

Conatus - Journal of Philosophy

Vol 8, No 2 (2023)

Conatus - Journal of Philosophy SI: War Ethics



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doi: [10.12681/cjp.34833](https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.34833)

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To cite this article:

Mosinyan, D. (2023). In Quest of Peace and its Subject. *Conatus - Journal of Philosophy*, 8(2), 431–444.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/cjp.34833>

In Quest of Peace and its Subject

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Abstract

The dynamics of warfare have undergone significant transformations, necessitating a comprehensive reevaluation of the study of wars. It is no longer sufficient to solely focus on analyzing military operations; instead, a broader perspective is required. Postcolonial research has shed light on the changing forms of warfare that emerged after the era of military colonialism. This shift in the nature of conflicts demands the development and application of new research methods to effectively comprehend and address contemporary warfare. Of particular significance is the emergence of informational and hybrid warfare, which blurs the traditional boundaries between states of war and peace. Consequently, the concept of peace, as the desired state of coexistence, warrants closer examination from multidimensional angles. While peace has historically been considered from moral and religious viewpoints, it is imperative to critically evaluate the applicability of these perspectives and explore alternative approaches. This article seeks to unravel the complex nature of peace by integrating insights from diverse disciplines. By adopting a multidisciplinary approach, encompassing moral, religious, and other disciplinary lenses, a more comprehensive understanding of peace can be achieved. Moreover, this interdisciplinary exploration enables a nuanced analysis of the intricate dynamics between war and peace, facilitating the development of effective strategies for conflict resolution. By critically examining the concept of peace and reevaluating the nature of war from this perspective, this article aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on conflicts and their potential resolutions. By combining theoretical reflections with empirical evidence, it offers a valuable resource for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners interested in comprehending the complexities of contemporary conflicts and working towards the attainment and sustenance of lasting peace.

Keywords: peace; war; violence; enemy; history; narrative; subject

I. The task of rethinking war and peace

Making peace an object of research reveals a number of difficulties because, unlike war, it is not directly identifiable, it does not exist as an event. For a long time, the methodology of historiography was developed and proposed as the course of wars or military-political events, but a language to speak about mankind in a peaceful state was not formed. Such methodology has its own philosophical justification, the basis of which is that war is an inevitable and even necessary reality arising from the nature of man and society, which can be observed from a number of thinkers, from Heraclitus to Hegel. Heraclitus' famous fragment on war as the father and king became a source of praise for war and shaped the core of history. Naturally, this perspective arises from Greek dialectical thought and it is about the natural struggle that takes place everywhere and the resulting formation of the world order. But it has also been applied to the realm of war itself, especially since Heraclitus' thought continues that war makes some free and some slave.¹ Another famous statement legitimizing war-centered history and culture comes from Clausewitz, who asserts that "war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means."² The idea of the primacy of war, of violence, was strengthened and complemented by the work of another theorist who admired Clausewitz, René Girard, who demonstrated the substantial character of the desire of sacrifice and the permanence of the revenge that ensued, concluding that:

If men wish to prevent an interminable outbreak of vengeance (just as today we wish to prevent nuclear war), it is not enough to convince their fellows that violence is detestable – for it is precisely because they detest violence that men make a duty of vengeance.³

The second author who responded to Clausewitz's formula and was constantly engaged in the transformation of historiography is Michel Foucault. He directly reversed the formula, "'Politics' has been conceived as a continuation, if not exactly and directly of war, at least

¹ Heraclitus, *Fragments*, trans. Brooks Haxton (London: Penguin Books, 2003): DK B53.

² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 69.

³ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD, and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1989), 15.

of the military model as a fundamental means of preventing civil disorder.”⁴ There is a proclivity to comprehend and explain modernity as modern politics emerged precisely as a means to prevent war or unrest. Foucault tended to deconstruct universal, continuous history and ask questions about interruptions and ruptures. In this case, the main question is why and how a link between war and “peaceful” politics was established. Since modern times, state armies have been formed less for new territorial conquests than for securing civil peace. It is a historical paradox that the army was conceived as a means of preventing war. This means that the line between war and peace is effectively undrawable, and any policy aimed at peace is somehow accompanied by silent war. In this case, however, there is an opportunity to open the historical intervals and bring the so-called “peace” to the center of attention, the problem being to find out the reality associated with it.

Peace studies typically starts with the challenges it faces, which can be divided into several groups. First, peace will be understandable if it is considered in the context of the most comprehensive and complete picture of political geography because many regional factors condition its existence. Second, it is essential to ensure broad coverage of the historical process so that the end of the war is not confused with the end of the battle or a change in the nature of the war. Last but not least, because there is a sizeable behind-the-scenes part of peacebuilding, there is a difficulty in the link between politics and academia that needs to be taken into account. Johan Galtung, one of the founders of peace studies, suggests three important principles to consider when discussing the idea of peace: a) The term ‘peace’ shall be used for social goals at least verbally agreed to by many, if not necessarily by most; b) These social goals may be complex and difficult, but not impossible, to attain; c) The statement *peace is absence of violence* shall be retained as valid.⁵ The third principle is essentially the expansion of the border between war and non-war. The absence of hostilities is still not peace, because there can be open, intentional, or, more importantly, not open, even unintentional violence, instead, which, as a rule, has a structural, systemic nature. In this context, another important question comes to the fore. Is it possible to eliminate all violence, and if so, how? Is there an alternative to using violence against violence, which inevitably leads to a vicious circle? This issue leads to the field of philosophy of law,

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 168.

⁵ Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6, no. 3 (1969): 167.

where the theory of natural law developed by the Enlightenment justifies violence as an inalienable property of nature, which is opposed by legal positivism, asserting the possibility and necessity of establishing the state and peace. In his classic article devoted to violence, Walter Benjamin, referring to the paradoxical nature of violence, states that there is no nonviolent way to resolve conflictual relations, since any agreement, however peaceful, in the end implies at least the use of the right to violence against the party that does not comply with the alliance.⁶ If there is order, then there is also a mechanism to control it, which includes the punishment for its transgression. The ontological consideration of peace means going beyond the simple denial of violence and discovering a reality that allows us to methodologically consider violence as the absence of peace. In personal relationships, this is quite possible, but conflicts are not regulated by individuals but by certain systems in which there are laws and rules that imply violence. On the personal level, there are spiritual realities that can overcome violence: Freedom, forgiveness, happiness, etc., which do not exist as such at the social, intergovernmental, and civilizational level, where, however, there can be, and perhaps there is, a will to end violence. In this context, Benjamin puts forward the concept of 'divine violence' as the ultimate and just violence for a peaceful life, citing pedagogical violence as an example.⁷ There is an essential and profound part in education that is not regulated by law, it is not only a matter of law but an activity that does not exclude spiritual and psychological violence, aimed at the unconditional good and improvement of the other person.

By analogy, the superpowers reserve the right to invade the territory of states that are underdeveloped by their standards and correct situations by using force. And just as in the field of education, it is impossible to prove in advance the true purpose of the proposed path, so the justification and enforcement of the political system already raise controversial issues involving violence. The eternal problem of the criterion arises, which in the words of Slavoj Žižek sounds like this: "[...] there are no 'objective' criteria enabling us to identify an act of violence as divine."⁸ In the human, all too human world, under the conditions of democracy 'divine violence' remains only as an abstract idea, the implementation of which leads to serious conflicts. Moreover, if we take into account the fundamental existence of mimesis in the human

⁶ Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," *Selected Writings*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA, and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004): 244-245.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 249.

