of this paper is to explore the role of war and conflict in two paradigms that have been proposed in order to capture the nature of these transformations. On the one hand, the idea of a "global governance" suggests that the phenomena of globalisation have opened the path for a new multilateral world order, in which no single power could any longer aspire to a position of hegemony, being power and authority rather dispersed and diffused in a multi-layered system of rules. On the other hand, critics of this view, who emphasise the role of conflict and war in the contemporary scenario, have proposed the concept of "empire" as the conceptual tool that best render the nature of contemporary world order. After analysing the two paradigms (§.1, §.3), with regards to their capacity to explain the contemporary transformation of war and conflict (§.2), the paper concludes that both paradigms potentially enable us to come to terms with conflict, the difference between the two depending on the reading of them that one follows. In particular, the biopolitical reading of governance shares many important points with the concept of empire as it has recently been formulated.

## 1. Situating "governance": a genealogical approach

Globalisation, in its numerous aspects - economic, financial, environmental, technological, political and cultural - has created such a situation that events, decisions and activities in one part of the world can have crucial consequences for individuals and communities on the other side of the globe. It involves a stretching and deepening of social relations and institutions across space and time such that, on the one hand, day-to-day activities are increasingly influenced by events happening on the other side of the globe and, on the other, the practices and decisions of local groups and communities can have significant global reverberations (Held, Mc Grew, Goldblatt, Perraton 1999, Bottici 2002).

As a consequence, globalisation can be conceived as a set of processes, which determine a complex form of interaction between the local and the global, rather than as an univocal process that shift the spatial form of human organisation from local to global scale. Some authors have coined a new term in order to capture this complex relationship: "glocalisation" (Robertson 1992) (1). The stretching of the social chains of interdependence that results from technological, economical, cultural and political globalisation has the consequence the lives of people in a single region of the globe increasingly depend not simply on peoples taking decisions on the global level, but also on the local responses to them as well as on what happens in other remote local regions of the globe.

The means by which this happens is the form of the network. In a network, which is formed by thousands of interwoven threads, processes flow through its junctions without it being possible to arrest them or even identify a single centre. This centrality of networks has lead to speak of a new "network society" (Castells 2000). As Arquilla and Ronfeldt also observed when analysing the consequence that this has with regards to conflict,

The rise of network forms of organisations - particularly "all channel networks", in which every node can communicate with every other node - is one of the single most important effects of the information revolution for all realms: political, economic, social, and military. It means that power is migrating to small, non-state actors who can organize into sprawling networks more readily than can hierarchical nation-state actors. It means that conflict will increasingly be waged by "networks", rather than by "hierarchies". It means that whoever masters the network form stands to gain major advantages in the new epoch (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 1997: 5)

One of the most often commented upon consequence of this new form of global-local interaction is the crisis of the nation-state. The sovereign state, which has been, and continues to be, one of the crucial promoters of the phenomena of globalisation, also seems to be one of its most illustrious victims. Whether one adopts the radical thesis of an "end of sovereignty" or rather emphasises the limits of this process by pointing to the crucial role that state apparatuses still play in the global scenario, it can hardly be denied that one of the most significant phenomenon is the increasing incapacity of nation-state to exercise their territorially-defined sovereignty in an autonomous way. The point here is not to determine the extent to which nation states are still the crucial actors of the international arena (Gilpin 2002), which might also be the case. It is rather to capture the significance of the fact that, to a great extent, their action increasingly depends on actors and processes that are subtracted to their control.

The fact that crucial processes and activities such as financial transaction, economic production, ecological and military challenges (2) tend to get rid of spatial constraints has crucially questioned the territorial anchorage of sovereign states. As a consequence, these latter are increasingly unable to promote a given financial or economic policy independently or to guarantee alone the security of their citizens or the environment in which they live - just to make only a few examples. At the same time, networks have contributed to the formation of communities not founded on the same hierarchical principles. The global world has indeed become the stage for an ever growing assortment of actors: from formal bodies to social movements, from emergent supranational entities such as the European Union to issue regimes, from transnational corporations to humanitarian groups, all of which can come to exercise a more or less formal source of authority.

Together with the actors, the script of the global scene seems to have changed too. One of the most fortunate concept that have been proposed in order to depict this new condition is that of "governance" (3). Whereas the idea of "government" implies some kind of centralisation, the term "governance" means instead a reticular and decentralised form. Since the nineties the idea of a "governance without government" started to be used in order to take distance from the conventional state-centric approach and signal the need for new conceptual tools in order to describe the new world order (Rosenau and Czempel 1992). As one of its chief promoters puts it, given the absence of a world government, the concept of governance provides a language to describe the nexus of systems of rule-making, coordination and problem-solving which transcend states and societies (Rosenau 2000).

