

The Unexpected But Previsible Return of War

Alain Bauer

ABSTRACT

In international relations, as in criminal or terrorist affairs, what seems new often turns out to be what has been forgotten. Amnesia has become our main enemy. We are gradually obliterating history, geography, perspective, and discovering that the present remains brutal.

Keywords: War, Russia, Ukraine, Europe

El inesperado pero previsible regreso de la guerra

RESUMEN

En las relaciones internacionales, como en los asuntos criminales o terroristas, lo que parece nuevo a menudo resulta ser lo que se ha olvidado. La amnesia se ha convertido en nuestro principal enemigo. Vamos borrando poco a poco la historia, la geografía, la perspectiva, y descubrimos que el presente sigue siendo brutal.

Palabras clave: Guerra, Rusia, Ucrania, Europa

意外但可预见的战争回归

摘要

在国际关系中，就像在犯罪或恐怖主义事务中一样，看似新鲜的事情往往一直被遗忘。失忆症已成为我们的主要敌人。我们正在逐渐抹去历史、地理、视角，并发现当下的现实仍然是残酷的。

关键词：战争，俄罗斯，乌克兰，欧洲

Nothing can excuse the premeditated attack of the Russian power against Ukraine. But denouncing it is not enough to analyze, understand and, above all, to react. The usual triptych of imprecations, incantations, and lamentations only serves to mask political impotence.

After 1945, in spite of painful decolonization, wrested independence, and terrorism of all kinds, a fragile peace had managed to guarantee international borders. This interlude, from the Yalta summit (in Crimea) to the fall of the Berlin Wall, ended under the blast of bombs and in the blood of the fighting in Europe. History remains tragic and, from this turning point, another world will be born, new demarcations will emerge, new stakes will be imposed for the survival of freedoms and democracies.

While the flow of data and information has become so abundant and so fast that we no longer have time to master its meaning, while alternative truths (called fake news) are submerging the information system everywhere, while there is no longer any absolute and common truth, while beliefs and distrust are multiplying—will Europeans, lost between the transhumanist promise and the unstructured Metaverse, finally become a real power? They have failed to consolidate power since the European Defense Community project was established in 1954?

OF AMNESIA IN GEOPOLITICS

In international relations, as in criminal or terrorist affairs, what seems new often turns out to be what has been forgotten. Amnesia has become our main enemy. We are gradually obliterating history, geography, perspective, and discovering that the present remains brutal.

Cold war and/or hot peace: in 1989, the liberal democracies experienced their epiphany. Westerners believed in the rightness of their model and in its copy and paste diffusion. Faced with the dismemberment of the Warsaw Pact, the Atlantic Alliance had a doctrinal and moral corpus that was to dominate. The Soviet debacle in Afghanistan balanced the American disaster in Vietnam, and the accounts seemed to be in balance. Détente is taking hold, borders are opening up, and freedom is progressing. A world of globalized carefree people satisfying their consumerist cravings is taking hold. But already, the fall of the Berlin Wall was followed by the destruction of Tiananmen Square. And a new, unexpected adversary, albeit one cooked up in the back rooms of Pakistan with the help of Western services, is preparing to take the field.

The matrix of the chaos to come has been established since 1979. Three events, whose connections are not understood, follow one another: the fall of the Shah of Iran, the attack on the Great Mosque of Mecca, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. Each one has local, regional and international consequences. But their accumulation creates the conditions for a major upheaval.

The appearance of the World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders (improperly named Al-Qaeda) accompanied the outbreak of the Algerian civil war following the interruption of the electoral process that gave victory to the Islamic Salvation Front. Both movements have as their backbone veterans of Afghanistan who fought the “red” enemy. The eschatological vision of their struggle changes the traditional profile of terrorism as another means of waging war.

THE REVENGE OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

Everywhere after 1989, the straight-line borders imagined by the victorious great powers of 1945 are breaking down. A new world is emerging in pain. Then, first in Yugoslavia, the door of the freezer that had frozen the Pandora’s box of nations, peoples, tribes, and confessions reopened. Nostalgic impulses and identity passions intermingle, where the colonizer (especially British, but not only) had cut up ethnic groups that aspired to reunify (Pashtun, Kurdish, Peul, ...), but also, where national constructions had left wounds infected by separatist or irredentist impulses (Basque Country, Catalonia, Ireland, Scotland, without forgetting curiosities such as the Falklands, Ceuta and Melilla, or Gibraltar).