⁸ Slavoj Žižek, *Violence* (New York: Picador, 2008), 200.

world, it will be impossible to find the source of violence. The justification for invading a territory often stems from the anticipation of potential threats originating from that region. In this context, it makes no sense to ask the question about the origin of the initial violence, because it always refers to the violence that preceded it, even at the level of threat. It is appropriate to recall an anthropological discovery, dating back to René Girard, according to which there is no aggression in the human world, unlike in the predators. Here the attack is always a reaction, or in other words, the aggression is always a response to another aggression, and so on, and it is not possible to find the beginning. And since violence exists self-sufficiently as the core of war and continues to justify itself, peace can be perceived merely as an opposing form of violence or an abstract narrative, devoid of its own independent essence in contrast to war. Peace becomes a reality when war finds a logical end.

II. Subjects of peace and world order

The search for the ontological basis of peace implies the determination of the subject of peace: who or what secures peace, to whom is it owed, or how is it produced? War is a performative phenomenon; one can easily identify the subjects who wage it. But peace cannot be summed up in performative judgments, which is evident even at the linguistic level. While one can ‘wage war,’ one cannot ‘manufacture peace.’ Peace is not a verb. So, is it possible to decide to make peace and do it? What entity is formed at this time, and what procedure implies the establishment of peace? Doesn’t the realization of peace imply the enforcement of one’s will through the threat of force? “Unlike warring, peace is not thought to be something we can do,”⁹ so the problem of the subject of peace is complicated. Peacekeepers, for example, can be considered direct implementers and subjects of peace, but they are at the center of the war and contain physical violence by the means of war. This is ‘negative peace,’ which only postpones military operations. The idea of positive peace leads to a certain anthropological concept and from its perspective to the consideration of peace as a reality existing in the human mind. One can think about a peaceful, safe, happy life, dream about it, but is it possible as a fact, as a part of reality? If the tendency to sacrifice and violence is substantial, as René Girard has shown, then Oswald Spengler’s words questioning peace are logical and under-

⁹ J. Gray Cox, *The Ways of Peace: A Philosophy of Peace as Action* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986), 9.

standable: "If few can stand a long war without deterioration of soul, none can stand a long peace."¹⁰ What activities are curtailed, and at what cost is peace secured? The question gains validity when we recall Woodrow Wilson's comment about the American Civil War creating an unprecedented reality in the country – a national consciousness.¹¹ Of course, this does not mean at all that civil war is the key to solving national problems, but it does certainly mean that the problem of the relationship between civil peace, or rather the absence of war, and the establishment of the state must be examined.

The first subjects of peace, i.e., the initiators of the process of achieving peace, were the parties to the Peace of Westphalia, who decided in 1648, after the Thirty Years' War, to create a world order and to secure peace through a balance of power. The separation of states from the Church and becoming a subject through the replacement of empires initiated and systematized international relations, the core of which is the establishment of peace. The most important concept associated with peace in this context is "world order," that is, a system based on certain rules, not by moral coercion, but practically called to create conditions for peaceful coexistence at the international level. The Westphalian world order, created by the Treaties of Westphalia (1648) and Utrecht (1713), was the first significant geopolitical step toward turning peace from utopia into reality. As a result, the so-called 'international community' was formed, which was supposed to be the guarantor of peace, that is, the subject. However, this subject has an essential feature, namely, that there is no specific ontological unit corresponding to it, which means that there is no specific responsible unit. The boundaries of the responsible entity end at the boundaries of the state, and there is no supranational sovereignty that would secure the international peace order. Therefore, it is not surprising the words of Henry Kissinger, who became a classic in diplomacy, "No truly 'world order' has ever existed."¹² Each side of the world order claims to be the leading authority and thereby identifies itself with the international community, which in turn gives rise to competition and conflict. The main contender for the title of chief defender of the Westphalian order has almost always been the United States, which continues to advance its vision of peace, according to which the principles of American gov-

¹⁰ Oswald Spengler, *The Hour of Decision*, trans. Charles F. Atkinson (London: Kimble & Bradford, 1934), 16-17.

¹¹ Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), 119.

