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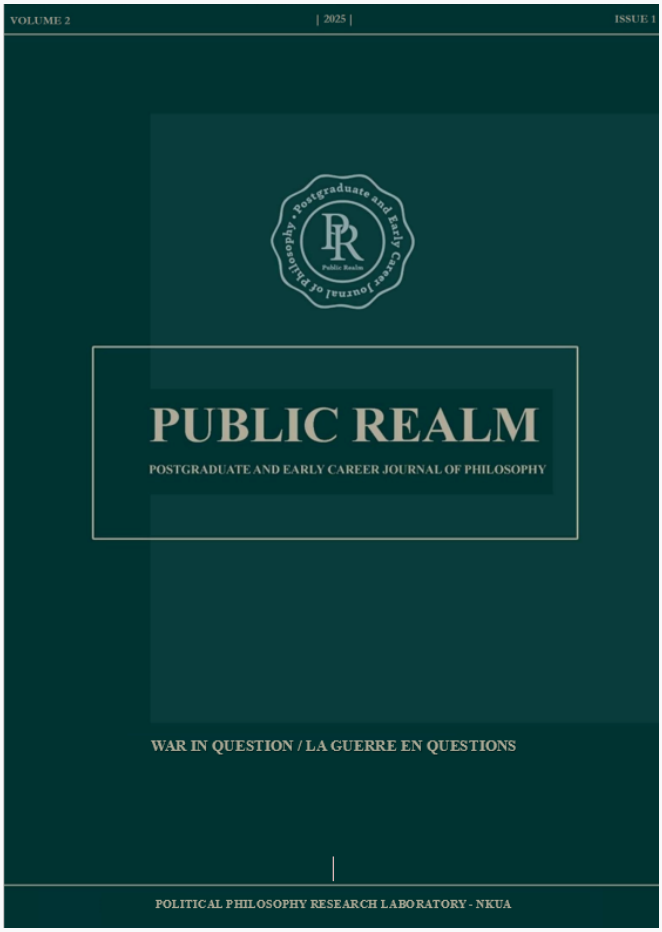

War in Marxian and Engelsian Thought: The Crimean War (1853-56) and the “Sixth Power in Europe”

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War in Marxian and Engelsian Thought: The Crimean War (1853-56) and the "Sixth Power in Europe"

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Abstract

The Crimean War (1853-56) attracted Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' political interest. The two thinkers came up with a long volume of articles and letters written as dispatches for the American newspaper The New York Tribune. I tap into the said corpus to glean past perspectives on a modern war as a major geopolitical phenomenon involving three Great Powers —namely England, France and Russia— and the crumbling Ottoman Empire, directly impinging upon the post-Vienna Congress established European socio-political order. I argue, based on Marx and Engels' commentaries, that in the Marxian philosophical constellation, war is conceptualised and projected as a harbinger of a pan-European proletarian revolution. As a "sixth power in Europe" that could hold sway over —foremost by precipitating— the course of events which would usher in a radical social transformation. The under-theorisation of modern war in the Marxian and Marxist intellectual traditions, the reasons behind it, and Étienne Balibar's distinct theoretical approach to the coupling of war and revolution are also presented and discussed.

Keywords

Marx, Engels, Crimean War, War in Europe, War and Revolution, 19th century

Introduction

Russia's gruesome attack on Ukraine, the ongoing bloody war and its harrowing effects have brought the tumult diachronically besetting Eastern Europe into high relief. Pundits and journalists of disparate ideological hues and interests have tried to draw parallels, pointing to continuities and ruptures, with another war of equally resounding geopolitical significance: the Crimean War of 1853-56.[1]

The latter had been the first large-scale war to break out after almost forty years of a propitiously balanced European peace agreed upon at the Vienna Congress (1815) that marked the end of the Napoleonic era. Despite not being canonised a "Great War," the Crimean War held all the typical trappings that could make it unfold into one: Two circumstantially allied Great Powers, namely France and Britain, supported by the disgruntled Ottomans and a contingent of Sardinians (Piedmont), launched a campaign against another, Russia.[2] In light, also, of the implicated violence, its high death toll and the demographic shifts it precipitated, it has rightly been termed "a transformative event."[3] The principal belligerents first came to loggerheads over the vexed question of who could claim the authority to have a say in the religious affairs of the Christian Churches and the protection of their votaries in the Holy Land, which were then part of the Ottoman dominion. The Sultan's swift concession to French demands to cede them control of the Catholic Church, but concomitant denial to bend to the will of Russians, who wished not only to hold sway over the affairs of the Greek Orthodox Church in Jerusalem but moreover to assume the role of protector of Orthodox Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire, incurred the Tsar's wrath. Russia and the Ottoman Empire initially went to war in October 1853, after the occupation, by the former, of the two Ottoman principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia; Great Britain and France entered the war after allying with the Ottomans[4] in March 1854 and attacked Crimea with the object of crushing Russian naval power in the Black Sea.[5] For the French and the British, in effect, this was a war waged to thwart Russia's influence in the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing risks it could pose to their interests, primarily the maintenance of free trade routes to southeast Asia; other smaller European powers, such as Prussia, Austria, Sweden and Denmark dithered over whom they ought to side with and eventually chose the path of active neutrality.[6] The war ended with the seizure of Sevastopol by the allied powers in September 1855 and the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Paris in March 1856, which promulgated the Black Sea a neutral sea, and stipulated, among other things,

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[1] See, for example, Alexander Etkind, "Two Toxic Commodities, Two Crimean Wars, and Other Wrong Historical Analogies," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, (March 14), 2023. https://carnegieendowment.org/politika/89261 (accessed May 27, 2023).

[2] James B. Agnew, "The Great War that Almost Was: Crimea, 1853-1856," *Parameters* 3, no. 1 (1973): 46-48. There exists a vast bibliography on the said war, the review of which goes beyond the scope of this study.

[3] Mara Kozelsky, "The Crimean War, 1853-56," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 4 (2012): p. 905.