Europe is confronted with the break-up of Yugoslavia, a country that is a symbol of the non-aligned. In the Balkans, the stigma of the four-year siege of Sarajevo (1992/1996), or of the 78 days of NATO air sorties bombing Slobodan Milosevic’s Serbia in 1999 in order to spare Kosovo from ethnic cleansing, is still present.

Throughout these three decades, war has been waging on various fronts and in various forms, from classic confrontation to hyper-terrorist innovation—until, in the strict sense of an armed conflict between two nations, with the aggressor also hitting the cities, it made its return to the heart of the Old Continent. And that it puts an end to an enchanted parenthesis of half a century. We are living in a historical and geographical cycle of vengeance.

THE EMPIRE UNTHOUGHT

We reread the theoretical essays on war: Ratzel and the struggle for vital space, Mackinder and the centrality of the world pivot, Schmitt and the need to designate the enemy, Mahan and the predominance of the maritime axes, Fuller and the superiority of the Blitzkrieg. Without forgetting the French: Aron for whom there is no instance superior to the States since each of them holds the monopoly of legitimate violence and, in the absence of a supreme arbiter, has the right to resort to it. And for whom: “Any change in the international system leads to a change in international relations”; or Duroselle, whose historical, empirical, realistic, and methodical enterprise endeavors to discern the role of ideas and regularities on the international scene, concluding from the inevitable confrontations that “[A]ny empire will perish.”

We reread their successors who try to renew the genre in the light of the collapse of communism. Some describe the effects of the phenomenon: Luttwak about the different levels of strategy or Nye about soft power. Others try to decipher it. In 1992, inspired by Kojève's theses, Fukuyama declared that the "end of history" had come with the ideological victory of Western liberalism, whose supremacy did not mean the absence of conflict. In 1996, Huntington announced the "clash of civilizations," considering that after having been predatory and then ideological, future wars will see the confrontation of a few large blocks determined by their cultural and religious identity. In 1997, Brzezinski drew the "great chessboard" on which a world based on the preponderance of the United States allied with Europe, rich but powerless, would depend in order to limit the multiplication of competition. The same author had indicated that it was necessary to detach Ukraine from Russia because together they formed an Empire, whereas separated, they were only States.

The authors of these concepts, centered on the questions of hegemony, power, and neutralization, intend to reorganize the planet. None of them, or almost none of them, sought to establish universal peace, which they considered utopian. Their reflections are confirmed by the mutation induced in 2001 by the terrorist attacks against the pillars of American power. They show the limits of nuclear deterrence. Unable to prevent recurrent attacks, nor to retaliate with the ultimate weapon, the United States conducted conventional operations that ultimately led to the withdrawal from Kabul in 2021, the humiliating images of which evoke the departure from Saigon in 1975.

However, one should always listen to the leaders of authoritarian regimes. They have a habit of saying openly what they want, where they want to go, and even how. Russia's Putin, China's Xi, Turkey's Erdogan, but also America's Trump or Brazil's Bolsonaro have in common that they spend their time announcing—shouting when necessary—their alternative vision to the decadent globalized society whose weaknesses they condemn, but whose democratic vitality they fear.

Each of them has a geographical representation of their territory, often ancient, quite distant from that of our school textbooks, which delineates their fundamental claims. One by one, the old empires are waking up, whether they are Persian (Iran), Ottoman (Turkey), Han (China) or Slavic Orthodox (Russia). Tehran in Lebanon first, Ankara in the Caucasian file, Beijing in Hong Kong while waiting for Taiwan. Moscow in Ossetia, Transnistria, Crimea, after having intervened in Belarus and Kazakhstan, invades Ukraine. They make maneuvers that recompose the idealized space of their national novel, and on which, since the first term of Barack Obama, the U.S. administration has broken its teeth several times.

UKRAINE: A PURULENT CASE STUDY FOR MOSCOW

In the Ukrainian question, the evidence of strategic imperatives tends to blur the prevalence of energy resources. However, they also explain the rivalries that embrace a country larger than France (600,000 km²), almost as populated as Spain (44 million inhabitants) and with a rich European history. Founded by the Varegues, Vikings from Scandinavia, baptized by Byzantine missionaries in 988, a powerful state under the reign of Yaroslav the Wise (1016-1054), Kiev Rus, also known as Ruthenia, is the common heart of the Slavic world and, tossed between empires, never ceases to want to regain its independence.