The prefix "global" that is most of the times associated with the term "governance" does not simply point to the scale of the institutions that exercise the governance, such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund or other regimes that operate at the global level. The term "global" also points to the pervasiveness of the governance within social life, i.e. to the potentially infinite variety of topics that can be the object of its regulations. Distinctions such as "public" and "private" make no sense in the world of global governance. For instance, according to the Commission on Global Governance, governance "is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their own affairs" (Selby 2003:4).

Thus, together with the critical stance towards the traditional state-centric approach, the concept of governance is also meant to underline that something new is happening in state-society relations as a consequence of the pluralisation of sites for social steering and control as well as of the increasing importance of non-governmental civil society actors in exercising the governance (Selby 2003: 3). Indeed, in a world where authority is increasingly diffused among multiple layers, the key to understand the role that different actors play on the global arena lies no longer in focusing on their legal prerogatives, but rather in assessing the degree to which they are able to evoke the compliance of the people whom they seek to mobilize (Rosenau 2002:75). States may appear to have an advantage in this regard, because they have the legitimate right to employ force if their citizens fail to comply, but to insist on this point means to ignore the wider underpinnings of compliance. In particular, this means to ignore the large degree to which compliance is rooted in an unthinking readiness to respond to directives issued by the authorities to which one has been socialized to be committed and loyal (Rosenau 2002: 75).

One of the most conspicuous consequences of this process is the key role that knowledge and expertise have come to play in the world of global governance. Suffice to think of the incredible amount of reports, statistics, databases and grey literature that has been produced over the last twenty years in order to get a clear evidence of this trend. As it has been observed from different perspectives, the reach and power of global governance also depends on its ability to present itself as the arbiter scientific truth (Dillon 2003, Duffy 2003). Compliance rests more and more on the threat of exclusion from a regime of truth than on the threat of recourse to direct force. Indeed, the very presupposition of governance is that of a free and rational subject who spontaneously follows the rational directives that are provided. Hence, also the tendency to depict the project of global governance as a neutral and technical project.

Together with dissatisfaction with the traditional conceptual apparatus of political theory, the concept of governance also plays an ideological role in legitimating and promoting various political agenda (Selby 2003: 3). This can most clearly be seen in the case of the World Bank, which initially introduced the word into policy discourse. Keen to preserve the balance between its increasing interventions in matters of government and its Articles of Agreement, which formally prohibit it from intervening in political issues, the Bank started emphasising the importance of "governance" within development policy (World Bank, 1989). Defined by the World Bank simply as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development" (World Bank 1992), governance was thus presented as a neutral, technical matter for eradicating poverty and promoting social order. The origins of governance were indeed identified with the state failure (1992:3), market failure (1992:6) and the failed campaign against corruption (1992: 16-17).

From this relatively limited use, the word gradually spread to other fields. During the nineties, other agencies such as the UNDP, for instance, took on a broader agenda: governance should not only serve to fight poverty and corruption but also to promote "human development" (UNDP 1997). Hence the stress put on disadvantaged people, women and minorities as well as on the need to protect environment. Since 1995, the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) emphasised the need to introduce governance within the framework of democratisation (OECD-DAC 1995). In the 1997 version of the DAC guidelines, a new emphasis is put on "civil society" promotion as another factor for stability and democracy promotion. (4)

Thus, the "good governance" that is now so central to international agenda was presented from the very beginning as a technical and apolitical project for promoting a better management of resources and fairness across the developing world. On the other hand, for critics, this discourse is but a refurbished means of "blaming the victims" of the current global order, hiding the roots of conflict by creating the impression that internal mismanagement rather than global economic structures are the root cause of their plight (George and Sabelli, 1994). (5)

Whether this criticism is right or not, it is clear that there is a tension in the whole discourse on "governance" between its alleged technical and apolitical nature and its promotion of a specific model of social power relations, i.e. the liberal one, with its emphasis on the need for limited state structures and the promotion of democracy and civil society.

