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# Si vis pacem, para bellum

*War as the Collapse of the A2R Triad  
and Peace as Resonance between Peoples*

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# I. Introduction — War as a Philosophical Question: Beyond Geopolitics, a Phenomenology of Dialogal Collapse

There are human realities before which philosophy must choose between two attitudes that are equally tempting and equally insufficient. The first is flight into abstraction — treating war as a conceptual object among others, analyzing it from the comfortable safety of theory without looking squarely at what it really is: torn flesh, cities reduced to ashes, entire generations marked by a violence they did not choose and whose traces they will carry for decades. The second is capitulation before complexity — acknowledging that war exceeds all philosophical categorization, that it belongs to the irrational, to chaos, to what fundamentally resists any conceptual ordering.

The phenomenology of interpellation refuses both attitudes. It does not claim to reduce war to a neat conceptual schema — the reality of organized violence between peoples is of a complexity and density that exceeds every philosophical framework. But it claims something more modest and more rigorous: to describe the phenomenological structure of what happens — or of what ceases to happen — when human collectivities go to war. And this description reveals something that neither political science, nor geopolitics, nor international law thematizes with the same precision: war is the structural collapse of the Call–Response–Resonance triad between human collectivities.

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The adage attributed to Vegetius — *Si vis pacem, para bellum* — is the point of departure for this reflection, not as a wisdom to be endorsed or refuted, but as a philosophical symptom of a way of thinking that has abandoned Resonance as its horizon and substituted for authentic peace a peace through fear — a suspended peace, a dormant volcano that awaits only an occasion to become active again.<sup>1</sup>

This monograph intends to show that the A2R triad formalized in the Mahoukou Law brings to the political philosophy of war and peace something that existing approaches had not yet offered: an eidetic framework that enables us to distinguish peace as accomplished Resonance from peace as suspended impediment, and that identifies the necessary conditions for an authentic reconciliation between peoples as distinct from the mere institutional normalization of relations between states.

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## **II. The Call between Peoples: From Mutual Recognition to Its Perversion**

### **II.1 The Authentic Call between Collectivities: What the Relation between Peoples Should Be**

Is the relation between peoples, between nations, between human collectivities, structured by the same logic of interpellation as the relation between individuals? Human collectivities are not individuals — they have no unified consciousness, no simple intentionality. And yet peoples address one another. They do so through their representatives, their institutions, their cultures, their languages, their arts, their shared memories.

The authentic Call between peoples is the structure by which one human collectivity addresses another in recognizing within that other an irreducible collective freedom — a manner of being in the world, a culture, a memory, aspirations that cannot be reduced to a threat or to an instrument. The Franco-German reconciliation after 1945 — built not only on treaties but on cultural exchanges, town twinnings, shared educational programs — constitutes perhaps the most accomplished example of an authentic Call between two peoples who had been driven to extreme violence.

### **II.2 The Perversion of the Call: From Address to Threat**

The perversion of the Call between peoples takes several characteristic forms. The first is the reduction of the other to a threat: when a people ceases to perceive another as an interlocutor whose singularity deserves to be welcomed, and begins to perceive them exclusively as a source of danger, the authentic Call becomes impossible. The second perversion is imposed silence — the situation in which one people is structurally prevented from addressing the other. The third is propaganda — the systematic production of a false image of the other people that replaces the authentic Call with an ideological construction.

Carl von Clausewitz had grasped something essential about this perversion: war, he writes in *On War*, is the continuation of politics by other means.<sup>2</sup> This formula describes precisely the

transition from the perverted Call to the armed Response. When politics fails to keep open the possibility of the authentic Call, it continues into war, in which weapons replace words as vectors of address between peoples.

### **II.3 Mimetic Desire between Nations: Girard's Contribution**

René Girard brings here a dimension that the Mahoukou Law alone could not describe with the same precision. Mimetic desire — the structure by which one collectivity imitates the desire of another and enters into rivalry with it for the same objects — is one of the most powerful mechanisms of perversion of the Call between peoples. The arms race is precisely this: a mimetic escalation in which each power imitates the military power of the other, until the rivalry itself becomes the principal driver of each one's behavior.