Today, as during the Second World War, the riches of its soil provoke covetousness. This “breadbasket,” which includes nearly a quarter of the arable land in Europe, also contains the coal mines of Donbass, the iron deposits of Krivoi-Rog and manganese of Nikopol, notable coal, uranium and potash mines, while the powerful hydroelectric power plant of the Dnieper (10 billion kilowatt hours) responds to the steel and industrial center around Donetsk. The country also controls the water supply of Crimea, which sheds light on why Russia is so keen to maintain its control over this territory inextricably integrated into its economy.

After 1989, during the period of retraction of the USSR, which had become the CIS, the tacit agreement prevailed that the borders of the Atlantic Alliance would not move. But, from the end of the Gorbachev presidency and during the Yeltsin mandate, Russia expressed its opposition to the movements considered aggressive in terms of NATO expansion.

For its part, Ukraine declared its independence in 1991 and in 1992, through the Treaty of Tashkent, renounced the arsenal that had briefly made it the third nuclear power in the world. In 1994, along with Belarus and Kazakhstan, it signed the Budapest Memoranda in which the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia guaranteed the territorial integrity and security of the former Soviet republics in exchange for their ratification of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In 2009, these guarantees were reaffirmed by the United States and Russia—then forgotten in 2014.

In the meantime, in 2002, the United States unilaterally withdrew from the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, deployed anti-missile systems on the periphery of Russia and announced its intention to acquire Prompt Global Strike capabilities, thus calling into question Russia’s second strike capability and thus its deterrent force.

NATO, under the impetus of Washington, launched its enlargement plan (MAP) to the East. The first three countries joined in 1999, followed by seven in 2004, two in 2009, and two more in 2017 and 2020. Since 1949, the Atlantic Alliance has grown from 12 to 30 members and has succeeded in integrating, in a quarter of a century, almost all the armies of the founding nations of the Warsaw Pact.

In Moscow, if the changeover in question can be accepted, as well as the neutralization of Kazakhstan, the slightest pivoting of Ukraine or Belarus cannot be envisaged. However, Russia is acting on the pretext of spontaneous or provoked local conflicts. Moldova was cut off from Transnistria in 1992. The Chechen desire for independence was settled in blood in 1994–1996, then in 1999–2000 (with the curious support of the United States). Georgia suffered the dissidence of Abkhazia and Ossetia and then the intervention of Russian forces in 2008, while the separatists of Donbass were supported in their armed struggle from 2014, in a sort of dress rehearsal for the “special military operation” against Ukraine in 2022. For 20 years, Vladimir Putin has not ceased to warn that he would do everything to loosen up what he considers to be a vice-like grip. He was indignant about this during his speech in Munich, in February 2007, at the Conference on Security Policy. He was vindictive, accusing the United States of “stepping outside its borders in all areas,” of jeopardizing “the security of all” and “international law,” of dangerously pursuing an “arms race” and of making the world “less reliable” than it was during the Cold War.

After starting to modernize its military, destabilizing its adversaries in the field of cyber warfare, mitigating the effect of sanctions by getting closer to its other friend/enemy China, and waiting for the decisive moment, it will have decided by itself to go on the offensive. For the Western world, the use of violence is the ultimate signal of incompetence. This is not the case in the Slavic world, which sees it as a suitable means to the end. We remember Grozny.

THE PRIMAKOV-GERASIMOV DOCTRINE

Since 2013, Russia has used and abused the “hybrid war.” Cancelling the distinction between peacetime and wartime while combining hard and soft power, this strategic concept allows the Kremlin to test the postures and reactions of the Western camp, whose apathy encourages it, at the next blow, to outdo itself. We owe it to General Valery Gerasimov, but it is part of a long tradition. It was born from a particular dimension of the strategy of the Byzantine Empire, with the “telluric” one that Leo Tolstoy lends to the Russian soul in his little-known opus *The Physiology of War: Napoleon and the Russian Campaign*, and it has its first draft in *The Evolution of Conflicts*, the collection of lectures of 1920 by General Alexander Svechin, a tsarist rallied to the Bolshevik cause. He also inherited the Primakov doctrine, which guided Russian foreign policy for more than two decades. Born in Kiev, Minister of Foreign Affairs and then Prime Minister from 1996 to 1999 under President Yeltsin, Yevgeny Primakov postulates that a unipolar world dominated by the United States is unacceptable and that Russia must counterbalance the hegemony of the United States by promoting the emergence of new powers such as China or India, guarantee its primacy and maintain its control over the post-Soviet space, and oppose the expansion of NATO.