To conclude, we can observe with Selby that there are at least two common points in the different understandings of global governance (Selby 2003: 6). In the first place, global governance is about the thickening social density of world politics and about transformations in the locations and scales at which politics is conducted. Secondly, global governance embeds a liberal idea, conveying a pluralistic view of the world: the governance project is about dispersing power away from hegemonic centre of power, especially states, about extending and overcoming resistance to liberal democratic values and procedures, and about ordering people and things through recourse to reason, knowledge and expertise. To sum up, it is a project for ordering global social relations.

## **2. War and conflict in a global age**

One of the major problem for the theorists of global governance is how to account for the continual eruptions of war and conflict that characterise our epoch. If governance is a project for rationalising global social relations and for creating order in absence of an ordinator - a world government, despite its many advocates, is still far from being established, how should we then interpret the recurrence of war and conflict?

While the wars that had followed the end of the Cold War could still be interpreted - with some naivety - as a residual to be swept away by the advent of a global civil society, since the nineties we have witnessed the advent of wars that appear as the direct product of the new epoch rather than as a residual of the past.

All the same, most theorists of the global governance are reluctant to take this objection on board. In their view, war and conflict remain either a residual of the past or a form of regressive resistance that should be tamed by extending global governance itself. Thus, while in Rosenau's view, for instance, those "who tend to defy steerage and resort to violence" are those outside or resistant to global governance (Rosenau 1995:16), in other authors' view, conflicts are the effect of a distorted system of governance that should be rectified through its democratisation with the institution of a global covenant (Held 2004).

On the other hand, the extent and the significance of the transformations through which war and conflict went in our epoch seem *prima facie* to exceed the explication capacity of these theories. How can we account for events such as the terrorist attacks to New York, Madrid and London? Are they simple residual of the past or irrational eruptions of chaos that can be tamed by reinforcing global governance?

In order to address these questions, we will try first to reconstruct the significance of the transformations of war and conflict in the global era (§.2) and, subsequently, will consider how they can be accounted for in the framework of both, the global governance, and an alternative paradigm that has recently been proposed as a more suited means to capture those transformations, the concept of empire (§.3). In conclusion, we will suggest that there are readings of the global governance that possess the same explicatory power of empire, without though entailing the same rhetorical impact.

By conflict, I mean any action or social relationships in which two or more actors (groups or individuals) try to impose their will with regards to objectives perceived as incompatible. (6) The objectives can then be either resources and benefits, or the very identity of an individual or a group. As Pizzorno observes, in the first case, we have a conflict of interest, whereas in the second we should speak of a conflict of recognition (Pizzorno 1993: 195). We should, however, here note that the identity that a group or an individual ask to be recognised is not necessarily an already existing identity. Indeed, in more than one occasion, the formation of a common identity is the result rather than the presupposition of a conflict. This can, for instance, be the case of a social movement that is still at the beginning, and therefore needs to create a unity, or of a social movement whose identity is losing force and needs to be reinforced through conflict itself.

To these first two types of conflict, we must add a third one. When at stake is an entire worldview, we are indeed witnessing an ideological conflict (Pizzorno 1993: 198). This latter type of conflict is characterised by the fact that the parts of the conflict possess a theory of reality and how to transform it which aspires to be recognised as universal truth. As a consequence, the parts involved typically aim to make proselytes, and gain as many people as possible to their own causes. It is precisely for this universalistic aspiration, that ideological conflict should be kept distinguished from a conflict for recognition of identity: in the first case, we have a theory of reality that present itself as an *universal* truth, whereas in the second we have a struggle for the recognition of a *particular* identity.

These are clearly only ideal-types, which never appear in their pure form in everyday social life. Most of the times, different components are intermingled to a point where they can hardly be distinguished. All the same, it is helpful to keep them distinguished at the analytical level.

Another way to classify conflicts is on the basis of the *means* that are employed in them. In particular, we can distinguish between non-violent conflicts and conflicts based on the use of violence understood here as use of physical coercion. (7) War, at least according to its classical definition, (8) is clearly part of these latter types of conflict. If we follow the definition of war provided by von Clausewitz in the first page of *On War*, war is precisely an act of violence (9) to compel our enemy to do our will (von Clausewitz 1976:75).

