

Virtuous Violence and the Politics of Statecraft in
Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber

1. Introduction

This paper is part of a broader project in which we explore links between ‘violence’ and ‘politics’, in principle and practice, in canonic Western political theory (Author, 2007; 2008; 2009). In this context, ‘violence’ refers generically to all uses of physical force to hurt, injure or kill, rather than being reserved for those practices of hurting, injuring and killing of which we disapprove.¹ Predominant liberal and radical leftist strands of contemporary political thought distinguish clearly between ‘politics’ and ‘violence’. In standard liberal accounts politics is identified with the pacified arena of the modern state. For liberals, violence may sometimes, regrettably, be an instrument for the pursuit of political goals. But politics itself is the ongoing non-violent negotiation (through conviction, persuasion, inducement, management) of competing individual and sectional rights and interests. The overall aim of liberal politics is to remove violence from the political agenda.² Radical critics deny liberalism’s promise to deliver a divorce between politics and violence (Honig 1993; Mouffe 1993 for example). However, often they share liberalism’s premise that politics and violence are distinct in principle, and ought to be so in practice. Anti-liberal thinkers, such as Agamben, follow Arendt in seeing violence as governed by an instrumental logic of ‘making’ as opposed to the expressive and creative logic of politics (‘acting’) (Agamben, 1998; 2005; Arendt, 1972). Opposing liberal instrumental defences of violence in just wars, humanitarian interventions or the internment of refugees and asylum seekers, Agamben identifies the liberal state with the *collapse of politics into violence* (Agamben, 2005, p. 86). In doing this he continues to hold up an ideal of *politics beyond violence*.

A common response to the liberal and radical positions described above is to confront them with the lessons of *realpolitik*. The work of thinkers such as Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527), Carl von

Clausewitz (1780-1831) and Max Weber (1864-1920) is sometimes read as part of a tradition of political realism that defines the logic of politics as one in which the ends justify the means, and in which violence is a central, perennial element in the available repertoire of means. On this account, the idea that politics can be purged of violence is absurd. It is noticeable, however, that this way of responding to the supposed utopianism of liberals and radicals still defines political violence in straightforwardly instrumental terms, in essence confirming the charge of thinkers such as Agamben that actually existing politics is reducible to the logic of violence. In this article, we draw on the work of Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber to problematise the liberal and radical claim as to the possibility of divorcing politics from violence, but our approach to the issue is different. Whereas realists criticise liberals and radicals for over-idealising the concept of politics, we are more interested in the correlative conceptualisation of violence in which the concept of *political violence* is rendered oxymoronic. Liberals and radicals may over-idealise the meanings of politics, but they also massively oversimplify the meanings of violence and therefore the ways in which conditions and practices of violence are immanently connected to the conditions and practices of politics in the contemporary world.

We have chosen to focus on the work of Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber because their work, which explicitly addresses the intimate connection between politics and violence, illuminates the role of *political violence* in the politics of statecraft. Their arguments call into question analytical and normative assumptions in both liberal and radical accounts of how violence figures in contemporary politics. In doing so, they draw our attention to the need to understand the meaning of *political violence as political*, if we are to properly grapple with the complexity of the task of detaching violence from politics in a world in which statecraft remains central to politics within and beyond the state.

The work of Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber is centrally engaged with the relationship between violence and politics in the foundation and reproduction of political community.³ Even though all three thinkers were writing in very different times and places, their arguments about politics and violence are mutually illuminating and interconnected. Both Clausewitz and Weber were influenced by

Machiavelli, whom they read as students, to whom they make explicit reference in their writings, and whose theories are suffused, more generally, with recognisably 'machievellian' themes.⁴ Any reader of Clausewitz who is familiar with methodological debates in social science is apt to be struck by the 'Weberian' themes in his work – his discussion of something like the 'ideal type' of 'absolute war', and his sceptical approach to laws (let alone recipes) in history and politics. Further, Clausewitz's liberal attitudes to absolutism and autocracy, and characteristic attitude to nation, statecraft, and armed force are also strikingly continuous with Weber's political writings (Paret, 1976; Weber, 1994a, b and c).⁵ Ultimately, however, our interest is not in making an argument about the history of political thought. Rather we are interested in drawing on the resources offered by Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber for conceptualising the meaning of political violence in more theoretically adequate ways than can be found in the liberal, radical or realist accounts referred to above.

Section Two begins with an examination of the nature and rationale of the immanent connection between politics and violence in the work of the three theorists. It shows how properly political violence is an explicitly *political* response to the incapacity of political actors to reliably control the outcomes of their own actions. We argue that this means that political violence is instrumental for statecraft in the work of all three thinkers not only because of its capacity to deliver certain outcomes in the sense of specific policy goals, but also because of the ways in which it keeps the conceptual space of politics, as a realm of action, open. In Section Three we consider the ways in which warfare, as a specific practice of violence, operates not simply as a condition but also as a resource for the renewal of politics in the distinction and relation between civic and military virtue. Military life exemplifies the transformation of privatised and disruptive violence into the artful, virtuous violence that the life of the *polis* requires but does not necessarily deliver. In this respect, the military camp, the garrison and the military in general provide a model for the city and the state, and the soldier provides a model for the citizen. More than this, however, military practices of violence constitute and sustain the distinctions that underpin politics as Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber understand it. In our Conclusion, we return to the question of the

liberal and radical aspiration to purge politics of violence. We suggest that this aspiration becomes less easily articulable, let alone realisable, when the role of political violence in contemporary politics is recognised to exceed the instrumental terms to which it is normally reduced. Our world is not the same as any of the worlds inhabited by Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber, but it is a world to which the legacies of the politics of statecraft remain central. It is therefore a world in which the specifically *political* character of practices of violence in politics persists, and therefore one in which the detachment of politics from violence cannot be accomplished by conceptual sleight of hand.