[4] Agnew argues, by citing illustrative quotes, that "Turkey was not so much an ally of France and Britain as she was an 'excuse.'" See Agnew, "The Great War," p. 49.

[5] William Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy since 1774*, 3rd ed. (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 19-20.

[6] Maartje Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals: Great Power Politics, 1815–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 69-73.

that Ottoman territorial integrity —by then a crumbling Empire, which had been progressively forfeiting lands it hitherto dominated— should be respected.[7]

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were not indifferent to these developments. The two men dwelt extensively on them in a series of articles and letters published in the *New York Tribune* over the years the war was waged.[8] The latter was reportedly "one of the largest and most influential newspapers worldwide."[9] It held a good reputation for standing firmly against slavery; besides, it was despised by Prussian authorities, which regarded it as an "organ of the Whig party" that advocated what they derogatorily dubbed "socialist extravagances."[10] The two thinkers, in their career as correspondents for the said newspaper, which lasted from the early 1850s until 1862, reported on a great variety of themes, maintaining a focus on British socio-political affairs and the fledgling capitalist society of the United States, less so on countries of continental Europe.[11] Jürgen Herres has recently argued that Engels' contribution remained a "carefully guarded secret for a considerable time," and only much later was it revealed that numerous reports, especially those dealing with military matters, were penned by him despite them having been credited to Marx.[12]

In this paper, I tap into this little-studied reportorial corpus. First I attempt to reconstruct the Marxian/Marxist and Engelsian theory of war. I then turn to their commentaries on the Crimean War. My goal is to glean their views on modern warfare in Eastern Europe and its socio-political implications for the broader continent.

Marx and Engels on War

Three, according to Siegfried Kissin,[13] have been the "perennial" quandaries preying on the minds of those adhering to socialism: how to prevent war; how to respond to it; what opportunities there exist(ed) for advancing the socialist cause in wars between capitalist powers. Contemporaries and epigones of Marx and Engels, starting from the International Working Men's Association (1864-72), to early German Social Democrats, and later authoritative figures of the Marxist tradition such as Vladimir Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, and the post-First International anarchists and feminists, rigorously addressed such questions.[14] Presumably having grasped that war as an act of collectively exerted violence presupposes the constitution of coherent, consensual and

[7] Hale, *Turkish Foreign Policy*, p. 20.
[8] Karl Marx, *The Eastern Question: A Reprint of Letters Written 1853-1856 Dealing with the Events of the Crimean War*, ed. Eleanor Marx Aveling and Edward Aveling (1897; rep., Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2013).
[9] Heinz D. Kurz, "Transatlantic Conversations: Observations on Marx and Engels' Journalism and Beyond," *Social Research* 81, no. 3 (2014): p. 637.
[10] Kurz, "Transatlantic Conversations," p. 640.
[11] Ibid, p. 642, 644-48.
[12] Jürgen Herres, "'My Immortal Works': Friedrich Engels as a Journalist and Publicist — An Overview," in *The Life, Work and Legacy of Friedrich Engels: Emerging from Marx's Shadow*, eds. Eberhard Illner, Hans A. Frambach and Norbert Koubek, trans. Joseph Swann and Mícheál Úa Séaghdha (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), p. 18-19.
[13] Siegfried F. Kissin, *War And The Marxists: Socialist Theory and Practice in Capitalist Wars, 1848-1918* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2019), p. ix.
[14] Marcello Musto, "War and the Left: Considerations on a Chequered History," *Critical Sociology* 49, no.3 (2023): p. 515-20.

unanimously organised political groups and organisations that should be able to secure widespread societal support for a successful large-scale mobilisation,[15] they sought to obstruct this process by appealing, via their writings, addresses and slogans, to the distinct and utterly irreconcilable, internationalist "common interest"[16] of the working class and its revolutionary movement,[17] the primary pool of manpower in every war.

When we turn to the forefathers, however, looking for an operational explanatory theoretical map and tools to navigate through the extant material, scholarly opinions converge in that there exists a gap in the Marxian intellectual legacy when it comes to identifying a coherently formulated, systematic and all-round theory of war. This is so either concerning war as a contemporaneous phenomenon in itself,[18] or in its relation to other phenomena, such as revolution,[19] or as an integral element in the broader constellation of international relations.[20] Nor did Marx and Engels expound any elaborate, clear-cut distinction between "just" and "unjust" wars[21] or a novel theory of unorthodox warfare.[22] Such themes still command marginal research interest. Neumann and Von Hagen blamed it on slanted (mis)representations of the two thinkers, hallowing them as stern anti-militarists and fervent pacifists.[23] For Paul Blackledge, it was the early 20th-century rise of "imperialism" and its prompt