With regards to war and conflict, the project of modernity has been characterised by an attempt to domesticate them through the institution of state sovereignty. In the first place, with the institution of a territorially defined state sovereignty, a clear distinction was established between the "internal" and the "external" dimensions of the exercise of sovereignty. Violent conflicts, and thus wars, were to be relegated to the clash between equally sovereign states: order *inside* the space of exercise of the sovereign power *superiorem non recognoscens* and the anarchical clash between equally sovereign powers *outside*. (10)

On the other hand, the clash between sovereigns in an anarchic space was to be further limited through the juridification of war. The formation of the modern system of sovereign states has been indeed accompanied by the affirmation of the *ius gentium*, which is formed by the so-called *ius ad bellum* and the *ius in bello*. (11) While the exclusive recognition of the *ius ad bellum* to the states, holder of the monopoly of physical coercion, was meant to put an end to civil wars, the progressive institution of a system of rules for combatants (*ius in bello*) had the function to limit the brutality of war. One of the most important consequences of the latter was, for instance, the separation between civilians and combatants, whereas the former implied the tendential separation of war from both morality and religion, with the progressive abandoning of the old doctrine of the just war that had been elaborated in the Middle Ages. While according to this doctrine a war is legitimate when it is waged for a just cause, according to the modern *ius ad bellum* a war is legitimate when it is waged by the (sovereign) power that has the right to declare war.

Non-violent conflicts, on the other hand, were to be tamed within the internal space of exercise of sovereignty. Modern political theory offered two different models for the interpretations of conflicts: the Hobbesian and the Machiavellian (Pizzorno 1993). According to the latter, conflicts are not necessarily harmful for a state (Machiavelli 1984, I, 2-4). Indeed, when they enable a part of the population hitherto excluded from the exercise of power to gain the right to participate to the government, they can generate innovative laws and institutions and thus be a means to guarantee the liberty of citizens (Machiavelli 1984, I, 2-4; 1962, III, 1). Conflicts are only harmful for the health of the state (*respublica*) when they are moved by personal and private ambitions and lead therefore to divisions in sects within the state rather than to the attainment of a public good (Machiavelli 1984 I, 2; 1962 III, 5; VII, 1).

On the contrary, according to Hobbes, spectator of the brutalities of the wars of religion which had bathed Europe in blood for many years, conflicts are always harmful and it is for their definitive overcoming that the Leviathan has to be instituted (Hobbes 1968, XVII). In his view, conflict should be left to the external dimension of sovereignty: even if the sovereign states remain in a condition of war of one against the other, from this condition it does not follow the same misery that characterises war among individuals precisely because, in this way, states maintain within their boundaries the conditions in which the life of their citizens can flourish (Hobbes 1968, XIII).

Contemporary transformations of the nature of war and conflict radically question this project of modernity. It is the very presupposition of the separation between the inside and the outside, and the consequent limitation of war to the latter sphere, that topples in the global epoch (Bottici 2002). The advent of networks as the hegemonic form of organisation of social life has indeed reached and penetrated also the domain of war, bringing about a deep transformations of its nature as well as of

its relationship with other spheres of social life. This, on the other hand, comes as no surprise, given that warfare techniques have always been dependent on the technologic evolution and the modes of productions of a given epoch. Thus, the fact that the network form of organisation plays a hegemonic role within both domains is not accidental but the consequence of a deeper, structural transformation of the whole social life they brought about (Dillon 2002).

A possible way to illustrate the point is to analyse the report issued every three years by the Roles and Missions Commission for the US Secretary of the Defence. *The Joint Vision 2010* issued in 1996 advocated a network-centric warfare. This implies moving to more lethal military capabilities not simply by adopting the information and communication technology of the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), but by systematically utilising information as the generative principle of formation for all aspects of military organisation. (12) A revised *Joint Vision 2020* issued in 2000, extended and embraced the network-centric warfare as the principle of formation governing all US national strategy (Dillon 2003:29, 30).

The new network strategy, which draw its inspiration from both the revolution in information and communication technology as well as from the molecular revolution in biology, is then officially characterised by four themes (Dillon 2003: 30-31):

1. A shift from the weapons platform (battle craft, aircraft, bomber etc) to the information network as the key unit of military organisation.
2. A shift of focus from the dynamics of individual military actors or units to that of radical relational systems.
3. A tendency towards interpreting the operations of complex adaptive military systems in biological terms.
4. Finally, the conviction that information is the prime mover in military as in every other aspect of human affairs. This does not simply mean that information increases the firepower and effectiveness of traditional weapons systems, but rather that information initiated a whole scale re-thinking of the very basis of military organisation, doctrine, training and operational concepts (Dillon 2002).