*Si vis pacem, para bellum* is, in this Girardian perspective, the most concise and most troubling expression of mimetic desire between nations: to obtain peace, imitate the military power of the one who might threaten you. This logic produces a structurally self-sustaining escalation in which each preparation for war justifies the other's preparation for war, in a spiral that can only stop through the exhaustion of both parties or through the designation of a common scapegoat.<sup>3</sup>

## **III. The Armed Response: When the Response Ceases to Be a Response**

### **III.1 The Phenomenological Structure of the Decision for War**

The decision for war is the moment when a human collectivity substitutes organized violence for the authentic Response. It is not simply a strategic choice — it is a transformation of the very structure of the relation between collectivities. Where there was a space of interpellation in which Responses could be given and received, war substitutes a space of destruction in which weapons speak in the place of subjects.

Hannah Arendt had grasped something essential about this substitution in *On Violence*: violence arises when power — understood as the capacity to act together — is in the process of disappearing.<sup>4</sup> In the terms of the Mahoukou Law: war arises when the capacity for authentic Response is structurally prevented or perceived as impossible. War is the reaction that substitutes itself for the Response when the authentic Response has become impossible.

### **III.2 Escalation as the Systemic Impediment of the Response**

Once war has begun, a mechanism of escalation is set in motion that progressively destroys every space in which an authentic Response could still be elaborated. In this escalation, the actors no longer respond — they react. The distinction that the Mahoukou Law establishes between reaction and Response is here of formidable precision: to react is to be determined by what precedes in a chain of causality that progressively escapes the mastery of each actor. To respond is to engage, from the place of one's own freedom, in an act that cannot be entirely predicted.

### **III.3 Dehumanization as the Destruction of the Call**

One of the most troubling mechanisms of war is the dehumanization of the enemy — that process by which a human collectivity progressively ceases to perceive in the enemy a shared humanity. This process is phenomenologically the destruction of the fundamental condition of the authentic Call: the recognition in the other of a singular freedom capable of receiving and giving. When the enemy is dehumanized, the Call becomes impossible in both directions: one can no longer address them as an interlocutor, and one can no longer receive what comes from them as a Call.

## **IV. The Geopolitical Scapegoat: The Pseudo-Resonance of Military Victory**

### **IV.1 Military Victory as False Resonance**

Military victory produces something that resembles a Resonance — a transformation of the situation, a resolution of tension, a feeling of closure after open violence. And yet, in the terms of the Mahoukou Law, military victory is not a Resonance — it is its most dangerous simulation. For authentic Resonance is always a reciprocal transformation. Military victory does not produce this reciprocal transformation — it produces a radical asymmetry between victor and vanquished.

The Treaty of Versailles (1919) is perhaps the most eloquent historical example of this pseudo-Resonance of military victory. The First World War ended in a formal victory for the Allies — but this victory produced a humiliation of defeated Germany that fed for twenty years the resentment and ultimately the desire for revenge that led to the Second World War. The volcano had been put to sleep — not extinguished.

## **IV.2 The Collective Scapegoat: Designating the Enemy to Unify the Community**

Girard has shown that the scapegoat mechanism operates in all forms of human organization, including modern states. In the geopolitical context, a collectivity gripped by internal tensions designates an external enemy onto whom all accumulated violence is discharged, producing a national unity that is not a collective Resonance but a pseudo-cohesion founded on shared hostility. This mechanism is of remarkable short-term effectiveness — and of remarkable long-term dangerousness.

## **V. Si vis pacem, para bellum: A Phenomenological Critique of an Adage**

### **V.1 The Internal Logic of the Adage and Its Apparent Coherence**

Vegetius's adage has an undeniable internal coherence. If one accepts its premises — that relations between peoples are fundamentally structured by rivalry and threat — then military preparedness as a condition of peace is a logically necessary conclusion. But the Mahoukou Law reveals the structural flaw of this adage: it lies not in its logic but in its premises. By asserting that peace is obtained through preparation for war, the adage presupposes that peace is the absence of war. Yet the Mahoukou Law shows that this definition of peace is radically insufficient: peace as the absence of war is suspended peace, the dormant volcano, the impediment of Resonance stabilized by mutual deterrence.

### **V.2 Deterrence as the Structural Impediment of Resonance**

The doctrine of deterrence is phenomenologically a permanent and systematic impediment of Resonance between peoples. In a regime of deterrence, the Call that each collectivity addresses to the other is not a Call to recognition — it is a Call to fear. I address you not in order to recognize you in your irreducible singularity, but to signify to you that if you attack me, I will destroy you. This form of address has the structure of a perverted Call: it addresses itself to the other's fear rather than to their freedom, and it produces not a free Response but a constrained retention.