2. Violent Means and Political Ends

For Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber the conceptualisation of politics centres on a bounded political community, and on the necessity and legitimacy of violence against external threats to the political community (city-state or nation-state). These themes are especially marked in Clausewitz's vision of statecraft, governmental action, which includes war as one of its means. Clausewitz lived in, and sought to understand the history and future of, a world of cabinets and sovereign governments, with competitive control over territory, a world of loyalty and divided loyalties, frontiers, invasions, alliances, and defections. Clausewitz himself, dismayed at the Franco-Prussian alliance of 1812, left Prussia and joined the Russian forces, returning to loyalty to Prussia only when Prussia again declared war on France (Paret, 1976, pp. 209-232). The logic of patriotism, as Paret puts it, in Clausewitz's world sometimes meant fighting against the state which had first call on your loyalty, but in any case the world irreducibly is one of states, whether they are engaged in 'death struggles for political existence' or in alliances that make war on one another's behalf a duty (Paret, 1976, pp. 209-221; Clausewitz, 1993, Bk I, Ch. 2). In Clausewitz's account, in its pure conception war focusses on the destruction of an enemy, of its military power, on the conquest of a country – the enemy government must be forced into signing a peace, the enemy people must be forced into submission (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk I, Ch. 2; Aron, 1983, p. 44; Herberg-Rothe, 2007, Ch. 3).

Machiavelli's world has very much the same structure, although the terrain is even less secure, the countryside outside the city more threatening, the propensity of other powers to make war, invade, lay siege, and spoil more immediate. In the *Florentine Histories* the parties to the raids and alarms are families and houses, who are fighting for dominance in the city setting; war has as its focus enriching oneself (whether one is a family, a party or a city-state) and impoverishing the enemy (Machiavelli, 1988b, Bk V, Ch 1 and *passim*). The *Discourses*, similarly, considers the place and defence of cities – the city is a built structure, its people and its hinterland, and of course its divisions and its government. The book is in large part a consideration of the conditions of stable domination by a prince or by a republican government, among which are the maintenance of the right kind of army, the right kind of conduct in war whether one is attacking or being attacked (Machiavelli, 1970, Bk II, 20, 27; Bk III,39). *The Prince*, of course, can be read in the same way. The successful ruler has to conduct himself in such a way as to maintain order inside the city, and crucially must not be pusillanimous or disorganised in war. Conquest has to be managed appropriately (Machiavelli, 1988a, Ch. III) and military organisation and the need for military competence and valour are continuous themes (Machiavelli, 1988a, Chs., XII-XIV, XX-XXI, XXIV).

For Weber, political leadership – whether in a nation state with a bureaucratic structure or not, whether neighbouring states are weak or strong – involves the uses of violence. A 'political' community is one in which the use of physical force is aimed at 'orderly' territorial domination (Weber, 1978, pp. 54, 901-908). Of course, political governors, political groups, have recourse to other means of domination too – legal norms, economic interactions, in fact 'all other conceivable means' can be used (Weber, 1978, p. 55). But physical force, including normally the force of arms, is what (together with orderly domination and territory) distinguishes political from other kinds of association and organisation such as households, churches, markets and the like. Individuals, lives, organisations, and conflicts within society and state are important in themselves, and are of absorbing scientific interest, but are important, above all, in terms of the 'enduring power political interests of the nation' (Weber, 1994a, p. 16). The national state, with political government (albeit a political government which has to deal with sources of cultural, religious

and above all economic power) and a bureaucratic form is the historical reality with which, and in which, we must deal. There is no point in wishing it away, as some kinds of liberal thinker, and numerous socialists, conservatives and others do (Weber, 1978, pp. 910-926).⁶

For these three, then, states – city-states, or national states – exist. They are a significant part of the furniture of the political world. Individuals are important – for all of them weak and strong leaders, the courageous and the cowardly, geniuses and incompetents, are also significant agents of change in history. For Machiavelli, and even more so for Weber, so too are more complex structures of social interaction – economic classes and interests, parties, and individuals in a diversity of social roles and locations. But, the point is, that states matter fundamentally, and politics and policy, in a world of states, is statecraft.⁷ Politics therefore is necessarily bound up with state-making and state-preserving.

For all three thinkers *politics requires violence* to the extent that violence has a role in making and preserving the political community. For Weber this connection between politics and violence is foundational, and violence is tied into the very *concept* of political association.

It is absolutely essential for every political association to appeal to the naked violence of coercive means in the face of outsiders as well as in the face of internal enemies. It is only this very appeal to violence that constitutes a political association in our terminology. (Weber, 1948, p. 334)

For Machiavelli and Clausewitz too violence is inherent in politics, given a world of rivalrous and antagonistic states (nation-states, cities, dukedoms). Machiavelli, like Weber, stresses the importance of violence in founding and maintaining political association. Clausewitz famously identifies war as part of statecraft, specifically that war is one means that governments have for furthering or pursuing state policy (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk I, Ch. 1, ss 23-24, 26).