¹² Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 2.

ernance are universal, so that their universal adoption will naturally lead to peace and balance of power, and hostility will be a thing of the past.¹³ This viewpoint originated with the founders of the American state, when Thomas Jefferson, for example, declared that “It is impossible not to be sensible that we are acting for all mankind.”¹⁴ In this case, the cultural and civilizational differences between states are indeed an obstacle to the establishment of peace, but they are inalienable facts and their forced change usually leads to internal or external rebellions. And the superpower tolerates only those cultural manifestations that fit into its concept. Moreover, a superpower, by definition, aspires to be the most comprehensive and monopolistic, and in the case of the United States, its slight weakening sometimes gives rise to the prediction that it will be the cause of a crisis of peace and stability.¹⁵ It is the logic and inclination of a superpower, but every sovereign state aspires to or dreams of it. Even if a superpower effectively ensures the security and stability of its territory, this is not a guarantee of eternal peace. This is because every culture aspires to sovereignty, striving to emancipate itself from external influences to achieve self-sufficiency and establish an independent existence. If we add to what has been said the imperative of Niccolò Machiavelli, which reads,

Any one, therefore, who wishes not to conquer, would do well to use [auxiliary] forces, which are much more dangerous than mercenaries, as with them ruin is complete, for they are all united, and owe obedience to others,¹⁶

the nature of the relationship between the superpower and the subordinate states, surrounded by the danger of conflagration, will be clearly outlined. The peacemaker, pretending to be the subject of peace, intentionally or unintentionally uses violence against the other participants. This is a unique and prominent theme in anti-utopian works, where behind the outwardly peaceful and harmonious order there always manifests some kind of evil that makes everyone “peace-loving” by force. It is more than important to consider this fact today when the world order has become multipolar and complicated, when the question “Who

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 11.

¹⁵ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Essential Wallerstein* (New York: The New Press, 2000), 435.

¹⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci (Letchworth: Oxford University Press, 1921), 54.

rules the world?" is no longer unambiguous but implies multi-layered answers,¹⁷ and when the number of participants in world peace and, consequently, of those who threaten war, has increased. Rebellion is always brewing against the unipolar world, and resistance to the form and norms of peace is forming in the multipolar world. Liberal democracy, which seemed unstoppable to American politicians and theorists, has failed to meet the expectations of certain civilizations, and the American or Russian flag flying in foreign lands is not always associated with prosperity and improvement.

Being a subject of peace requires legitimacy, otherwise calls for peace are perceived as calls for war. Making concessions on some issues and showing good will are not enough for fundamental peace, because politics is very different from interpersonal relations in blind systematics, continuously pursuing goals, up to the final destruction of the enemies. Achieving peace is possible only by becoming a subject of peace, and by recognizing the enemies and striving to maintain a semblance of equilibrium with them.

III. The concept of enemy in peacebuilding

Peace inevitably overlaps with the idea of the enemy, for the need for it arises precisely in relation to the enemy. The enemy is the Other who disturbs the establishment of one's sovereignty and does not harmonize with one's idea of peace. The *otherness* of the Other is an opportunity for determining one's own limits and thus for self-knowledge, but also a target for the imposition of one's own identity and culture. The Other becomes an enemy when he does not allow self-realization and hinders the realization of spiritual and material possibilities. On the other hand, the emergence of the enemy is a deep reminder of the possibilities and of the urge to exploit them. This is indeed comparable to the existence of the shadow, the dark, lower aspects of the psyche, the awareness of which is the prerequisite for self-knowledge. Just as the acceptance of the shadow is met with fierce resistance,¹⁸ overcoming the emotional barrier can be challenging when it comes to identifying the enemy. Without knowing the enemy, without understanding why it is the enemy, it is not possible to free oneself from its influence. This is what Nietzsche's Zarathustra also proposed: "You should be the kind of men whose eyes always seek an enemy – your enemy [...]. You should

¹⁷ Noam Chomsky, *Who Rules the World?* (New York: Penguin Books, 2017), 258.