### **V.3 The Paradox of Preparation for War**

The adage of Vegetius contains a paradox that the phenomenology of interpellation enables us to formulate with a new precision: by preparing for war in order to obtain peace, one

creates the conditions of the very war one claims to prevent. This paradox operates at several levels. At the perceptual level: the military preparedness of one people is perceived by its neighbors as a threat — even if it is subjectively experienced as defensive — which produces a mimetic response that retrospectively confirms the initial perception of threat. At the structural level: preparation for war creates institutional and economic interests that have a stake in the continuation of international tension.<sup>9</sup> At the temporal level: the peace of deterrence resolves none of the underlying tensions — it suspends them, leaving grievances to accumulate until the volcano awakens.

## **VI. Toward a Diplomacy of Resonance: What the Mahoukou Law Requires as Conditions for Authentic Peace between Nations**

### **VI.1 Peace as Resonance: A Triadic Definition**

*Authentic peace between peoples is the accomplished Resonance between the Call of each collectivity in its irreducible singularity and the Response of the others in the recognition of that singularity — a reciprocal transformation that is deposited in the space between peoples and that durably modifies their manner of perceiving, relating to, and building together their common existence.*

This triadic definition enables us to distinguish negative peace — the absence of war — which corresponds to the suspension of impediment without its resolution; positive peace — peaceful coexistence founded on shared rules — which may be authentic or superficial; and peace as Resonance — the reciprocal transformation of peoples through their mutual recognition — which alone is constitutive of a lasting peace.

### **VI.2 The Conditions of Resonance between Peoples**

Resonance between peoples requires conditions that contemporary institutional diplomacy does not always bring together. The first is the long time of mutual recognition: the Franco-German reconciliation took decades, and it would not have been possible without the cultural exchange programs, town twinnings, shared history textbooks, and shared commemorative monuments that progressively rebuilt the capacity for authentic Call. The second is the recognition of past sufferings and injustices — a structural condition of Resonance, not merely a moral requirement. The third is the construction of spaces of authentic Call between peoples — not only between their governments, but between their civil societies, their artists, their younger generations.

### VI.3 The Cultural Modalities of Resonance between Peoples: What Non-Western Traditions Teach Contemporary Diplomacy

One of the deepest limitations of contemporary diplomacy is its formal universalism that ignores or marginalizes the specific cultural modalities through which different human traditions have developed their own paths toward Resonance between collectivities.

The ancient Chinese tradition offers resources of great richness. Sun Tzu, in *The Art of War*, develops a strategic thinking that is, in its depth, actually a thinking of conflict resolution through the transformation of the relationship rather than the destruction of the enemy.<sup>6</sup> His most celebrated maxim — *The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting* — describes phenomenologically something essential: the authentic resolution of a conflict is not military victory but the transformation of the relationship between collectivities to the point where violence becomes unnecessary. And the Confucian thought of relations between states — founded on *li* (rites) and *ren* (benevolence) — develops a conception in which peace is the product of the quality of ritualized relations between collectivities rather than of force. African traditions of conflict resolution offer a different and complementary contribution. The palaver — that practice of collective deliberation that characterizes many traditional African societies — is precisely a device for creating the conditions of Resonance between parties in conflict. It requires the long time of shared speech, the presence of elders as third-party guardians of the communal relationship, the public recognition of wrongs committed, and the restoration of relations before any formal normalization. The palaver does not aim first at an agreement on rules — it aims at the transformation of the relationship between the parties.

The Rwandan *gacaca* — those community jurisdictions established after the 1994 genocide — is perhaps the most striking contemporary example of the search for authentic Resonance after extreme violence.<sup>8</sup> Its deep logic is phenomenologically sound: reconciliation cannot come about through a tribunal alone, even an international one. It requires that the parties to the conflict come together in a space where the Call can once again be addressed.

These traditions reveal what contemporary UN diplomacy tends to forget: Resonance between peoples cannot be produced by standardized formats applied uniformly to all conflict situations. It requires taking into account the specific cultural modalities through which each human collectivity has developed its own paths toward mutual recognition.

## **VI.4 Suspended Peace as a Specific Form of Impediment: The Dormant Volcano**

The phenomenology of interpellation enables us to name with precision suspended peace — the dormant volcano — as a specific form of impediment to Resonance distinct from both open war and authentic peace. It is characterized by a formal resolution without real transformation: agreements have been signed, weapons have fallen silent, but the underlying grievances have not been recognized. It presents an active and unprocessed memory: collective wounds remain alive, instrumentalizable, ready to be reactivated. And it manifests a structural vulnerability to entrepreneurs of violence who find fertile ground in unresolved grievances.