Of course for none of these thinkers does this mean that politics is simply reducible to violence. States are made and preserved through a variety of means. Clausewitz, for instance, emphasises the plurality of political means: 'war is simply a continuation of political intercourse, with the addition of

other means' (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk VIII, Ch. 6B, p. 731). This negates that misreading of Clausewitz's dictum which simply identifies war with politics,⁸ but it makes clear that war is part of the whole that is policy:

'It can be taken as agreed that the aim of policy is to unify and reconcile all aspects of internal administration as well as of spiritual values, and whatever else the moral philosopher may care to add. Policy, of course, is nothing in itself; it is simply the trustee for all these interests against other states.' (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. VIII, Ch. 6B, p. 733)

The first sentence is a methodological or procedural injunction to the general, or to the writer of a theoretical work on war – this is how we must treat state policy.⁹ The second sentence analyses the value of policy in terms of the interests within the state, and hence underlines the sense of an antagonistic relationship between the inside and the outside of the polity, such that armed force must inevitably be a means of politics.¹⁰

However, even though all three thinkers identify a necessary connection between politics (as statecraft) and violence, they all make a distinction between this violence and other kinds of violence. Political violence is not just violence *per se* (Weber, 1978, pp. 904-906). Machiavelli begins *The Art of War* with the observation that:

For all the arts that are ordered in a city for the sake of the common good of men, all the orders made there for living in fear of the laws and of God, would be in vain if defences were not prepared. (Machiavelli, 2003, Preface, p. 3)

According to Clausewitz 'primordial violence, hatred and enmity' make up one element of the 'paradoxical trinity' which underlies the reality of war (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. I, Ch. 1, s 28, p. 101). The passions which break forth in war must have a latent existence in the people. Weber too takes it that 'violent social action is obviously something absolutely primordial' (Weber, 1978, p. 904). All groups, from households up, have made use of violence. But for all three this ubiquity of violence across time and place does not account for the specific nature and role of *political violence*. For all three thinkers, human,

social existence can only be understood as, to begin with *complex*, second, *indeterminate*, third as plural or *multicausal*, and therefore *unpredictable*. Political violence, as with politics in general, is a specific mode of response to the complexity and contingency of the realm of human action.

Machiavelli conceptualises fortune as an unpredictable, not to mention malevolent, ebb and flow, a violent river, the arbiter of half the things we do (Machiavelli, 1988a, Ch. XXV), who can 'blind men's minds' (Machiavelli, 1970, Bk. II, Ch. 29). Fortune can only be controlled by an opposing physical force – by using masculine coercion against her chaotic feminine mischief (Machiavelli, 1988a, pp. 84-87; Pitkin, 1984). The study of history enables Machiavelli to understand patterns and processes: the continued flux in human affairs, the inexorable 'descending from good to bad and rising from bad to good' that applies to provinces and indeed to all worldly things (Machiavelli, 1988b, Bk. V, p. 185; 1970, Bk. I, Ch. 6). His own understanding of what goes wrong and how things go right enables him to hit the strikingly assured note of *The Prince* and *Art of War*. Among the numerous things that go wrong in history, weak and badly directed armies, disorderly warfare, neglect of the art of war is perhaps the most significant in his view (Machiavelli, 1988a, Ch. XIV; 1988b, Bk VI, Ch. 1, p. 230). Fortune operates in war as it does in civic and personal life. Relying on fortune has been hopeless for Italian cities; it will be disastrous in war. But men have the capacity to resist fortune, with virtue, prudence, and art (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. III, pp. 62-3; 1970, Bk. II, Ch. 1). For example, organising an army with only one front in a battle means that one has a single chance, and fortune need strike only once for disaster; organising three fronts means that disaster will occur only if fortune abandons you three times 'and the enemy has so much virtue that he beats you three times' (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. III, p. 64).

According to Clausewitz 'the play of chance' is the second element of the trinity' which underlies the reality of war (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. I, Ch. 1, p. 101). It is quite clear that Clausewitz did not set out to produce a set of rules for statesmen and generals that would improve on the influential manuals of war of his time. On the other hand, it is unclear whether we should read Clausewitz as offering a more complexly realistic theory of cause, instrumentality and policy execution than was standard, or whether

his analysis resists and negates the themes of control and predictability altogether. Recent readings emphasise ambiguity (both in Clausewitz's theory and in the reality it seeks to grasp), plurality, and the indistinctness of means and ends.¹¹ The three moments of the trinity - political power, violence, and chance – are equally significant, equally causally consequential, and because all can escalate, all are relevant to what Clausewitz refers to as 'friction', the gap between the ideal and the real, between the dynamics of a pure system and the complication of an actual conflictual situation, between our initial expectations and intentions and what actually unfolds.¹²

Weber, of course, is committed to pluralism in social scientific explanation in two senses. First, the explanation of any one event or phenomenon is likely to consist of multiple causes including agents' motivations and understanding, chance and contingency, and a variety of material causal processes. Second, in different historical settings we can take it that the norms governing motivation might be different, that in general material resources are distributed in characteristic ways depending on the historical setting (a palace system, feudalism or capitalism), and hence which agents are likely to do what, to whom, are matters of historical contingency (Weber, 1949). The problem is that multicausality means that the consequences of one's actions are uncertain. Certain modes of action and interaction do not require the agent to take responsibility for his actions – notably, in market transactions we take the immediate profit or loss to ourselves only and are not concerned with the effects on others. But it is a conceptual aspect of political action, in Weber's analysis, that the politician is required to take responsibility for all the foreseeable consequences of his action. There is an equivocation in Weber's analysis here. In 'The Profession and Vocation of Politics' the text is specific that responsibility must be taken for the 'foreseeable consequences' (Weber, 1994d, p. 360); but of course by Weber's own understanding of causality and explanation, fateful consequences are precisely unforeseen and, indeed, sometimes unforeseeable. In particular, the outcomes of uses of violence are unpredictable (Weber, 1994d, pp. 357, 361, 364).