This is still a contested doctrine within both the US Secretary of the Defence Community and the international community. But what is most interesting to us is that this doctrine best epitomises the hegemonic role of network in contemporary world. While the superpowers spend trillion of dollars on high technology earth and space based weapons systems, the vast majority of today's war casualties are killed by small arms wielded by non specialists (Nordstrom 2001: 16354). Indeed, the point is not the degree to which current military operations are actually shaped by this doctrine or the number of military expenses dictated by it. It might well be the case that this is still a minority, however a significant one. What is at stake is the significance of these transformations, i.e. the fact that they reflect the most significant shifts in contemporary world.

One of the major consequences of the emergence of the network-centric warfare is a tendential de-territorialisation of war. In the first place, this is because any sort of network, also immaterial ones, can indeed be the site for an attack. Financial networks, transportation systems, water supply facilities, oil and gas storage, just to make a few examples, all of them increasingly depend on the cyberspace and can therefore become potential weapons. Should you wish to attack them you may choose or not to operate in the cyberspace (Dillon 2003: 33).

But moreover, networks, by their very nature, elude territorial boundaries. The enemy can no longer be identified with a single place. For instance, the "impious West" can hardly be identified with the mere territory of the US just as "terrorism" can hardly be identified with a single territorial enemy. This identification can at best be the result of the work of a political myth. (13) "Terrorism" is a non-identifiable enemy and can indeed lie everywhere. It has by definition no place: it can hit everywhere and from this derives its disruptive and devastating power.

This process is also reflected by a parallel shift in emphasis from "defence" to "security" in both military and, more generally, policy discourses. If the enemy lies potentially everywhere, then only a deeper action in the environment can help prevent an attack. In the contest of the US foreign policy, this shift means the movement from a reactive and conservative attitude to an active and constructive one, both within and outside the national boundaries. In the more general worldwide context, this implied a progressive erosion of the distinction between war and police action: if defence means a protective barrier against an external threat, security requires rather actively and constantly shaping the environment (Hardt and Negri 2004: 21). Hence, also the gradual erosion of the distinction between a state of peace and a state of war, and the consequent continuous invocation of a state of exception (Hardt and Negri 2004: 5).

With the Cold War we had already witnessed a condition of continual war. The nuclear weapons, with their exponential increase in destruction capacity have already determined a quality leap in the nature of war as well as in its relationship with the conditions of peace. The advent of biochemical weapons insert in this trend and bring it to a new stage. To put it bluntly, we may say that while the aim of modern war was the control of a *territory*, the aim of contemporary war is the control of *life* itself. In the first place, indeed, the new weapons possess a capacity to modify the very nature of life (and death) that was unknown to the previous epoch. Whilst fire weapons could only result in the death or mutilation of the single enemy which had been hit, both nuclear and chemical weapons can intervene on the very nature of the life of an entire population, by modifying their fundamental vital functions. (14) Secondly, it is the

network form of organisation itself which provides unedited chances for a capillary control of life. In this sense, we can speak of a biopolitical power of warfare networks (Dillon 2003).

The consequences that all these transformations had for the modern project of domesticating war are pivotal. From the point of view of the *ius ad bellum*, we are assisting to a new privatisation of war. Wars are no longer exclusively waged by sovereign states, but, rather, by any sort of actors. Even sovereign states themselves make increasingly recourse to private mercenary troops. Not by chance, thus, some authors have recently re-proposed the concept of "new medievalism" in order to designate the new world order. (15) And the analogies with the medieval world order do not stop here. We cannot enter the discussion of the concept of new-medievalism here, but let us simply note that the re-emergence in the contemporary world of the old doctrine of the just war is no coincidence. This doctrine challenges indeed one of the most important limits that modernity had tried to impose on war: the separation of the *ius ad bellum* from both morality and religion.

From the point of view of the *ius in bello* we are assisting to an analogous erosion of the limits that the project of modernity had tried to impose on war. The progressive erosion of the distinction between combatants and civilians is perhaps the most striking evidence of this process. This process started in the total wars of the Twentieth Century and their capacity to mobilise entire societies, but reached a new level with the advent of terrorism. The latter can indeed potentially hit everywhere at any time, so that it becomes impossible to distinguish between a condition of war and a condition of peace. To sum up, they are the very presuppositions of the modern project to domesticate war by imposing limits on it that are questioned by the contemporary transformations of war.

To conclude, together with the separation between the space inside and outside the nation-state, it is also the distinction international relations and domestic politics that topples. In a parallel way, the contours of the distinction between war, understood as an act of violence, and conflict are increasingly blurred. In the context of the new "global war" (Greblo 2002) opened up by 9/11 low-intensity warfare meets high-intensity conflict so that it becomes more difficult to keep the two categories of war and conflict separate. If, since the Cold War we had already witnessed the emergence of a kind of war that does not involve the actual use of violence, now conflicts have emerged that make recourse to violence in its most devastating force - the illimitable violence of terrorism.