## **VII bis. The Pax Christiana as a Paradigm of Resonance between Peoples: Beyond Diplomacy, the Grace of Reconciliation**

### **VII bis.1 The Peace of Christ: What John 14:27 Says That Diplomacy Does Not**

*"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives." (Jn 14:27)*

This verse pronounced by Jesus during the farewell discourse — a few hours before his Passion — explicitly distinguishes between two types of peace that are structurally different in nature. The peace that the world gives — *pax mundi* — is the peace of equilibrium, of deterrence, of victory, of the treaty signed under duress. It is the peace of *Si vis pacem, para bellum* — a conditional, provisional peace, founded on the suspension of violence rather than on its transformation. It is the peace we have described throughout this dissertation as the impediment of Resonance — the dormant volcano that awaits only the occasion to awaken.

The peace of Christ is of another structural nature. The *Pax Christiana* is not the absence of tribulation — Jesus himself affirms this: 'In the world you will have tribulation' (Jn 16:33). It is something that remains at the very heart of tribulation, something that does not depend on the absence of conflict in order to be accomplished. It is a peace that passes through violence rather than avoiding it — and it is precisely for this reason that it is the most radical form of Resonance.

### **VII bis.2 The Triadic Structure of the Pax Christiana**

Analyzed from the perspective of the Mahoukou Law, the *Pax Christiana* reveals a triadic structure of remarkable depth and coherence. The Call of the *Pax Christiana* is of an absolutely

singular nature: it precedes every demand, every disposition, every capacity for reception. 'I give you' — not: I give you if you deserve it, if you are capable of it. The gift precedes and constitutes the capacity to receive it. This is the structure of the absolute Call: a Call that does not wait for the addressee to be ready before addressing them.

The Response to the *Pax Christiana* is what the Christian spiritual tradition names conversion — the transformation of the fundamental orientation of existence. To receive the peace of Christ is to consent to being transformed by it. Meister Eckhart spoke of *Gelassenheit* — letting go — as the condition of possibility for this authentic reception: not a passivity but an act of freedom that consents to be transformed.

The Resonance of the *Pax Christiana* is what the Hebrew tradition names *shalom* — that word which designates not simply the absence of conflict but the fullness of life, justice restored, communion between beings and with what founds them. The *shalom* is Resonance in its most expansive dimension: something that comes about in the space between subjects when they are in authentic relation with one another, and that transforms their manner of being in the world.

### **VII bis.3 The Cross as Traversed Impediment: Violence Transformed into Resonance**

What is philosophically most decisive in the *Pax Christiana* is its relation to violence. The peace of Christ is not given before violence or alongside it: it is given in the night of the betrayal, on the threshold of the Passion. And the Cross itself — which is the most radical violence, the absolute denial of the other's Call — becomes in the christological reading the site of a Resonance of unequalled depth.

The phenomenological response to this paradox is as follows: the Cross is the Resonance of the traversed impediment. It is not violence that produces the Resonance — it is the manner in which violence is received and traversed from within a freedom that does not allow itself to be defined by it. Jesus dying on the Cross does not cease to address — 'Father, forgive them' (Lk 23:34) — even at the moment when every Call seems impossible. And it is this Call maintained in the extremity of violence that constitutes the most profound Resonance of Christian history.

Hannah Arendt had understood something essential about this structure in her reflection on forgiveness: 'It was Jesus of Nazareth who discovered the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs.'<sup>15</sup> Forgiveness — this capacity to free the other and oneself from the irreversible weight of the past — is precisely the form that the *Pax Christiana* takes in the

political sphere. And forgiveness is, in the terms of the Mahoukou Law, a Resonance that comes about not despite past violence but through it.

#### **VII bis.4 The Pax Christiana and Contemporary Processes of Reconciliation between Peoples**

The *Pax Christiana* is not reserved to the private sphere. It has a political and collective reach that the history of reconciliation processes between peoples illustrates in striking fashion. Desmond Tutu — theologian and chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa — had formulated with remarkable precision the relationship between the *Pax Christiana* and political processes of reconciliation. His theology of ubuntu — *I am because we are* — is a political and anthropological translation of the *shalom*: an affirmation that authentic peace between wounded collectivities cannot come about without the mutual recognition of their shared humanity, without the painful work of truth spoken, and without the grace of forgiveness freely offered and freely received.

What Tutu had understood — and what the Mahoukou Law enables us to formalize — is that the *Pax Christiana* requires concrete conditions in order to be accomplished. It requires truth spoken — the Call of the victim who names what they have suffered. It requires recognition — the Response of the perpetrator or their community that welcomes this Call without denying it. And it requires forgiveness — not as a moral obligation imposed from without, but as a Resonance that can come about when the Call has been truly received and the Response truly given.