[15] Siniša Malešević and Christian Olsson, "War," in *The Sage Handbook of Political Sociology*, eds. William Outhwaite and Stephen P. Turner (London: SAGE, 2018), p. 718-19.
[16] Alan Gilbert, "Marx on Internationalism and War," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 7, no. 4 (1978): p. 354.
[17] Musto, "War and the Left," 515-20. It had been César de Paepe, one of the principal leaders of the International Working Men's Association (1864-72), who first formulated the classical position of the workers' movement on the question of war, namely that under capitalism, wars are inevitable, since it is the dominant socio-economic paradigm itself that engenders and proliferates them.
[18] Panagiotis Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου*, 5η έκδοση [Theory of War, 5th edition] (Athens: Themelio, 2004), 169; Musto, "War and the Left," 516; Sigmund Neumann and Mark Von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, eds. Peter Paret, Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 262; Walter Bryce Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War: Kant, Clausewitz, Marx, Engels and Tolstoy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 67, 73-74. The above-cited scholars refer to pronouncements on the subject matter which they view as "fragmentary," "occasional," "sometimes contradictory," "not developed systematically enough, not related clearly enough to the core principles of Marxist social and political theory" and "scattered through their [Marx and Engels'] writings".
[19] Kissin, *War And The Marxists*, 38-39; Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War], 227-39; Karel Kára, "On the Marxist Theory of War and Peace: A Study," *Journal of Peace Research* 5, no. 1 (1968): 13-14. Kondylis discusses the relation between the two, as derived from Marx and Engels' fragmentary writings. Their presumed interdependence was important because it brought *foreign policy* to the two thinkers' centre of attention, as a distinct factor affecting the global spread of the long-awaited proletarian revolution. Kára discusses the qualitative distinction between "violent" and "peaceful" forms of revolution in the Marxist tradition. War, expectedly, falls within the first category.
[20] Benno Teschke, "War and International Relations," in *The Marx Revival: Key Concepts and New Interpretations*, ed. Marcello Musto (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 302-5, 314; Scott Burchill, "Marxism," in *An Introduction to International Relations: Australian Perspectives*, eds. Richard Devetak, Anthony Burke, and Jim George (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 69.
[21] Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War], 235-36. As a matter of principle, a "just" war equates to a (civil) revolutionary war. The big question, nevertheless, has been to what extent a "just" war could, from a strategic point of view, remain defensive, or whether it could also evolve into an aggressive one. Having said that, it is interesting that when it came to revolutionary tactics, the two men stressed the importance of attacking first (see 245-47).
[22] Kondylis, p. 249-50.
[23] Neumann and Von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 262-63. Their reaction to the Allies' entry into the Crimean War is a glaring refutation of the purported thesis: "*At last* [my emphasis], the long-pending question of Turkey appears to have reached a stage where diplomacy will not much longer be able to monopolise the ground for its ever-shifting, ever-cowardly, and ever-resultless movements. The French and British fleets have entered the Black Sea [...]." See Marx, *The Eastern Question*, 215 [The European War].

incorporation into Marxist thought that consigned the fruits of the two thinkers' military thought into oblivion, as irrelevant and of no intellectual value for contemporary political realities, signalling "a radical transformation of the European and world theatres after Marx and Engels' death."[24]

Benno Teschke, most recently, broached this under-theorisation in great detail. He imputes the lack of a Marxian concept of war to a Marxian "historical materialist" understanding of history, in which the interpretation and theorisation of inter-state war are taken to be an extraneous task since it is the state itself that is foregrounded as the sole unit of analysis. Precedence is therefore given to vertical social conflicts taking place *within* the boundaries of political communities, and phenomena that manifest beyond national boundaries are only appraised in relation to their significance for the "strategic calculations of national and international working-class movements."[25] It was moreover anticipated that the gradual spread and ultimate universalization of capitalism would lead —due to the "universal interdependence of nations"— to the waning of national antagonisms; concomitantly the swollen class struggle would pave the way for "the formation of a world proletariat as a universal class," that would embark on "a single and synchronised world revolution" which, in turn, would signal the eventual elimination of war.[26] Besides, the inner mechanisms of the foreseen trade-mediated expansion of capitalism remained at best vague, making it seem as if it hinges upon "an automaticity to a transnationalising and homogenising process that discount[s] how the expansion of capitalist practices was refracted through a pre-existing interstate system that generated resistance and differences through geopolitics, war and class conflict in the contested and regionally highly differentiated (non-)transitions from pre-capitalist to capitalist state-society complexes."[27] By and large, such inherent determinism, combined with a rigid eschatology, made any theorisation of modern war seem tangential. All in all, Teschke concludes by couching the problem in an erudite manner: "Marx," he argues, "oscillated between foregrounding theoretical abstractions held to impose the deep logics and functional requirements on the course of history —notably, a single-world-historical pattern of sequences of modes-of-production, the mega-structures of a transnationalising, homogenising, and unifying capitalist world market, or the spaceless self-expansion of the concept of capital— and delving into historical concretions —a series of case studies on specific geopolitical junctures. Both modes of inquiry were expressed in the use of different analytical registers: theoretical-logical tracts versus journalistic, political, and historical narratives."[28]

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[24] Paul Blackledge, "War and Revolution: Friedrich Engels as a Military and Political Thinker," *War & Society* 38, no. 2 (2019): 2.
[25] Teschke, "War and International Relations," 304-6.
[26] Ibid, 307-8; Burchill, "Marxism," 69; Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, 68; Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War], 171, 177.
[27] Teschke, 308; see also 309, p. 312-14.
[28] Ibid, 314-15. Such may be the case for Marx. As for Engels, it can expressly be said that he lived up to his nickname: "the General." He was enlisted early as a bombardier in the 12th company of the Guards Artillery Brigade in Berlin and got actively engaged in the failed revolutions of 1848. It was then that he first developed an interest in a variety of military affairs, as he "understood the importance of a good military force for any revolutionary movement, and the need for decisive action at the opportune moment." Further, he had been a pedantic observer of naval battles and came up with perceptive, often prophetic remarks on naval warfare affairs. Gallie dubs him "the most perceptive military critic of the nineteenth century." See: Roland Boer, "Friedrich Engels (1820-95)," in *Routledge Handbook of Marxism*

We can, however, still talk of a "general Marxist position on war."[29] This boils down to three Marxian premises, namely that: war is not ipso facto evil or irrational; war can be seen in a favourable light when advancing social progress and multiplying the possibilities of production;[30] political-diplomatic criteria ought to override military ones when war is regarded as a policy.[31] Marx and Engels, argues Kondylis, in conceptualising "war," referring to the highest level of escalation of an armed conflict, regardless of whether this is taking place within or among states: it is an "act of collectively exerted, armed violence aimed at attaining collective goals, where collective agents can be either classes, nations or states."[32] What is confounding, nevertheless, is that the two men, in trying to draw a connection between military conquest and the transformation of prevailing social structures, recurred to much earlier stages of mankind, repudiating, in effect, the central historical materialist thesis that war is endemic solely to class-organised societies.[33] Therein, they found war to have been "a permanent inter-societal possibility,"[34] an ever-present "relatively independent variable in the ever-changing human scene."[35]