### **3. Empire**

The phenomenology of contemporary war that we have reconstructed in the previous paragraph seems indeed to radically question the project of modernity of rationalising war. At the same time, doubts may arise over the capacity to render the role that these phenomena play in the contemporary world through the lenses of the global governance. If this latter is to be understood as a project for rationalising global social relations, it seems indeed to be more a means for overcoming war and conflict rather than one for understanding it.

Alternative concepts have been recently advanced. In particular, the concept of "empire", it is argued, given its conceptual link with the idea of conflict, represents a valuable alternative (Hardt and Negri 2000). The task of this section is to analyse the analytical potentialities of this concept.

In contemporary debate, we can distinguish two mainstream use of the concept of empire (Zolo 2004). According to the first one, which steams from the Marxist tradition, the contemporary world order represents no radical novelty: the passage from capitalism to imperialism would be a necessary condition of the survival of market economy and in this sense its origins would go back at least as far as the nineteenth century. (16) Thus, for instance, Harvey argues that a "raw imperialism" led by the US lies under the neutral mask of globalisation, despite the fact that this took the form of multilateral neoliberalism in the 1990s and is now turning into an unilateral militarism with the current George W. Bush administration (Harvey 2005).

According to other authors, on the contrary, the contemporary condition would indeed entail a radical novelty that implies a major break with the classical notion of empire. This is the new role that states play in world politics. Imperial states do not aspire to territorial conquest any longer, but rather participate in a tendentially decentred and de-territorialised distribution of power. Hence, the concept of "empire", which has been recently been proposed by Hardt and Negri in the homonymous book, as distinguished from that of imperialism. (17)

This use of the concept of empire implies a major break with regards not only to classical theories of imperialism but also more recent version of the concept. For instance, even a refined version of the concept of empire such as that of "empire by invitation", which has been used to describe the relationship between the United States and Europe since 1945 (Lundestad 2003) still implies the idea of a hierarchical system of political relationships. In this view, the American empire in contrast to most traditional empires, consists of mostly independent countries, but it is still based on a hierarchical system radiating from a center. (18)

On the contrary, Hardt and Negri, who write from an overtly militant communist perspective, insist on many occasions on the fact that "empire" does not mean US hegemony. (19) No state, not even the US, can go alone in the contemporary world. In their definition, "the concept of Empire is characterised fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire's rule has no limits" (Hardt and Negri 2000: xiv). The contemporary world order is in their view best described as an empire precisely because of this lack of boundaries and not because of the US hegemony. Rather, their "empire" is by definition an acephalous

one.

First and foremost, therefore, this use of the concept posits a regime that encompasses the spatial totality. Second, "empire" denotes a de-centred and de-territorialised system where no centre can be identified. In order to render this idea, Hardt and Negri employ the category of the "mixed constitution" (Hardt and Negri 2000, 304-320). Third, empire denotes a regime that operates in all registers of social life. In the words of the two authors, "empire not only manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower" (Hardt and Negri 2000: xv).

In the view of the two authors, coming from the Marxist tradition, the roots of this form of biopower is the transformation of production brought about by the advent of what they call "immaterial labour" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 29). In their view, the central role previously occupied by the labour power of mass factory workers in the production of surplus value is today increasingly filled by intellectual, immaterial, and communicative labour power exercised through networks. This new form of labour, that despite its still being limited to a relatively small part of the world production, is hegemonic in the sense that tend to permeates all spheres of production and social life. Immaterial labour produces not just goods, but also affects and modifications in the bodies. In a word, it produces a new form of subjectivity.

Finally, according to Hardt and Negri despite its raising from conflict, the concept of empire is always dedicated to peace - a perpetual and universal peace. As they observes, recovering the tradition of Thucydides, Livy and Tacitus (along with Machiavelli commenting on their work), empire is formed not on the basis of force itself but on the basis of the capacity to present force as being in the service of order, justice and peace. Interventions by imperial armies are solicited by the parties involved in an already existing conflict: "empire is not born of its own will but rather it is called into being and constituted on the basis of its capacity to resolve conflicts. Empire is formed and its intervention becomes juridically legitimate only when it is already inserted into the chain of international consensuses aimed at resolving existing conflicts [...]. The first task of empire, then, is to enlarge the realm of the consensuses that support its own power" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 15).