¹⁸ Carl Gustav Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, trans. Richard Francis Carrington Hull (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975), 8.

seek your enemy, wage your war and for your thoughts!”¹⁹ The one who has discovered the depths of their soul and is looking for ways to bring them up is looking for the enemy. In the opposite case, the enemy appears by himself, and then all that remains is to counter, that is, to submit to the enemy’s logic, and in case of success, it is meaningless even to talk about positive, factual peace.

If the image of the enemy can be circumvented after a certain amount of self-conquest in the personal or spiritual sphere, then it may be impossible to avoid it without a crisis in international relations, because the political goals are less directed toward self-satisfaction than toward the promotion of conquering activities, for which the search for the enemy almost never ceases. At the end of the Cold War, the speech of Georgi Arbatov, advisor to the President of the Soviet Union, to the United States is noteworthy: “We are going to do a terrible thing to you; we are going to deprive you of an enemy.”²⁰ The United States without an enemy truly remains alone and seems to lose its sense of identity. When there is no need to protect and nurture culture, it dilutes and dissolves and loses the ability to be a reference point for its bearers. A principle can be formulated: The more a nation becomes alienated from its culture, the more urgent becomes the search for an enemy as a pledge for the awakening of identity. In the absence of the enemy, a state of peace prevails, but it has no ontological basis because there is no entity to sustain and support it. The problem is to find and even create an enemy through whose destruction the promise of peace becomes a reality. This was basically the reason for American interest in the Arab world after the Cold War. The United States declared a large-scale war on terrorism, in which it made Islam its metaphysical enemy,²¹ leading to a variety of interpretations: Is this a war against terrorism or just against Islam, which is different from American culture?

The political and anthropological argument for the search for an enemy is the claim that the enemy would otherwise discover an enemy for himself. The chronological factor of searching for the beginning, the reason of the enmity does not work here at all, because there is always the argument of the existence of a hidden enemy, which takes the conversation into the metaphysical sphere and considers the enemy

¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 33.

²⁰ Georgi A. Arbatov, “Preface,” in *Mutual Security: A New Approach to Soviet-American Relations*, eds. Richard Smoke and Andrey Kortunov, xiii-xxiii (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1991): xxi.

²¹ Hans Köchler, *World Order: Vision and Reality*, ed. David Armstrong (New Delhi: Manak, 2009), 58.

as an idea, or even as a tool. That is the case, if you fail to consider the enemy as a tool, you subject yourself to his will. Lord Palmerston's principle describing identity and peace has become a catchphrase: "We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow."²² The perpetual enemy not only creates practical complications but also imposes a certain kind of identity that raises the problem of being or not being. Moreover, the perpetual enemy is a matter of choice rather than reality, for its justification can be endless. When Carl Schmitt thought about the concept of the political, he linked it closely to the concept of the enemy and tried to free it from the moral burden in every possible way. Referring to the Gospel commandment to "love your enemies," he notes that there are two words in Greek and Latin that express the meaning of 'enemy' – *hostis* (πολέμιος) and *inimicus* (ἐχθρός), the first of which means the political enemy, and the second is a private, personal enemy, not a friend, mentioned in the Gospels.²³ *Hostis*, that is, a political enemy, cannot be loved, and for that matter, it is not necessary to hate him, because he is an idea, the result of a political decision and position. Hostility is at the level of political tensions that arise from the formulation of goals and the imposition of peace on preferential terms. These political goals can overlap and lead to conflicts that have nothing to do with personal positions: "War is armed combat between organized political entities."²⁴ From this point of view, war itself is a realistic fact, it is beyond desires and moral attitudes. It can take place even without the will of all involved because it is subject to a political (not personal) logic. There is no such thing as a purely religious, purely economic, or moral war; war is by definition political, the result of choosing an ally and an enemy.²⁵ The purpose of politics is to divide the environment into allies, neutrals, and enemies, and to manifest the corresponding will. As soon as politics leaves the realm of self-interest and assumes moral dimensions, the concept of war for humanity arises, which is unusually intense because it considers the enemy as a universal monster and makes it its task not only to defeat but also to utterly destroy.²⁶ If war is a manifestation of this kind of political will directed against the enemy, then peace is

²² Henry Kissinger, *World Order* (New York: Penguin Press, 2014), 27-30.