Let me begin with Engels.[36] For Engels, wars waged between small, classless tribes are to be differentiated in two ways from those waged between class-organised societies: In the former, it is the duty of the whole tribe, at whose hands power lies entirely, to conduct war; not exclusively of a specialised group, as would be the case in a society with a fully-fledged division of labour and relevant class distinctions. It does not, then, reflect a clash of antagonistic class interests, but instead transcends them. Besides, such wars were (initially) not conducted in order for tribes to gain access to exploitable resources, be they people or goods, since classless societies were largely based on autarchy.[37] Their goals were of a rather insular *economic* nature, be it the protection of the land which the tribe settled on and cultivated or its small-scale expansion.[38] "But it is precisely the impossibility of such a circumstance [...] in the future [communist] society, which would preclude the scarcity of goods and be based on a capitalism-induced global market. The causes of war in the primordial classless society would wither away within the classless society of the future."[39]

Marx, respectively, traced war's corrosive effects upon ancient societies by focusing on the Greco-Roman organisational model.[40] There, aggregations of people settled in cities and subsisted by cultivating the countryside, which

and Post-Marxism, eds. Alex Callinicos, Stathis Kouvelakis and Lucia Pradella (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2021), 42; Kurt Möser, "'The General' as Admiral: Friedrich Engels and the Naval Warfare Debate," in *The Life, Work and Legacy of Friedrich Engels: Emerging from Marx's Shadow*, eds. Eberhard Illner, Hans A. Frambach and Norbert Koubek, trans. Joseph Swann and Mícheál Úa Séaghdha (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 90-91, 93, 95; Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, 68-69; Neumann and Von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 264-66, 272-75; Blackledge, "War and Revolution: Friedrich Engels," 5-8.

[29] Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, p. 74.
[30] Ibid, 74; Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War], p. 171-72.
[31] Ibid, p. 174-75.
[32] Ibid, p. 176-77.
[33] Ibid, p. 177.
[34] Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, p. 76.
[35] Ibid, p. 79.
[36] The theoretical views of Engels, elaborated on here, were put forward in his *Anti-Dühring* (1878) and in *The Origin of the Family* (1884); these of Marx in his *Grundrisse* (written 1857–61).
[37] Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War], 177-8.
[38] Ibid, p. 178-79.
[39] Ibid, p. 179.
[40] Ibid, p. 181.

formed part of the broader dominion. The biggest challenge for this societal paradigm came from rival groups that could occupy or lay claim to the said lands.[41] War, in this instance, had been a means of securing the group's existence. It formed the "sublime collective duty" of the community.[42] Marx, nevertheless, did not fall short of noticing the ensuing paradox, namely that even though war serves as the sole "guarantor" of the continuance of a community's social life, it, at the same time, undermines the cardinal foundational principle of its economic preconditions, that is the suspension of the individuality of its members for the sake of the community. War and conquest, to put it short, alienate the social subject by introducing the conditions for him to develop an assertive attitude which subsequently translates into an ever-increasing lust for authority.[43] Both thinkers, importantly, recognised that unremitting warfare would naturally alter the internal structures of early-day societies, creating "lords" and "slaves." Such an unequal power structure, it was argued, would arise as a corollary, on the one hand, of the genesis of slavery and, on the other hand, of the progressive autonomisation and institutionalisation of those subjects who managed to distinguish themselves as skillful warriors, enhancing thereby, in an epoch of frequent wars, their status within the community. An analogical correlation between combatant services viewed as vital-for-the-community and the desire for further claims to authority was thus established.[44]

At this time, slavery as a nascent institution stood as a catalyst for the transmutation of the socio-economic functions of war. Developments in the field of the economy, such as the division of labour, rise in volumes of production and dispossession of the common ownership of land,[45] amplified the need for more labour. Naturally, it was only through war that this need could be met.[46] Captured men of defeated tribes, who once would have been killed, were now transformed into slaves and subjected, significantly, not to the community as a whole but to a ruling class of warlords. Slave ownership thus emerges as a new paradigm of class rule. "[W]ithout war labour could not be found, hence it had been impossible for slave ownership to become established as a form of class domination," notes Kondylis.[47] As a result, war, formerly a means of defence and conquest, is now re-introduced as "a response to the [still inchoate, though existing as a consequence of uneven warfare skills] internal differentiation of the community,"[48] with the quest of warlords seeking accumulation of power being its driving force. The growing number of such slave-owning warlords and their ardour for conquest led, in turn, to the proliferation and consolidation of slave-owning economies, ergo of slavery as an institution.[49]

The disillusionment suffered due to the failed revolutions of 1848[50] drove Marx and Engels to enquire into the connection between foreign policy,

[41] Ibid, 181.
[42] Ibid, p. 181-82.
[43] Ibid, 182.
[44] Ibid, p. 180-1.
[45] Ibid, p. 180.
[46] Ibid, p. 182-83.
[47] Ibid, p. 183.
[48] Ibid, p. 183.
[49] Ibid, 183-85; Gallie, *Philosophers of Peace and War*, 77-78. The emergence of Roman latifundiae as self-contained units of production is a paradigmatic case in point.
[50] Neumann and Von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 266-68.

war and internal affairs, as well as the broader interdependence between socialism, military policy and foreign affairs "because without an understanding of these relationships, a realistic revolutionary strategy could not be possible."[51] It had been then that they conceived war as a harbinger of revolution,[52] began to regard the peasantry as "a possible ally or driving force in the coming social revolution,"[53] put forward the view that dormant domestic class struggles could be brought into the spotlight when war among national ruling classes breaks out[54] and understood that "the future success of the workers' movement demanded socialists [to] develop a workable strategy for confronting and overcoming the military power of states."[55]