By adopting the political axis of the Primakov doctrine, the confrontation with the West, the Gerasimov military doctrine maximizes it. By applying it to the terrain of war, it affirms the importance of hybrid tools while confining them to their instrumental value and keeping military power as an indispensable catalyst: nuclear weapons remain the ultimate guarantee of strategic independence. Thus, it is possible to successfully conduct a battle despite the threat of nuclear fire and by preventing escalation.

As Dmitry Adamsky analyzes in RDN, “geopolitical competition did not end with the Cold War, it changed its form.” And as Thibaut Fouillet specifies, this “form” is that of “an integral strategy whose originality rests on a coordinated use of means of all kinds (civil, technical) and, for military means, on a modernized and info-enhanced conventional apparatus [...] using the totality of available functions (immaterial fields of disinformation, cyber, proxies, etc., and also material fields of deep strikes) to produce sufficient tactical and operational effects to paralyze the enemy’s ability to react.”

The implementations of the Gerasimov Doctrine, from Georgia in 2008 to Syria from 2015 to Ukraine since 2014, have been calibrated to rule out excessive risk taking. As the Georgian test showed, the conventional tool was outdated in terms of technology, communication, and mastery of complexity; Russia invested heavily, albeit in a targeted manner, to try to catch up. The current leaders seem to be more influenced by the example of Crimea, but the model they ultimately choose will have crucial consequences for the future of the world under the watchful eye of China.

FROM TWO FRONTS TO ESCALATION

Since 1989, Russia has been fighting on two fronts. Externally, Moscow has tried to limit the damage of the post-Cold War unipolar moment, during which its role in the international arena suffered unprecedented marginalization. The Kremlin has continuously tried to move the international order towards multipolarity in order to secure a role in the concert of great powers.

At the same time, competition with the West has taken place on the domestic scene. According to Moscow, the West, since the end of the Soviet Union, has tried to impose its values on Russia, perceived as a tool of geopolitical subversion. Thus, the Kremlin has considered external and internal competition as two aspects of the same global geopolitical confrontation with the West.

However, with the arrival of Vladimir Putin in power, the strategic competition with the West has constantly escalated from confrontation to war, in the literal sense of the term— and on European soil.

The war has thus turned out to be total. Before the war, during the war, the same pursuit has animated and continues to animate this radical conflictuality. It

was a war of repositioning that upset the life and destiny of Europe.

It remains to be seen what China will learn from this for Taiwan, and much more widely. Presidents Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping outlined their vision for the world order at a summit on December 15, 2021, displaying a united front against the West.

“Today, some international forces, under the guise of ‘democracy’ and ‘human rights,’ are interfering in the internal affairs of China and Russia, trampling on international law and the recognized norms of international relations,” Xi Jinping said. “China and Russia should increase their joint efforts to more effectively safeguard the security interests of both sides.” And not without giving his support to Vladimir Putin for the security guarantees that the latter demands on the western flank of Russia. The two leaders also expressed their fundamental disagreement with the creation of new military alliances in the Pacific and Indo-Pacific basins such as the Aukus (Australia, Great Britain, United States) or the Quad (Australia, India, Japan, United States).

On February 4, 2022, in Beijing, was published a long statement adopted jointly by Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the opening of the Winter Olympics. It enacts and proclaims a “new era,” a “new global model” for the twenty-first century by advocating “sustainable development for the planet, dialogue, justice, freedom, equality, mutual trust and democracy as a universal human value exercised in all spheres of public life.” Behind these proclamations lies the common affirmation of another model of governance that challenges that of liberal democracy. In a communiqué, published the same day and dedicated to “the promotion of international law,” the two foreign ministries of Russia and China denounce the Western stranglehold, according to them, on international relations. They condemn the UN General Assembly which judged illegal the annexation of Crimea by Moscow and the Court of Arbitration in The Hague which denies Beijing’s claims in the South China Sea.

In an exchange of goodwill and mutual support, the declaration stresses that “democracy is not one size fits all,” that a country “can choose the forms and methods of exercising democracy that best suit it,” which is to China’s advantage. In return, China supports Moscow on the non-expansion of NATO and its demands for security guarantees in Europe. This is a turning point for Beijing, which had refrained from recognizing the annexation of Crimea and had not supported Moscow in the war in Georgia.

The communiqué also affirms the concept of the indivisibility of security, which has been much used by Moscow in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, and which states that the security of some cannot be organized to the detriment of others. The vision of Internet governance, artificial intelligence, or the cosmos is also revealing. Both countries commit to deepening their cooperation in the security of information technologies and, while advocating for an “internationalization”

of Internet governance (by which they mean a non-American governance), they clearly state that they will refuse any hindrance to their sovereignty over the regulation of these networks.