It is critical to Machiavelli's, Clausewitz's and Weber's analyses of the instrumentality of political violence, that it is beset with uncertainty: chance, *fortuna*, multicausality, probability. And yet all three thinkers argue that politics, as statecraft, needs violence in order to work. It seems that political violence is not accounted for solely in terms of its capacity to deliver specific political ends, though this is clearly part of the story. Political violence is a mode of political action on these accounts, but it also plays a more fundamental role. When the prince, the general or the political leader acts politically, he (rarely she) acts as if foreseeing the unforeseeable. In other words, he operates in a world that is carved out of a space between contingency and predictability. Political violence, even though it cannot reliably shape and control the future, is treated by these thinkers as grounding and embodying the possibility of the paradoxical space of politics. It is both *more and less than a means for politics*.

3. Virtuous violence: the polity and the military

For Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber, political violence is virtuous violence, both in terms of the character of those individuals engaged in it, and in terms of the values embedded in it as a practice, and their impact on political life beyond war. As Paret remarks, Clausewitz is notable for the frankness with which he 'faced all aspects of violence' (Paret, 1976, p. 285). War is dangerous and frightening; it is physically and mentally taxing; and painful. All of these and others are among the 'fundamental causes of friction' (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk.I, Ch. 3, pp. 116-7). And these factors call for virtues such as those possessed by the genius of the Clausewitzian general: the possession of a 'fine and penetrating mind' to deal with uncertainty, courage and responsibility in the face of danger both physical and moral; energy and strength (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. I, Ch. 3, pp. 117-131). Clausewitz provides a graphic description of the experience of the novice on the battlefield and the chaos and horror involved.

A noise is heard that is a certain indication of increasing danger – the rattling of grapeshot on roofs and on the ground. Cannonballs tear past, whizzing in all directions, and musketballs begin to whistle around us. A little further we reach the firing line, where the infantry endures the

hammering for hours with incredible steadfastness. The air is filled with hissing bullets that sounds like a sharp crack if they pass close to one's head. For a final shock, the sight of men being killed and mutilated moves our pounding hearts to awe and pity. (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk I, Ch. 4, p. 132)

Clausewitz's representation of battle focusses on the hierarchy of statuses and roles, which can direct a massively complex range of units and individuals towards a unified purpose. This hierarchy of social status and authority is reflected in Clausewitz's model of cognition (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. I, Ch. 4, p. 130). The general's faculty of vision, for Clausewitz, must cover everything from the precise combination of qualities needed for different ranks and types of soldier, to the ways in which troops are moved on the battlefield (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. I, Ch. 4, p. 128). Discipline and training help to instil the appropriate range of qualities, and through the experience and habituation to the extremes of warfare, along with the leadership of generals with vision, a collective spirit is acquired (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. III, Ch. 5). This holism of vision enables the creation of something strong and resilient, providing each part of the whole sustains all of the others: 'One crack, and the whole thing goes like a glass too quickly cooled' (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk III, Ch. 5, p. 222).

Clausewitz understands war as a struggle between 'living reactive' forces (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk II, Ch. 3, p. 174). For Machiavelli, with his central conviction that virtue can take on fortune and win, can exploit good luck and dodge bad, there is a much stronger sense of the captain being able to construct and manage the beauty and spectacle of war (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. III, p. 71). In *The Art of War* he also draws a strikingly visual representation of the field of battle. His, however, is altogether more focussed on glory and joy. The fear and terror that are generated by blood and mess are not brought into focus:

See with how much virtue our [men] fight, and with how much discipline, through the training that has made them so by habit and the confidence they have in the army that you see march ordered, - - . Look with how much virtue they have withstood the thrust of the enemy, and with

how much silence, - - . See them fleeing from the right side; they flee from the left as well; behold the victory is ours. Have we not won a battle very happily? (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. III, pp. 70-71)

In *The Art of War* Machiavelli is fundamentally concerned with how to make citizens into soldiers and discusses in detail the discipline needed to enable this transformation: 'For a spirited army is not made so by having spirited men in it but by having well-ordered orders' (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk II, p. 48). The well-ordered orders involve a range of techniques that work on the body to counteract individual 'spirit' and channel it towards the good of the whole. The techniques range from physical training in arms to drilling, to the tight choreography of deployment, movement and rest of troops in precisely delineated ways (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. II, pp.43-62). In a properly regulated army, troops respond to flag or trumpet unquestioningly and immediately (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. II, pp. 47-8).

For Weber, the role of charismatic authority has, in the modern army of the early twentieth century, been entirely subsumed by instrumental rationality (Weber, 1978, pp. 1150-1155). Further, army discipline itself requires a certain kind of virtue of 'conscientiousness', and it is the combination of discipline and conscientiousness, all in the service of a greater cause, that marks out the nature of modern warfare. As with Clausewitz and Machiavelli, Weber emphasises the collective and constructed nature of political violence in his own time.

The berserk with manic seizures of frenzy and the feudal knight who measures swords with an equal adversary in order to gain personal honor are equally alien to discipline, the former because of the irrationality of his action, the latter because his attitude lacks matter-of-factness. Discipline puts the drill for the sake of habitual routinized skill in place of heroic ecstasy, loyalty, spirited enthusiasm for a leader and personal devotion to him, the cult of honor, or the cultivation of personal fitness as an art. Insofar as discipline appeals to firm ethical motives, it presupposes a sense of duty and conscientiousness – "men of conscience" versus "men of honor" in Cromwell's terms. (Weber, 1978, pp. 1149-50)

Participation in successful military violence requires virtues – conscientiousness, courage, steadfastness and so on. But war and military violence also embody values that can act as a counter to civilian corruption. As we have set out, training for and participation in military violence instils virtue in the individual, both the footsoldier and the officer. This is significant for all citizens, subjects, and rulers of the state in several ways. First, citizens must be transformed into soldiers. Second, states and societies are then faced with the difficult relationship between military and civilian roles and lives.