The said engraftment of the concept of "revolution," and of the implied "class struggles," in post-Marx theoretical debates around war was problematised by Étienne Balibar.[56] Balibar has argued that the two concepts brought to the fore the "unpolitical" character of war since they spell "'the end of the political state,' or suppress the autonomy of the political sphere."[57] Tracing "class struggle" back to an appropriation of the Saint-Simonianian conception of "antagonism," he contends that Marx came to posit "the Industrial Revolution and the process of proletarianisation" as "just another form of war" after reversing the thesis of Saint-Simonians that industrialisation, commerce and production will supersede war.[58] Through the introduction of the "war model" for the class struggle, a new concept of the "political" emerged: "*Politics* in the essential sense would [now] precisely concern the transition from one phase, [that of 'low-intensity' civil war], to the other, the 'becoming visible' of latent struggle [...]" allowing for a scope of decision-making that would either lead to "victory" or "defeat."[59] Classes would figure as "camps" or "armies," forming "radically exclusive antagonistic groups external to one another," pushing themselves towards a fatal confrontation in a teleological fashion.[60]

The link between world capitalism and war, "the *historicity* of war from the point of view of 'historical materialism,'"[61] to couch it in Marxian terms, is also touched upon. Balibar argues that the introduction of war in Marx's theory of history is inherently problematic since it comes to deconstruct the body it meant to build.[62] This is due to two contradictions encountered in the dialectic of war and militarism: First, the evolution of military technology and strategies,

[51] Neumann and Von Hagen, 263-64. Teschke also argues that "the nexus between capitalist development, foreign policy, revolutions, and war" became, for the first time, an object of Marx's interest in reaction to the Crimean War. This interest was sparked by the events that fell under the rubric of the "Eastern Question", which "could not [be] resolve[d] in line with his own theoretical premise of world-historical progress driven by the most advanced capitalist nations. For it proved impossible to derive from the 'objective' interests of the British (and French) bourgeoisie a definitive and unambiguously liberal-progressive foreign policy, either in intentions or outcomes. It also proved impossible to identify a transnational bourgeois class interest [...] that somehow dispensed with interstate conflicts." See Teschke, "War and International Relations," 309-11.
[52] Neumann and Von Hagen, p. 269.
[53] Ibid, p. 268.
[54] Ibid, p. 269.
[55] Blackledge, "War and Revolution: Friedrich Engels," 3.
[56] Étienne Balibar, "Marxism and War," *Radical Philosophy* 160 (2010): 9.
[57] Ibid, "Marxism and War," p. 9.
[58] Ibid, p. 10.
[59] Ibid, p. 10-11.
[60] Ibid, p. 11.
[61] Ibid, p. 12.
[62] Ibid, p. 12.

along with the incorporation of masses into conscription armies,[63] which in no way lead to the eventual elimination of "arms races"; these are "virtually as unlimited as the process of capitalist accumulation itself."[64] Second, it seems that the rising importance of the nation-state does not entail the repositioning of state apparatus as the chief enemy in the eyes of the global working class, but —to the disenchantment of socialists— it is the (un)successful espousing either of nationalism or internationalism by workers that ultimately determines their opposition to a general war among rival capitalist states.[65]

Hence we reach the crux of the "problem" of revolution. Herein lies the question: "How did the Marxists make and think of the revolutions they were involved in, and what was their essential objective?"[66] Balibar identifies two "tendencies." He finds these to have been expressed in the historical cases of Vladimir Lenin and Mao Zedong: the revolutionary war of the masses and the mass resistance to war.[67] It had been Lenin's "transformation of the imperialist war into a revolutionary civil war," that through its "re-creat[ion] of class politics at the expense of the state," ushered in the transition "from the state monopoly of legitimate violence to the class monopoly of historical decisive violence."[68] Respectively, Mao's propounding of a "protracted war of partisans," through a recalibration of the Clausewitzian axiom that regards war as "the continuation of politics by other [extra-state] means" and a new conception of the political that renders the communist party the chief organ of historical development,[69] gave rise to a new articulation of the relation between war and politics. The latter's linchpin had been "a new historical unity of class, people and revolutionary party."[70] "So, in a sense, we have come full circle, and it is not by chance, probably, that the closure of this circle consists in the reversal of the hierarchical relationship between institutional warfare waged by the state and popular guerrilla warfare."[71]

Marx and Engels' theses on war massively moulded the character of modern revolutions. What ought to stand out as their most seminal contribution is that through their theorisation of global politics and conflicts "they raised the question of social change in their time [...] to the plane of world politics."[72] The passages reproduced below reveal a spectacularly knowledgeable account of 19th-century geopolitical rivalries and capture the two men's sincere angst for the course of the revolutionary cause.

[63] Both Marx and Engels placed great emphasis on the establishment of a modern mass army through conscription. This, they thought, "could serve as the major channel through which a democratic society might emerge." The doctrine of a "democratic army," a "nation in arms," was first advocated and further expounded on by Engels. See Neumann and Von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," 277, 279-80. For a more wide-ranging discussion on the social functions the army performs, see Kondylis, *Η Θεωρία του Πολέμου* [Theory of War], 207-27, especially 209-11, 223-25.
[64] Balibar, "Marxism and War," p. 12-13.
[65] Ibid, p. 13.
[66] Ibid, p. 14.
[67] Ibid, p. 14.
[68] Ibid, p. 14-15.
[69] Ibid, p. 15-16.
[70] Ibid, p. 14.
[71] Ibid, p. 15.
[72] Neumann and Von Hagen, "Engels and Marx on Revolution, War, and the Army in Society," p. 264.