IS FRANCE, THE LAST INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR POWER IN WESTERN EUROPE, PREPARED?

Paris has taken note of the changes underway. In the “strategic vision” that he published (a rare exercise), General Burkhard, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces [CEMA], explains that it is now a question of “winning the war before the war,” the continuum “peace/crisis/war” no longer being relevant. At the heart of this revision is the notion of relativity associated with the temporality of hostilities. This establishes a new grammar of war, the keys to which he provides.

Hobbes already noted in *Leviathan* that “war exists as long as the will to fight is sufficiently proven.” This invites us to revisit the legal delimitation that governs international law, which stems from the Treaty of Westphalia, that is, the legitimacy of a political authority to declare war and sign peace. Hobbes adds that the relevance and actuality of a war also lies “in a recognized disposition to fight for as long as there is no assurance to the contrary.” This then invites the reintegration of two aspects often absent from the military equation: the economic and psychological dimensions of conflict.

General Burkhard concludes that it is necessary to “prepare our military strategy in the light of three notions: competition, which has become the normal mode of expression of power in many fields (economic, military, diplomatic, legal, cultural, etc.), contestation, which challenges the commonly accepted rules in order to seek to impose a *fait accompli*, and confrontation.” Taking into account the current world disorder, “Two actors can thus find themselves at the same time in competition in one field and in contestation in another. They can also be in contention only in a given geographical area and in competition in the rest of the world.”

French armies must therefore “contribute to the knowledge of the capabilities and intentions of the various competitors and permanently propose relevant military options to the political decision-maker, contribute to removing uncertainty and preventing the imposition of a *fait accompli*, and detect the weak signals that make it possible to anticipate the shift towards confrontation.”

Given that this competition is taking place in a growing number of environments and fields of conflict, conducive to hybrid and circumvention strategies, which combine military and non-military, direct and indirect, regular and irregular modes of action, often difficult to attribute, but always designed to remain below the estimated threshold of response or open conflict, “French forces must therefore be able to counter them by learning to control them, while respecting

the principles on which our actions are based.” This implies strengthening intelligence and analysis capabilities and broadening the spectrum of capabilities. All this while taking into account the hypothesis of a “high intensity” engagement.

The Armed Forces “contribute to the exercise of responsibilities and to France’s ambition to be a balanced power, while being able to lead operations in coalition, actively participate in the national power strategy from the stage of competition, where the interests of different actors are already confronted, notably through indirect or hybrid strategies, and offer the political power a very wide range of military options combining controlled effects in all environments and fields of confrontation, with particular attention to action in the exo-atmospheric and cyber environments and in the information field, in order to influence the determination of our adversaries by imposing favourable power relations.”

However, for General Burkhard, this redefinition also implies an overhaul: “The French Armed Forces must be organized in such a way as to be able to deal with strategic surprise, while being resilient beyond the only permanent postures of nuclear deterrence, safety and protection, and permanently capable of responding to any situation that would threaten France and its interests, if necessary in a high-intensity confrontation.”

In the end, the triptych borrowed from General Poirier in *La Crise des fondements* must be placed in its strategic context—that of the Cold War. Now, Poirier himself has shown the relative usefulness of the atomic bomb—it can only reduce one kind of threat, the invasion of the national territory, but cannot crush a delocalized financial attack or terrorism.

From now on, the strong are confronted with the strong, the weak with the strong and the strong with the crazy.

The Burkhard strategy does not forget the effects in the immaterial fields. It wants to integrate two largely forgotten aspects: cooperation and coexistence. These are complementary and indispensable phases of strategic thinking, which must be interwoven because of the overlap between them: cooperation and coexistence. This is the essential question posed by General Burkhard’s strategy: how to avoid confrontation? Climbing to extremes? Paroxysmal war?

In the geostrategic context of the Cold War, the notions of land border defense and nibbling land actions extended into the depths of geophysical space, well beyond the political border. Nevertheless, “the practical French border” was delimited by the “Iron Curtain.” This practical border was the real military border. Ultimately, there was an extension of the notion of the physical border due to limited purpose actions beyond the theoretical border of France.

On a strictly land level, this strategy brings a paradigm shift in the understanding of the notion of border. Concomitantly with violence, there is a transfer from the physical dimension to the psychological dimension. This is why, from the

time of the so-called “peace,” strategic thinking must apprehend the roundabout ways, still called peripheral or hybrid, of a future war whose preliminary forms are economic, ideological, subversive, clandestine, and indirect.