#### **VII bis.5 The Pax Christiana as the Horizon of the Diplomacy of Resonance**

It would be philosophically naive to claim that the *Pax Christiana* can be directly translated into a diplomatic program. Relations between states obey logics of power, interest, and security that do not allow themselves to be transformed by the mere invocation of an evangelical ideal. And the history of political Christianity — from the Crusades to the wars of religion — shows clearly enough that the *Pax Christiana* can be instrumentalized to justify precisely what it seeks to overcome.

But the *Pax Christiana* can function as a critical horizon and as a source of inspiration for the diplomacy of Resonance. It reminds us first that authentic peace cannot be produced by the human means of negotiation and compromise alone. It reminds us next that authentic peace passes through truth — that *shalom* cannot be accomplished in lies or denial. And it reminds us finally that authentic peace is a gift as much as a construction — that it comes about in the

space between subjects who have consented to expose themselves, to recognize one another, to let the encounter transform them.

## **VII. Conclusion — Peace as Resonance: A Philosophy of Radical Political Hope**

The phenomenology of interpellation — the Mahoukou Law — does not resolve the problem of war. It does not claim to offer a magic formula that would eliminate organized violence between peoples by the sole force of philosophical conceptualization. The reality of war exceeds every philosophy.

But it brings something that geopolitical and strategic analyses cannot give: a rigorous description of the structure of what must happen for peace to be authentic — and a precise identification of the forms of impediment that produce those false peaces that are deterrence, imposed victory, and institutional resolution without real transformation.

The critique of the adage *Si vis pacem, para bellum* that this dissertation has developed is not naive. It does not claim that it is enough to renounce military preparedness for peace to come about. It affirms something more modest and more demanding: preparation for war can produce negative peace — the absence of war — but it cannot produce positive peace — the Resonance between peoples. And negative peace, like the dormant volcano, merely defers violence to the next generation.

Is this program realistic? The honest answer is: not always, not everywhere, not immediately. There are situations in which violence must be stopped by force before Resonance can be sought. There are wounds so deep that several generations are needed before reciprocal transformation can begin. And there are entrepreneurs of violence whose interests are so deeply tied to the continuation of the conflict that no offer of Resonance will be able to reach them.

The philosophy of hope that the Mahoukou Law proposes is not a philosophy of naivety — it is a philosophy of lucidity about the conditions of authentic peace, and of the determination to build these conditions where they are lacking.

***Si vis pacem — para resonantiam.***

Prepare the Resonance. Build the conditions in which the authentic Call can be addressed between peoples, in which the free Response can be elaborated from the depth of cultures and memories, and in which the reciprocal transformation can be deposited in the space between human collectivities to constitute there progressively something that finally

resembles peace — that peace which Jesus named 'his peace': not the balance of terror, not the victory of the strongest, not the silence of the vanquished, but the *shalom* — the accomplished Resonance between peoples who have consented to recognize one another mutually in their wound and in their desire to live together.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, Book III, Prologue, 4th–5th century. 'Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum.'

<sup>2</sup> Clausewitz, C. von, *On War* (1832), trans. M. Howard & P. Paret, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, Book I, Chapter 1, § 24.

<sup>3</sup> Girard, R., *Battling to the End*, trans. M. Baker, East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2010. Girard develops precisely the application of mimetic theory to Clausewitz's thinking on war.

<sup>4</sup> Arendt, H., *On Violence* (1970), New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, essay 'On Violence.'

<sup>5</sup> Arendt, H., *The Human Condition* (1958), Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 238: 'It was Jesus of Nazareth who discovered the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs.'

<sup>6</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, 5th century BCE, trans. S. B. Griffith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963, Chapter III.

<sup>7</sup> Ricœur, P., *Memory, History, Forgetting*, trans. K. Blamey & D. Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, Part Three: 'The Historical Condition.'

<sup>8</sup> Hatzfeld, J., *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*, trans. L. Coverdale, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. For a philosophical analysis: Gasibirege, S., *La réconciliation au Rwanda*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010.

<sup>9</sup> The notion of the military-industrial complex is developed in President Eisenhower's farewell address (January 17, 1961).

<sup>10</sup> Mahoukou, C., *Phenomenology of Interpellation. The Mahoukou Law (Call–Response–Resonance): Foundations, Developments, and Horizons*, 2026. For mimetic impediment, see Chapter 11 bis.

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