The Crimean War and the "sixth power in Europe"

Marx and Engels had been no strangers to journalism before they started working in the *Tribune*. In the early 1840s, after he discarded any hopes of finding employment in academia as a radical, Marx became chief editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, a reputedly liberal paper which was based in Cologne and was subtly critical of the provincial government and the seated-in-Berlin monarchical authority. It was then that he was first brought up against the tangible economic hardships faced at the grassroots level of society and felt impelled to study political economy.[73] Engels, from early on an eloquent thinker and a vocal social critic,[74] maintained a lifelong relationship with journalism, using the numerous newspapers he wrote for as an outlet platform for his ideas to be disseminated.[75] He also published pamphlets, essays and commentaries of military-strategic interest and on uprisings and wars.[76]

At this point, a methodological caveat should be added. This is necessary for the sake of the clarity and scholarly solidity of the present study's normative underpinnings. When visiting the works of past thinkers, it is suggested as methodologically apt to proceed by exploring two avenues: one of authorial intention, and that of authorial and textual reception.[77] Authorial intention "attempt[s] to recover the original intention that the author[s] had in writing the relevant text, and particularly [their] intention in making one or more conceptual moves within that text."[78] Sensitivity to historical context is indispensable in this respect. Authorial and textual reception, on the other hand, "seeks to understand the impact of th[ese] author[s'] move by tracing the reception of [their] text[s] over time."[79] Here I do not focus on "the serial contexts [...] in which the author[s] [are] explicitly drawn on, reinterpreted, and reused;"[80] what chiefly concerns me is the reception of my work by a potential readership.

For Karl Marx, at the core of the Eastern Question, the "ever-recurring question" reignited "whenever the revolutionary hurricane has subsided for a moment,"[81] laid a geopolitical stalemate, encapsulated in the following

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[73] Terrell Carver, "Reading Marx: Life and Works," in *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, ed. Terrell Carver (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7-8; Paul Prew et al., "The Enduring Relevance of Karl Marx," in *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Marx*, ed. Matt Vidal, Tony Smith, Tomás Rotta and Paul Prew (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 8.

[74] Terrell Carver, *Engels: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3-5.

[75] Herres, "'My Immortal Works': Friedrich Engels," 10-11, 14, 16, 17, 18-19, 20.

[76] Ibid, 18, p. 22-23.

[77] Claire Vergerio, "Context, Reception, and the Study of Great Thinkers in International Relations," in *War, States, and International Order: Alberico Gentili and the Foundational Myth of the Laws of War*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 28.

[78] Vergerio, "Context, Reception, and the Study of Great Thinkers," p. 28.

[79] Ibid, p. 28.

[80] Ibid, p. 28. A work that revisits the 1853-56 corpus in a revisionist fashion, aiming to flesh out and refine the analytical lenses of International Relations scholarship "by reintegrating class [interests]," is that of Cemal Burak Tansel, "Geopolitics, Social Forces, and the International: Revisiting the 'Eastern Question,'" *Review of International Studies* 42, no. 3 (2016): 492–512.

[81] Marx, *The Eastern Question*, 2 [Turkey]. The excerpts cited henceforward (but also the one in footnote 23) have been formatted in the following way: besides page number, the full title of the respective article/letter is cited within brackets. Since in the original corpus the articles/letters are not signed, I have consulted the work of Kondylis (*Η Ελλάδα, η Τουρκία και το Ανατολικό Ζήτημα* [Greece, Turkey and the Eastern Question]), in which some of them are cited, to attribute each piece either to Marx or Engels. When the author is not identified, I use "Marx/Engels."

question: "What shall we do with Turkey?"[82] He considers "the present crisis of the Ottoman Empire" as "produced by the same conflict between the Latin and Greek Churches which once gave rise to the foundations of the Empire,"[83] and imputes "the true origin of the present Eastern complication," to Napoleon III's "anxi[ety] to cajole and win over the Pope, and to be crowned by him."[84] "Bonaparte," he writes, "had reasons to accept the challenge [of, allegedly, protecting the interests of the Latin Church in the East], and make himself appear the 'most Catholic' Emperor of France."[85]

Pervasive throughout his and Engels' dispatches is a feeling of deep suspicion and antipathy towards all Western political actors and organs. The Vienna Conference, a joint body of England, France, Prussia and Austria, periodically convening in Vienna to come up with a solution that would avert war —in fact, that would put pressure on the Sultan to yield and unconditionally concede to the Tsar's preposterous demands— is scathingly labelled a "retrospective Pythia"[86] and a "juggle."[87] Marx refers to Napoleon III as "the oppressor of the French people" and dubs him the "Western [Ts]ar."[88] Lord Palmerston, "that unscrupulous and consummate tactician,"[89] is also targeted for his suspected oblique service to Russian interests.[90] As for the cumbersomeness he sees defining the English Parliament and the futile debates taking place there throughout the time Russia kept menacing the Sultan, but, most markedly, on the eve of war, he remarks: "After all, the most curious feature of these agitated debates is that the House completely failed in wresting from the Ministers either a formal declaration of war with Russia or a description of the objects for which they are to plunge into war [...]."[91] "Can there exist a greater delusion than believing this Ministry [...] to have been all at once transformed [...] into a Ministry that could undertake any war against Russia, except a simulated one, or one carried out in the very interest of the enemy against whom it is ostensibly directed?"[92] Following, some time thereafter, the exposure of a secret memorandum agreed upon between England and Russia back in 1844, he comes raging against the Ministry, labelling them "criminals [...] convicted of having permanently conspired [with Russia]"[93]; while in another instance, when secret documents were disclosed, highlighting a humiliating position on the part of English political agents against the Tsar, he exclaims: "So much must be clear to whoever peruses these documents that, if