In this paradoxical and perilous phase of “war under threat,” the French armies have leaders, personnel, doctrine and equipment around which they maintain their operational preparation—which they do not yet have the right or the need to use. “Avoiding confrontation” then means gaining the upper hand by winning the intellectual battle. This battle consists of defining the threshold of aggressiveness, which is to say, the analysis of a situation in an autonomous and permanent manner, the dilemma of which is to react too early and too strongly, one runs the risk of making escalation inevitable, and to react too late and too weakly, one is exposed. The Burkhard strategy addresses both of these issues.

SI VIS PACEM ...

War, through its historical nature, intrinsically combines two dimensions of time in a variable manner: repetition and innovation. Faced with these two constraining logics, the strategic state registers delays and accelerations. War remains linked to a variable iteration between repetition and singularity. Are we giving ourselves today the means that the singularity of the moment demands?

Saved from the accounting blindness of Treasure Accountants by the resolute team of Jean Yves Le Drian, then Minister of Defense, will the French Armed Forces be able to implement such a strategy of adaptation to the new situation after the difficult episodes of Afghanistan and the forced withdrawal from Mali? In any case, after the resilience of General de Villiers, who held the same position of Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, the lucidity of General Burkhard’s vision allows us to believe in a real leap forward. This is precisely what the new world disorder ratified by the war in Ukraine requires.

But will this newfound vision, this budgetary effort, be enough to make up for lost strategic time? Because from now on we will also have to relearn how to win the war during the war. This is the new strategic task at hand. It confronts the specific temporality of war.

The strategic act that General Burkhard describes as “harder conflict” and “high intensity” must redefine our relationship to time. The notion of “high intensity” or “major engagement hypothesis” implies developing a culture of speed. In fact, the information flows available to approach the phenomenon of war are combined in a new way and from a variety of perspectives. This culture must lead to the concept of command speed. And this, not without keeping in mind that long time, as well as slow time, are also weapons.

Yesterday, before a “conventional” war, armies had an alert time, that is, a relatively long period before engaging in combat (Alert time = T decision +

T preparation + T training + T deployment). For the First World War, we can estimate an alert time of four years. For the Second, about ten months—it is the “phony war.” In 1990, during the Gulf War or in 1999, during the intervention in Kosovo, it was reduced to six months. The alert time depends on the threat, on the enemy. Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Beslan massacre, the conflict in Syria, the annexation of Crimea, the Bataclan massacre, or the offensive of Azerbaijan and Turkey in Nagorno-Karabakh, the alert time is now almost zero. Tomorrow, the French armies will have little or no time to react. The means made available to them or not will determine the preservation of our independence and our rule of law.

A REASON FOR HOPE

Once upon a time, a great military power was faced with a guerrilla war. While everything pointed to an imbalance of forces in favor of the regular army, the guerrillas won. And this time has happened many times: in turn, and among others, Indochina, Algeria, Vietnam, Afghanistan, etc.

By accelerating the feeling of national unity within a new resistant country, Ukraine, by promoting the appearance of a new heroic figure, the “servant of the people” Volodymyr Zelensky, Vladimir Putin’s Russia may have just created a new Afghanistan. Imagined in the Kremlin as liberators applauded in the streets of Ukrainian cities, Russian soldiers are discovering themselves as hated invaders. Moscow will perhaps succeed in its *Anschluss* in Kiev. But the military victory, more difficult to achieve than expected, will come at the price of a moral disaster in the Slavic world and an unprecedented disavowal for the Kremlin.

The world disorder will not stop. Nor will the virulent revival of empires. The next conflicts are publicly announced. The intentions are not hidden.

France and Europe have little time left to decide on the future they want to build. The war in Ukraine is only the beginning.

In the chaos of the Russian invasion, it is the violent rebirth of empires that is needed.

Alain BAUER is a professor of criminology at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM), Senior Research Fellow at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York and at Fudan University in Shanghai. He directs the training courses of the CNAM’s Security Defense Intelligence Criminology Cyberthreats Crisis Department (PSDR3C). He is the author of about 50 books.

Olivier ENTRAYGUES is a lieutenant-colonel, an infantry officer, and a graduate of the École de guerre. He holds a Ph.D. from King's College and is currently head of the Observatory of New Conflicts at the Center for Doctrine and Teaching of the French Army Command. He is the author of some 15 books. This paper is not the official opinion of the French Army.