In Weber's analysis cities are, among other things, concentrations of economic transactions, whether focussed primarily on production, consumption, carriage, exchange, or all four (Weber, 1978, 1212-1220). The balance or dynamic of power and authority, as between economic actors, military activities and interests, 'princes', citizens and denizens, can't be characterised in advance of historical facts. But, the complex and often competitive relationship between fortifications and markets, military drill and civic relations, wars and city life, are a repeated theme for analysis. As such, a central problem inevitably is the relationship between economic classes and status groups, and the rival authorities of hierarchy (religious or spiritual power and interests), the non-military political staff, and the garrison (Weber, 1978, 1223-1226).

Machiavelli dwells on these problems at length. In *The Art of War* he begins by considering the common idea that civil and military life are 'discordant': they feature different standards of dress and manners, civilian ways seem effeminate from the point of view of military ways (Machiavelli, 2003, Preface, pp. 3-4). 'Sinister opinions' have poisoned relations between civilian and military (Machiavelli, 2003, Preface, p. 4). A key part of his argument is the claim that the involvement of the citizenry in the military will sort out the clash between civil and military, and furthermore will strengthen virtue in the city by counteracting the selfish pursuit of private material interests, and by encouraging commitment to the good of the polity as a whole (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. I, pp16-18). For Machiavelli, the market is a source of luxury and indolence, and hence is a source of corruption. The corruption of princes is explicitly linked to luxury, and Machiavelli also seeks to resolve the political and ethical significance of market

relations by proclaiming the dignity of poverty (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. I, p. 11). Centrally, though, Machiavelli's response to the problem Weber identifies is to dispense with the garrison, and to collapse the categories 'citizen' and 'soldier'. He rejects the idea of a garrison, or permanent standing army of any sort, or the employment of mercenaries for war, because of the disorder their proclivity to violence will pose to the city. The profession of soldiery and war obliges the soldier 'at all times to be rapacious, fraudulent and cruel', and in times of peace these people will set themselves up as soldiers of fortune. 'War makes thieves and peace hangs them' (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. I, p. 14). Instead, Machiavelli insists that the citizens must be the soldiers (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. I, pp. 15-18). Furthermore, the state must monopolise military power: the art of war should be practiced in times of peace only as an exercise, and it should be practiced by the state alone (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. I, p. 19).

For Machiavelli, then, production and consumption – the market function of the city – are the background to citizenship. They are what the soldiers go back to when exercises or war are over. They are, presumably, one of the factors that give meaning to life, and make the republic worth defending. But they are also a source of corruption. The giving of military duty to market actors, and the return to market and household by soldiers when the battle is over, then, bring together in a single body two modes of social relations which potentially undermine one another. The market is injected with virtue by being peopled with soldiers. The military, and in particular violence, is taken up by the whole state. Instead of violence becoming the personal property of soldiers, or of the 'violent individual', it is shared. It is transformed into a public good whose benefits and costs are shared equally. Excesses of violence and excesses of consumption are both dealt with in one measure.

The relationship of city to military then goes in both directions. Military discipline and virtue promotes virtuous uncorrupt citizenship; and it is the city that provides military power. However, Machiavelli does not subscribe to the view that a farmer just as he is armed with his scythe, and his natural bravery and uprightness, will make a good soldier. Machiavelli's prescriptions for drilling, drawing up battle orders, marching, making and remaking fronts, striking camp and decamping, are not

in any degree assumed to come naturally to town or country people. They are highly artificial, highly technical, and transformative. Machiavelli takes seriously the gulfs between garrison, market and farm. The problem, then, for him is surely going to lie in the reversability that he banks on – on the soldiers going cheerfully back to farm or trade.

One answer to this problem lies in the very artificiality of military life. It is remarked by Machiavelli that the camp is to be like a moving town, consisting of streets, and houses, and workshops, and a public square (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. VI, pp. 120-122). But what is striking is that the camp is absolutely not like a town. It lacks disorder, higgledy-piggledy layout, dark spaces, heterogeneous social classes, aliens and migrants, and so on. In the camp soldiers should be occupied so ‘that no time was left to them for thinking or for Love or for games, nor for other things that seditious and useless soldiers do’ (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. VI, p. 137). This employment strategy as well as military efficiency more generally, gives a double reason for giving the soldiers the necessary ingredients, and supplying no bread other than what they make themselves. The army camp, then, which follows an identical plan everywhere, becomes the shadow or mirror city. Here virtues of obedience, moderation, abstinence and communality are entrenched (Machiavelli, 2003, Bk. VI, pp. 117-131).¹³

The camp offers an alternative to, and a source of renewal for, the corruption of the city. Paradoxically, it is the soldier who embodies virtues that citizens have lost. In very different historical contexts from Machiavelli and each other, and with different implications for both civilian and military arrangements, this theme occurs also in Clausewitz and Weber. Clausewitz, a professional and serious pedagogue himself, believes that only the military can really educate citizens to virtue:

Today practically no means other than war will educate a people in this spirit of boldness; and it has to be a war waged under daring leadership. Nothing else will counteract the softness and the desire for ease which debase the people in times of growing prosperity and increasing trade.
(Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. III, Ch. 6, p. 226)