[82] Ibid, p. 2 [Turkey].
[83] Ibid, p. 248 [Russian Diplomacy—The Shrines—Montenegro]. The origins and particulars of the conflict in the Holy Land are also further discussed by Marx in 317-23 [War Declared—Mussulman and Christian].
[84] Ibid, p. 248 [Russian Diplomacy—The Shrines—Montenegro].
[85] Ibid, p. 248 [Russian Diplomacy—The Shrines—Montenegro].
[86] Ibid, p. 172 [The Quadruple Convention—England and the War].
[87] Ibid, p. 339 [Russia and the German Powers].
[88] Ibid, p. 98 [Urquhart—Bem—The Turkish Question in the House of Lords]. Marx/Engels mention[s] that it had been "*circumstances* [my emphasis] [that] have almost constituted [Napoleon III] the arbiter of Europe." For it would be his success or failure to think and act strategically that would eventually determine developments in the European continent: "The prospect of a European war, dragging along with it insurrectionary movements in Italy, Hungary and Poland [...] these eventualities seem to allow the man of the 2nd December [1851] to lead the dance of the peoples, if he should fail to play the pacificator with the kings." See Marx, 182 [The Russian Victory—Position of England and France].
[89] Ibid, p. 190 [Palmerstone's Resignation].
[90] See, for example, Marx, p. 330-32 [War with Russia].
[91] Ibid, p. 260 [Debates in Parliament].
[92] Ibid, p. 265 [Kossuth—Disraeli and Hume—United States—France and England—Greece].
[93] Ibid, p. 329 [War with Russia].

this scandalous Ministry remain in office, the English people may be driven, by the mere influence of external complications, into a terrible revolution, sweeping away at once Throne, Parliament and the governing classes, who have lost the faculty and the will to maintain England's position in the world."[94]

To decipher the intellectual routes the two men follow, interpret their stance and trace the connection they draw between phenomena, I should further explore authorial intention. Why, to put it in mundane terms, did they seek to occupy themselves with the Eastern Question? Besides the formal need to meet the contemporary American press readership's demand to remain updated on European events that affected American domestic affairs and interests in relations with Britain in several contending issues,[95] I should focus on the two men's wider philosophical viewpoints and aspirations, as these could be conceptualised in a spectrum of eventualities intertwined with the prospective resolution of the Eastern Question. "Marx and Engels," writes Kondylis, "viewed the Eastern Question [...] through the, for them, crucial prospect —the prospect of the tactics and the strategy of the European revolution."[96] It is a well-known fact that following the failed revolutions of 1848-49, the two men remained steadfastly[97] sanguine —consecutive disillusionments notwithstanding— over the prospects for a pan-European proletarian revolution which would be sparked off by some minor, potentially expanding European war;[98] or after a major, long-time simmering, financial crisis that would have had a spillover effect.[99]

The chief bastion, however, of anti-revolutionary activity at that time — from 1815 and on— as the quelled revolution in Hungary (1848-49) had demonstrated,[100] was one of the Crimea belligerents: Tsarist Russia. The two thinkers' abhorrence of Tsarist Russia is profuse and evinced throughout their reports. For Engels, Russia was the foremost obstructor of any reform and reorganisation of Europe; he talks of the "Empire of the Tsar" as the "mainstay of European reaction," which "threatened the progress of Europe with its expansive foreign policy and therefore had to be fought with every available means."[101] Since 1789, the year of "the European Revolution, the explosive force of democratic ideas and man's native thirst for freedom," he writes, "there have been in reality but two powers on the continent of Europe —Russia and Absolutism, the Revolution and Democracy. For the moment the Revolution

[94] Ibid, p. 313 [The Secret Diplomatic Correspondence].
[95] David Riazanov, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels: An Introduction to Their Lives and Work* (London: Martin Lawrence, 1927), p. 105; Abbenhuis, *An Age of Neutrals*, p. 78, 81; Frank A. Golder, "Russian-American Relations During the Crimean War," *The American Historical Review* 31, no. 3 (1926): p. 463-64, 467.
[96] Panagiotis Kondylis, *Η Ελλάδα, η Τουρκία και το Ανατολικό Ζήτημα* [Greece, Turkey and the Eastern Question] (Athens: Gnosi, 1985), p. 13.
[97] It was only in the period between the Russo-Turkish War of 1878 and Marx's death in 1883, that the two men started to regard war as "a retarding and regressive phenomenon rather than a promoter of revolution and progress" and declared that "peace would be more likely than external war to enhance the prospects of revolution in Russia, and in capitalist Europe generally." The reason behind this perspectival shift was that it was now thought that "war would unleash a chauvinistic wave and would mean widespread exhaustion of energies." See Kissin, *War And The Marxists*, p. 87-90.
[98] The entertained pattern of an anticipated pan-European proletarian revolution is recurrent and can be traced in the commentaries of Marx and Engels whenever war broke out. See Kissin, p. 3-4, 12-13, 16, 18, 19, 22-24, 38-39, 59-60, 67, 86.
[99] Marcello Musto, *Another Marx: Early Manuscripts to the International* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 76-80.
[100] Kissin, *War And The Marxists,* p. 11.
[101] Herres, "'My Immortal Works': Friedrich Engels," p. 21.

seems to be suppressed, but it lives and is feared as deeply as ever."[102] Marx was no less condemnatory; according to Bruno Naarden, "[t]o him Russia was an extremely dangerous and uncivilised power with a constant lust for expansion that could only be blocked by military force."[103] He finds "Continental retrogression [to have, ever since,] been identical with Russian progress in the East."[104] The success of her covetous, expansive policy, which is seen not "as a mere casual and temporary occurrence, but as part and parcel of a great scheme of policy,"[105] Engels imputes "to the ignorance, dullness, and consequent inconsistency and cowardice of Western Governments;"[106] Marx, specifically, "on England's connivance."[107] "It will prove," nevertheless, "utterly powerless with the revolutionised peoples" the latter asserts with confidence.[108]

Analysing the note of Count Nesselrode, Russia's foreign minister, following the occupation of Danubian principalities and the entrance of the joint fleets of English and French in Ottoman waters, they can not help but express their fury towards the contemptuousness with which the Tsar treats Western Powers: "It is a document, indeed of Europe's degradation under the rod of counter-revolution. Revolutionists may congratulate the [Ts]ar on this masterpiece. If Europe withdraws, she withdraws not with a simple defeat, but passes, as it were, under *furcile Caudine*."[109] Instead they call for treating "a Power like Russia, [...] *the fearless way* [my emphasis]."[110] At last, despite a purported Russian imperviousness to "the more pernicious invasions of the revolutionary spirit,"[111] she is presented as anything but complacent: "Russia herself is more afraid of the revolution that must follow any general war on the Continent [...]. Does [she] act on her own free impulse, or is she but the unconscious and reluctant slave of the modern *fatum* —revolution? I believe the latter alternative," writes Marx.[112] It is with consideration, therefore, to the revolution that the Western Powers ought to address the Eastern Question: "The Sultan holds Constantinople only in trust for the Revolution, and the present nominal dignitaries of Western Europe, themselves finding the last stronghold of their 'order' on the shores of Neva, can do nothing but keep the [Eastern]