In Hardt' and Negri's use, the concept of empire denotes therefore not only absence of border but also an union of juridical concepts and ethical values. The re-emergence of the medieval category of the *bellum iustum* in both intellectual and policy discourses is perhaps the most striking evidence of this change. In their view, the modern principle of mutual respect among sovereign state has given way to the contemporary emergence of a right of intervention, which is based on a permanent state of exception justified by the appeal to the universal values such as justice and freedom (Hardt and Negri 2000: 18).

To conclude this reconstruction, we can note a strong similarity here with the role that knowledge plays within the paradigm of global governance. As we have seen, this latter is based on an extensive and intensive use of reports, statistics, grey literature, which serves not only as guidelines for policy-makers, but also as intellectual discourses that shape their subjects.

On the other hand, empire, given its emphasis on the link between its own constitution and conflict, seems to be *prima facie* a better tool for understanding the role of war and conflict in contemporary world. As we will see, however, there are readings of the global governance that make similar points and can thus provide equally valid analytical tools.

#### **4. A biopolitical global governance**

One of the objections that have been addressed to Hardt and Negri is that their use of the concept of empire presents an assortment of motifs plucked by disparate classical work, arranged into dazzling, yet intellectual fragile, bouquets (Brennan 2003, Tilly 2003). As a consequence, it ends up denoting nothing less than the new global condition as a whole (Zolo 2004:192). Whether this criticism is right or not, it seems to point in the right direction.

For our purposes it is indeed helpful to note that Hardt and Negri's use of the concept is very broad. In particular, their use departs from traditional usages of the term precisely in the point that would set it definitely apart from the concept of global governance: the possibility of individuating the *caput* of empire, its emanating centre. Being an acephalous "empire", which includes in itself a large variety of motifs, its diagnosis is not a priori incompatible with the concept of governance, a part from the militant perspective that the two authors of empire aim to open up.

On the other hand, if we put on a side for a moment this militant side, it becomes clear that there are many points of contact with the governance paradigm. (20) In particular, it must be observed that there are readings of the global governance itself that are very close in their diagnosis to Hardt and Negri's concept of empire. According to Dillon, for instance, the power of the global governance lies - as the power of empire, we may add - in the biopolitical power of networks. Drawing insights from Foucault, Dillon focuses on the ways in which power/knowledge is exercised through the pluralistic, multi-layered system of global governance. In his words,

"global liberal governance is a Foucauldian system of power/knowledge that depends upon the strategic orchestration of the self-regulating freedoms of populations, the relations between whose subjects form complex and dynamic

networks of power. These networks operate through the strategic manipulation of different generative principles of formation: profit, scarcity, security and so on. Initiating and orchestrating domains of self-regulating freedom also requires detailed knowledge of the populations and the terrains that they inhabit. The object of power here is the exercise of power over life, rather than power over death. Global governance is therefore very much more a domain of "bio" rather than "geo" politics (Dillon 2003:26)

To sum up, this reading of the global governance converges with the diagnosis of the authors of empire in four fundamental points. First, global governance is also a multi-layered, decentred system of rules, which operates in all spheres of social life. Secondly, in this system, too, knowledge/information plays a crucial role. Thirdly, this biopolitical power is also linked to the emergence of a mode of production based on the technological revolution of networks. Finally, what is most interesting to us, Dillon's analysis also points to the inextricable link between power and conflict. Indeed, the very presupposition of Dillon' view is the fact that no power can ever be exercised without resistance to it. Here lies the root of conflict. Resistance to global governance is not simply a regressive reaction to, but the very condition for the exercise of global governance itself, because it is the condition for the exercise of any sort of power.

As a consequence, as much as power, in the context of global governance, assumes a pluralistic connotation, so do resistance and conflict. Thus the authors that adopt this conceptual framework, include in their phenomenology of conflict not only terrorist attacks or global crime, but also the activities of social movements and even Bush ambivalent, if not downright hostile, attitude towards multilateralism (Cochrane, Duffy and Selby 2003). In this way, far from being a means for simply overcoming conflict through the rationalisation of all social relations, governance becomes here a means for understanding the roots of conflict itself.