For Weber, too, 'the silent and bleak struggle for everyday existence' in economic competition contrasts very unfavourably with battle, even a losing battle 'with superior enemies in open conflict' (Weber, 1994a, p. 14). As we have seen, the key source of meaning for politics in the modern era is the national state. The state's end is to safeguard or change the external and internal distribution of power, which involves war and violence. War does something to soldiers that it does not do to the run of citizens:

it makes him experience a consecrated meaning of death which is characteristic only of death in war. Death on the field of battle differs from this merely unavoidable dying in that in war, and in this massiveness only in war, the individual can believe that he knows he is dying 'for' something. ... This location of death within a series of meaningful and consecrated events ultimately lies at the base of all endeavours to support the autonomous dignity of the polity resting on force. (Weber, 1948, p. 335)

We have said that military life and war as a critique and corrective to civilian corruption is a shared theme between Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber; and that is so. However, it is important at this point to attend to the clear differences between them. For Machiavelli the camp will come into existence both for the purposes of war itself, and for military training. Citizens are taken out of the city, in order to make them into soldiers and hence into more satisfactory citizens. But the camp is also the place of order out of which the discipline necessary for battle is possible. Clausewitz lived in and thought about a world with a professional military, who lived and trained in garrisons. He had severe doubts about the relevance of camp life to war, especially in modern times. The problems as he saw them were first practical: modern war is inconsistent with the enormous luggage trains that are necessary if camps of the kind that Machiavelli envisaged were to be struck (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. V, Ch. 9, pp. 372-4). On the other hand, he was cognisant of the problem that bivouacing by troops is devastating for the countryside. The major problem is that the camp represents a space of peace and order, exactly with Machiavelli's nicely organised areas for cooking, stabling, latrines, sociability and so on. For Clausewitz, this kind of voluntary neutralisation of power can no longer be seen as in keeping with the nature and aims of war

(Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. V, Ch. 9, pp. 373-4). The 'true nature of war will break through again and again with overwhelming force, and must, therefore, be the basis of any permanent military arrangements' (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. V, Ch. 9, p. 374). Periods of rest in war have, in his time, more or less disappeared as the 'elemental fire of war is now fierce', so camping in tents is quite ruled out. Concomitantly, training and winter quarters, should be considered as a state of non-war.

Clausewitz draws a clear distinction between military life in general and war. Military life consists of education, essay writing, examinations, physical training, a good deal of routine office work, and conventional sociability among colleagues (Paret, 1976). Clausewitz's ideal type of 'absolute war' with its own dynamic, albeit never realised as such in the real world, means that between routine military life and an actual state of war there is a qualitative change which goes beyond the difference between training or practicing, and doing it for real, although this distinction is also undoubtedly significant. For Machiavelli and Weber the distinction between training and then doing for real what the company has been trained to do is also significant, but the continuity between them is more taken for granted than it is by Clausewitz who constantly wrestles with his conviction that war, while not metaphysical, and while it is just one means the state can use in order to further its policy, is at the same time not at all ordinary. But, of course, we find this theme also in Weber's view that the soldier's death is the site of consecration in a disenchanted world; and in Machiavelli's association of battle with a spectacle of virtue.

But this uneasiness between a qualitative difference between war and peace on the one hand, and the continuity between them on the other, is ramified further in all three texts. For all of them it is the state, if not the society that inhabits and constitutes it, that must be defended.¹⁴ Indeed, there is real concern whether the society itself is worthy of defence. But resolution can be sought in the fact that the very defence of the state might imbue the society with the virtue that makes it, too, worth defending. In Weber's view, only the death of a soldier is consecratable in a disenchanted world in which the absolutes of religious imperative have become meaningless, and in any case must give way to the responsibility and prudence of the state politician. Conversely, only such consecratable death justifies the deathly power of

the state. Weber's soldier dead on the battlefield, Clausewitz's newcomer to war dimly discerning the possibility of order that underlies the chaos and confusion of gunfire and fear, Machiavelli's infantry standing calmly in the face of an onslaught by the enemy, are a permanent critique of the society they defend while defending the state. But at the same time, the practices of political violence, of which the individual soldier is a part, embody, rely on, constitute and reinforce the distinctions between social and political, private and public, inside and outside that sustain the state as a political entity.

4. Conclusion

As we remarked at the outset, Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber are bound together intellectually by a shared approach to the question of the justification of uses of violence by the organised state against external enemies and against its own citizens. They all connect the justification of war and military force in interstate conflict by reference to the value, the historical reality and necessity, of the state itself. In all three we meet a similar disappointment, from the perspective of this value-freighted state, with the people who constitute it, corrupted as they are by commerce and consumption. In order to justify the extraction of value, by way of force, from these people, then the state has to be freighted with historical value and ethical significance, over and above those very people. This is notwithstanding the very real 'liberalism' of both Clausewitz and Weber who certainly deny the prerogative of an absolute ruler to use state resources at his own discretion, and who consider that the state must be a collective enterprise whose policy must take account of the interests of the people who live in it (Paret, 1976; Mommsen, 1989; Weber, 1994b, 1994c). The point is that for both of them, and for Machiavelli too,

the question which stirs us as we think beyond the grave of our own generation is not the well-being human beings will enjoy in the future but what kind of people they will be. (Weber, 1994a, p. 15)

Of the three, Machiavelli is clearest that life in the military camp is the way for the state to produce people of the right kind. As we have seen, Clausewitz believes that the soldiers who work and

are educated in the garrison, and are capable of dealing with the fog of war, are the only ones who can really educate corrupted citizens. Weber stops far short of such valorisation of the military in the sense of giving them definite social tasks such as education. But only the dead soldier is the appropriate sacred symbol of the nation and the state. In other words it is the battlefield that is the focus of and inspiration for love of country.