²³ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago, IL, and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 28-29.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

the resistance to this will. But how is it possible to have a confrontation that leads both sides to abandon the predetermined image of the enemy and change it?

IV. Peace as a treaty and as a reality

A state as a subject of international relations is capable of concluding a peace treaty with another state, but this raises a couple of questions: First, what made peace possible, which until then seemed impossible, and second, what processes are presupposed by this document, to what level of social life can peace reach, and what are the reasons for its maintenance? Peace treaties are usually the result of either the realization that the military path leads to a dead end or the complete surrender of one of the parties. The first option springs from self-interest, but remains a narrative that does not completely eliminate the source of possible future wars, especially if there is a possibility of a realignment of forces. Moreover, the generations of victims will perceive the alliance as unjust on the existing terms and, unable to overcome the feeling of enmity, will only postpone war. In such a situation, the absence of war is not a sign of peace, because the mechanisms of mutual restraint only reinforce aggression, which will inevitably express itself in other forms. It is, of course, the royal road to postpone war. In other words,

A balance of forces does not in itself secure peace, but if thoughtfully assembled and invoked, it can limit the scope and frequency of fundamental challenges and curtail their chance of succeeding when they do occur.²⁷

This is reminiscent of the classical Latin phrase – “If you want peace, prepare for war!” The principle of balance of forces does not apply in the case of capitulation. It is clear that the defeated party cannot speak the language of forcing peace. The only option is to engage the international community and invoke human rights norms. However, this is not a purely legal issue, since there is no international police system, so to speak. International law, which is the main guarantee for the signing of a peace treaty, refers not only and not so much to the juridical dimension, but to international relations and politics, and the latter is first and foremost an area of realizing one’s own interests and being guided by them. Not only is a moral, peace-loving attitude not enough to win the desired peace, but also showing weakness can give the ene-

²⁷ Kissinger, 9.

my ideas of war. A consistent pacifist must be prepared to declare war on war, which implies the will and the power to use violence.

Therefore, the attainment of peace cannot be solely reliant on goodwill, as the act of hastily signing a peace treaty at any cost may inadvertently give rise to internal and external tensions. Moreover, the emergence of modern hybrid wars has exacerbated the challenge of distinguishing between the states of war and peace. The conventional peace agreements fail to account for the insidious nature of psychological attacks and cyberattacks, which operate covertly and can permeate all facets of public life. The concept of peace presupposes the presence of a responsible subject who assumes the mantle of safeguarding it. However, the emergence of such a subject also implies an acknowledgment of potential threats emanating from other actors, thereby necessitating efforts to neutralize them. This process is inherently fraught with tensions, and even when a peace treaty is established, underlying considerations persist. Consequently, alliances forged during peacetime can be severed opportunistically at a later stage. The complexities surrounding the pursuit and sustenance of peace call for a more nuanced understanding of its nature and implementation. Achieving lasting peace requires a comprehensive approach that not only addresses visible conflicts but also acknowledges and mitigates the invisible and multidimensional challenges posed by hybrid warfare. Furthermore, a thorough evaluation of the roles and responsibilities of the involved subjects is vital in effectively navigating the complexities of peace processes.

In conclusion, the achievement of peace cannot solely rely on good intentions and hastily-signed treaties. The evolving landscape of hybrid warfare blurs the boundaries between war and peace, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges inherent in peacebuilding. Recognizing the invisible threats and tensions, as well as the complexities of subjectivity and alliances, is crucial for fostering sustainable peace in a rapidly changing global landscape.

Acknowledgments

The research was carried out with the financial support of Brusov State University, within the scope of the application code N1GH-22/002.

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