Clearly, in the view of these authors all the different manifestations of conflict call for a different evaluation of both their nature and the role that they play within the system of global governance. In comparison with the destructive role of terrorism and the war on terror, the emphasis on the role that social movements has come to play since the mass demonstrations at the Seattle WTO summit in 1999 recalls for instance another model of conflict that does not equate it with chaos and destruction. Indeed, as we have seen according to what we have called the Machiavellian model, conflicts are not necessarily harmful. In as far as they enable a part that had been hitherto excluded from the government to take part in it, they can be a means for innovation and even the condition for exercise of freedom. Conflict, on the contrary, are harmful when they resolve into the unilateral advantage of one part at the expenses of the common good.

To conclude, war and conflict cannot be uprooted from contemporary world, as much as they are so from any system of power. All the same, both the paradigm of governance and that of empire, at least in certain readings of them, can be used to come to term with their postmodern transformations. The difference remains that between two terms, one which openly presents itself as a political manifesto and has therefore strong rhetorical impact, and another one, the "governance", which presents itself as neutral and technical, but, as we have seen, also risks to be not.

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## Notes

1. More recently, in order to render the idea of this double tendency towards integration above the states and fragmentation below it, another neologism he has been suggested: "fragemegration" (Rosenau 2002: 78). This search for new words is already the sign of the widespread dissatisfaction with the traditional vocabulary of political and social theory.
2. On the notion of global challenges, such as nuclear weapons and global warming, as well as on the philosophical significance of their emergence, see Cerutti 2001.
3. Since the appearance of the term in the language adopted by the World Bank and the introduction into the language of political science by the fortunate Rosenau and Czempiel "Governance without government" (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992), the term has been adopted by a vast amount of interpreters. See, for instance, Held, McGrew, Goldblatt, Perraton, 1999; and Held and McGrew 2002a.
4. For a critique of the notion of "civil society" and the role that it plays in the global governance agenda, see, for instance, Fine, Lapavitsas and Pincus 2001 or, more recently, Challand 2006.
5. For a discussion of the ethics of assistance, see Chatterjee 2004 and, in particular, Pogge 2004.
6. For this definition of conflict, see Cerutti (2003:14) and Elwert (2001: 2542).
7. For a discussion of the possible definitions of violence, see Haupt 2001 and Warren 2001.
8. The advent of the Cold War had, however, already questioned this definition of war, being not based on an actual act of violence, but rather on the threat to make recourse to it.
9. I am here taking distance from Howard and Paret, who translate the German "Gewalt" into "force", whereas it is precisely "violence" that is, in my view, here meant (von Clausewitz 1976:75).
10. For wider discussion of this point, see Bottici 2002 and 2004.
11. This is one of the reason that has led some authors to speak of an anarchical society of states (Bull 1977). According to this view, even in absence of an ordinator the relations between sovereign states still exhibit a certain degree of order. To assume the opposite view, means to fall in an essentially flawed domestic analogy (Bull 1977, Bottici 2004).
12. There is now a vast literature on the so-called Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). For a brief overview, done from the perspective of the US Administration, see Rumsfeld 2002. For a general discussion, see the links to articles provided at <http://www.comw.org/rma/index.html>
13. For this use of the concept of political myth see Bottici 2006, whereas for an analysis of the clash of civilisations in these terms, see Bottici and Challand 2006.
14. On the absolute character of war after the advent of the atomic bomb as well as on the ontological transformations that this has brought about, see the classical volumes by Günther Anders (Anders 1980). First published in the fifties, the reflections by Anders still conserve their intact significance today. This is perhaps due to the fact that nuclear weapons have not disappeared from the contemporary world but rather continues to be one of the paradigmatic global challenges (Cerutti 2001).
15. A first throughout discussion of the idea of a "new medievalism" is to be found in Bull 1977. More recently, see, for instance, Kobrin 1999.
16. For a good sample of sustainers of the imperialist thesis, see Appelbaum and Robinson 2005.
17. The book has had a huge impact in both militant and academic circles As an example of this impact, see the collections of essays and reviews *Debating Empire* (Balakrishnan 2003).
18. Lundestad discusses four different definitions of the concept of empire, as it has been used in recent debates, and all of them converge on the fundamental idea of a hierarchical system of political relationships radiating from a center (Lundestad 2003:19).
19. On the contrary, according to other authors the concept of empire should rather be used to denote the "neo-imperial hegemony" exercised by the US and whose origins goes as back as to the Second World War when the strategy of uniting the world in its "hegemonic peace" was first elaborated (see, for instance, Parsi 2002: 89).
20. According to Parsi, who adopts a less acephalous reading of empire, the two perspectives of empire and governance are not at all incompatible. In his view, it simply seems to be a matter of registers (Parsi 2002).

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