Although they are writing in different contexts and make different arguments about the relation between political and military power and virtue, all three thinkers are united in identifying political violence as virtuous. Political violence is collective rather than individual, public rather than private, it requires the separation of its participants from their private interests, desires and identities, but it also makes that separation possible through artifice. At the same time as literally enforcing the bounds of state power, the inside/ outside distinction, military life also acts as an inspiration to the political identity of citizens, educating them in patriotism. This does not mean that politics is reducible to violence as such. Instead it speaks to the depth of the interdependence between the politics of statecraft and specific practices of violence that are inherently political, and thereby puts into question the very idea of violence 'as such'. At the heart of this common ground between politics and specific practices of violence is a response to the impossibility of absolute control. For all three thinkers the politics of statecraft occupies a place between strategic rationality and the deep uncertainties inherent in action, reducible neither to natural necessity nor sheer contingency. This 'between' place of politics is kept open through the difficult cultivation of distinctively political purposes, identities and virtues. For all three thinkers, virtuous violence is the paradigmatic way of cultivating such purposes, identities and virtues.

At the beginning of this article, we referred to liberal and radical aspirations to purge politics of violence. From the point of view of such perspectives, Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber, at best, offer us an outdated account of a world of statecraft now lost and, at worst, represent a tradition of political realism in which the role of violence in politics is unquestioningly celebrated. In our view, however, the account of the relation between politics and violence offered by Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber helps

us to understand the specificity of *political violence*, not as an accidental property of contemporary politics but as deeply embedded within it. This is not just because violence is a key (if not necessarily reliable) instrument for political (state and non-state) actors in both liberal and illiberal states, although this is clearly the case. Rather it is because contemporary understandings of what it means to create and maintain political community still draw centrally on the repertoire of the politics of statecraft. This means that they are reliant on the possibility of a kind of violence that creates, sustains and exemplifies the lines between inside and outside, public and private, natural and artificial without which neither 'state' nor 'people' could exist. To ignore the ongoing role of specifically political violence in nurturing political identities and aspirations is to misrepresent contemporary politics within and across political communities. It is also to refuse to engage seriously with the question of whether politics without political violence is possible.

Liberal political theories persistently ignore the ongoing reliance of the liberal state on specific kinds of 'virtuous violence', both inwardly and outwardly directed. From the liberal point of view, violence is an instrument that may be used to attain political ends to the extent that those ends are legitimate and other means are less appropriate. Practices of violence themselves are detachable in principle from the ends that they serve, to the extent that they come under scrutiny it is in terms of shifting standards of humanitarian law or norms, not in terms of their political character. This means that the question of *how* violence can be used as an instrument for the sustaining of politics is neglected. What would, or could, the political community be without the ways in which virtuous violence enacts the capacity to construct order out of chaos and to create and police the distinction between inside and outside, private and public? From the liberal point of view drawing a distinction between permissible and impermissible hurting, killing and injuring is a *moral* question. However, Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber show us that this is a *political* question, not because it involves political goals and values, but because it is only with a distinction of this kind that politics as we know it is possible at all.

Of course from the point of view of radical theorists such as Agamben, the idea that violence is foundational to the politics of statecraft is grist to the mill of his critique of contemporary politics and, especially, of the liberal state. In our view, however, such critiques misunderstand the specificity of political violence by subsuming all violence under a logic of control. By homogenizing all violence and drawing a line in principle between politics and violence, radical theorists make two mistakes. Firstly, they move too quickly to the conclusion that the politics of statecraft is dead. Secondly, as with liberal theorists, they fail to address the implication of violence in the cultivation of political identity and political virtue, and therefore fail to take seriously the question of what politics without violence could be in theory or in practice.

We do not mean to suggest that politics and political violence, in the senses that Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber understood them, exhaust the meaning of either politics or political violence in the contemporary world. Nevertheless, in our view their arguments remain salient insofar as politics continues to be resourced, even if only in part, by the discriminations and limitations embodied in their reading of political violence. For them, political violence is bound up with its own limitations and thereby with constructing a world that it does not and cannot fully control, either in terms of the ends it pursues or the virtues that it cultivates. Machiavelli, Clausewitz and Weber show how political violence both exemplifies and grounds the politics of statecraft. This account speaks to the paradoxes of political action and the complex conditions underpinning distinctively political order. In doing so it reminds us that violence is no mere tool that politicians may pick up or put down at will, and that the detachment of politics from violence is as difficult in principle as it is in practice.

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¹ Clearly violence is a much- contested concept. In political theory, it is common to distinguish 'violence' from 'force', with the former carrying the suggestion of being uncontrolled and illegitimate and the latter being a more normatively neutral term, associated with the idea of 'necessity' (as in a force of nature). In addition, some thinkers extend the use of the term 'violence' to modes of violation of others that are not directly physical (Bufacchi, 2007, Ch. 1).

² This is most clearly demonstrated in the claims of liberal democratic peace theory (Russett, 1993; Brown, Lynn-Jones & Miller, 1996).

³In the case of the thinkers under consideration here, Machiavelli tends to use *violenza* when referring to personal and excessive acts of physical violence, and *forza* to refer to collective, managed coercion (See entries for 'violence' and 'force' in the glossary in Machiavelli, 2003). For Clausewitz and Weber, the German *Gewalt* covers both 'violence' and 'force' (Herberg-Rothe, 2007, pp.171-2), nevertheless, as we will show, there are clear distinctions drawn in their work between uncontrolled, privatised and illegitimate violence and controlled, public and legitimate kinds. Crucially, for all three thinkers, war exemplifies the practice of violence that simultaneously relies on distinctions between different kinds of violence and constitutes and reinforces those distinctions without which politics, as they understand it, could not be possible.

⁴ For Clausewitz's reading of Machiavelli, see Paret, 1976, pp. 169-79; Weber engaged with Machiavelli's work as a student (Mommsen & Osterhammel, 1987, p. 27) and referred to the *Florentine Histories* in his writings on the city in *Economy and Society* (Weber, 1978, p. 1296).

⁵ There are no references to Clausewitz, as far as we can tell, in Weber's work, and no index entries in the editions of Weber's work that we have consulted, nor in critical commentaries including Zohn's notes and index to his translation of Marianne Weber's biography (1975). It seems then that Clausewitz's thought about method rather simply anticipated some of the themes that were taken up in the series of *Methodenstreit* later in the nineteenth century to which Weber was such a major contributor (Weber, 1949; Aron, 1983, p. 44). See Mommsen's *Age of Bureaucracy* chapter 2, on the subject of Weber's intellectual inheritance of 'the ideology of nationalism and the prestigious idea of the nation state' (Mommsen, 1974, p.26) – an intellectual and political climate that Clausewitz participated in and contributed to (Aron, 1983, p. 372).

⁶ According to Mommsen: 'Weber never envisaged any world other than his own, which was largely characterised by nation states' (Mommsen, 1974, p. 37). Aron asserts the same about Clausewitz: he 'does not conceive of peace except in and through the liberty of people organised in states.' (Aron, 1983, p. 372).

⁷ 'Politics' and 'policy' are in modern German and Italian signified by one word: *das Politik, la politica*. Weber concedes that confining the term 'politics' to statecraft does not conform to ordinary usage – we think of campaigners and journalists as acting politically; we think of banks and local authorities as having policies. Strictly speaking, for Weber, this is wrong – and we should distinguish such phenomena and classes of events from 'political action as such, the actual organised action of political groups', where 'political group' means a group ruling by way of political power (Weber, 1978, p. 55). See Price's note on Machiavelli's use of *stato* in *The Prince*, which denotes political community, government of political community, and more generally, 'politics' and 'statecraft' (Machiavelli, 1988a, pp. 102-3), though it's important to note that the term is not equivalent to the modern 'state' (Skinner, 2002).

⁸ Modern Clausewitz scholarship has been particularly engaged in contesting reductionist readings of Clausewitz's famous formula, see: Paret, 1992, Ch. 12; Aron, 1983, pp. 100-116; Herberg-Rothe, 2007, Ch. 6.

⁹ This procedural reading is supported by another sentence in the paragraph: 'In no sense can the art of war ever be regarded as the preceptor of policy, and here we can only treat policy as representative of all interests of the community' – the theorist of war has to proceed at least as if policy properly represents all interests internal to the state (Clausewitz, 1993, Bk. 8, Ch. 6, p. 733).

¹⁰ It is probably worth mentioning here Foucault's question whether Clausewitz's dictum should be reversed. Clausewitz repeatedly tells us that war is a continuation of policy. Must we then enquire whether politics is a continuation of war? (Foucault, 2003, pp.15, 47) Foucault traces versions, in French and English early modern and then revolutionary political thought, of the idea that war is a permanent ineradicable basis for all relations and institutions, that war continues to be the motor that drives politics (Foucault, 2003, pp. 49, 59, 101-9). Foucault's point in these lectures is that this thought (i.e. not Clausewitz's thought, but its inversion) meshes both with an idea of 'rebellion as a response to a war that government never stops waging' as articulated by the Diggers and others (Foucault, 2003, p. 109), and with an idea of one 'race' of people opposing their oppression by another conquering 'race', so that popular state sovereignty becomes an imperative to protect the 'race' (p. 81). There is no hint of this kind of idea in Clausewitz. It does surface – although not as an inference from any idea of constant war, in Weber's inaugural lecture (Weber, 1994a, p. 14). But we hasten to add that Weber was at pains to repudiate 'racial' explanations in social science – see especially Weber 1978 p.398n.

¹¹ See Herberg-Rothe's account of traditions of reading Clausewitz on the relation between the three aspects of the trinity (Herberg-Rothe, 2007, Ch. 4).

¹² According to Cimbala the Clausewitzian concept of 'the fog of war' – our incapacity to know what is going on at times of stress, informational and communicative difficulty, complicated lines of action and interaction – should also be included under the concept 'friction' (Cimbala, 2001, pp. 10, 1-9, 13-14). See also, Beyerchen, 1993, pp. 60-62, 69-70 and Clausewitz, 1993, Bk I, Ch. 3, pp. 17, 25.

¹³ Machiavelli's treatment of the camp as an idealized city is echoed in Huntington's *The Soldier and the State: the theory and politics of civil-military relations*. Huntington unfavourably compares the Main Street of Highland Falls, 'the tiresome monotony and incredible variety and discordance of small town commercialism', with West Point (the US military academy) where behind the gates 'ordered serenity; beauty and utility are merged in gray stone'. West Point is a community with a structured purpose, where the behaviour of men is governed by a code that is the product of generations. There is little room for presumption and individualism; no man is incited to be more than he is. 'In order is found peace, in discipline, fulfillment; in community, security'. 'West Point embodies the military ideal at its best; Highland Falls the American spirit at its most commonplace'. (Huntington, 1957, pp. 464-465)

¹⁴ Our phrasing here is obviously reminiscent of Foucault's *Society must be defended* (Foucault, 2003) – in a separate work in progress we offer a more detailed analysis of his and other analyses of state and violence.