[102] Marx, *The Eastern Question*, 18 [The Real Issue in Turkey]. Engels had been a vitriolic critic of Russia from the late 1840s, since he considered that her "intermarriage" with Prussia and Austria in the so-called "Holy Alliance" and their common exploitation of partitioned Poland, stalled the democratisation of Germany. See Blackledge, "War and Revolution: Friedrich Engels," p. 5-6.

[103] Illustrative, in this regard, is Marx's first address in the International (1864). His hostility was also amplified by his rift with Mikhail Bakunin. Marx's image of Russia, nevertheless, is a nuanced one. Insights of a more positive tint are also included: After the Paris Commune was brutally suppressed in 1871, Marx started counting more on a revolution that would take place in Russia and developed a research interest in the Russian village communes and the distinct collectivism that defined agrarian relationships there, which he regarded —qualifiedly though— as an alternative path to socialism. See Bruno Naarden, "Marx and Russia," *History of European Ideas* 12, no. 6 (1990): p. 783, 789-90, 790-93.

[104] Ibid, *The Eastern Question*, 29 [Turkey and Russia].

[105] Ibid, p. 107 [The Turkish Question in the Commons].

[106] Ibid, p. 22 [The Turkish Question].

[107] Ibid, p. 46 [Aberdeen—Clarendon—Brunnow—Connivance of the Aberdeen Ministry with Russia].

[108] Ibid, p. 80 [Traditional Policy of Russia].

[109] Marx, p. 62 [The Russo-Turkish Difficulty—Ducking and Dodging of the British Cabinet—Nesselrode's Latest Note].

[110] Marx, 188 [Russian Policy]. Marx and Engels abetted every war that would enmesh and could potentially weaken —let alone thrash!— Russia. Their unwavering anti-Russianism was in consonance, it should be noted, with a perennial tradition of Russophobia that kept shaping contemporary prevalent views on this country and her political regime after 1789. See Naarden, "Marx and Russia," p. 785-87, 789; Kissin, *War And The Marxists*, p. 4, 19-21, 26, 37-38, 41-43, 45, 59-61, 63, 82-84.

[111] Ibid, p. 336 [Russia and the German Powers].

[112] Ibid, p. 29 [Turkey and Russia].

question in suspense until Russia had to meet her real antagonist, the Revolution. The Revolution which will break the Rome of the West will also overpower the demoniac influences of the Rome of the East."[113]

Commenting on the reasons behind Western European Powers' vacillation to resolutely confront Russia, they draw a socio-politically tinted contradistinction between the two camps. "There is an energy and vigour," argues Marx, "in that despotic Government and that barbarous race which we seek in vain among the monarchies of the older States. [...] Western Europe is feeble and timid because her Governments feel that they are outgrown and no longer believed in by their people. The nations are beyond their rulers, and trust in them no more. It is not that they are really imbecile, but that there is new wine working in the old bottles. With a worthier and more equal social state, with the abolition of caste and privilege, with free political constitutions, unfettered industry and emancipated thought, the people of the West will rise again to power and unity of purpose, while the Russian Colossus itself will be shattered by the progress of the masses and the explosive force of ideas."[114] Besides politicians holding high offices, the blame for this condition is particularly to be put on "the stockjobbers, and the peace-mongering bourgeoisie, represented in the Government by the oligarchy, who surrender Europe to Russia";[115] —"in order to resist the encroachments of the Tsar, we must, above all, overthrow the inglorious Empire of those mean, cringing, and infamous adorers of the golden calf."[116]

A telling excerpt, in the same vein, of the connection the two thinkers draw between war, rising popular grievances and domestic civil unrest —the latter regarded as uniquely fertile soil for revolution— is encountered among remarks they make when the war breaks out: "While the first cannon bullets have been exchanged in the war of the Russian against Europe, the first blood has been split in the war now raging in the manufacturing districts, of capital against labour. [...] While the hypocritical [...] humbugs spoke peace to the [Ts]ar at Edinburgh, they acted war with their own countrymen at Manchester. While they preached *arbitration* between Russia and Europe, they were rejecting scornfully all appeals to arbitration from their own fellow-citizens. [...] [T]he masters do not want arbitration. What they aim at is dictation. While at the very moment of a European struggle, these Russian propagandists cry for a reduction of the army, they are at the same time augmenting the army of civil war, the police force [...]."[117]

Such anticipations, nevertheless, may have reverberated as plain wishful thinking since, for the time being, "counting on the cowardice and apprehensions of the Western Powers, [the Tsar] bullies Europe, and pushes his demands as far as possible [...] [while] [t]he Western Powers [...] inconsistent, pusillanimous, suspecting each other, commence by encouraging the Sultan to resist [him], from fear of the encroachments of Russia, and terminate by compelling the former to yield, *from fear of a general war giving rise to general revolution* [my emphasis]."[118] In a patently jaundiced and *defeatist* tone, Marx

[113] Ibid, p. 81 [Traditional Policy of Russia].
[114] Ibid, p. 189 [Russian Policy].
[115] Ibid, p. 133 [The Vienna Note (Continued)].
[116] Ibid, p. 133 [The Vienna Note (Continued)].
[117] Ibid, p. 151 [War].
[118] Ibid, p. 74-75 [Russia and the Western Powers].

remarks: "The revolutionary party can only congratulate itself on this state of things. The humiliation of the reactionary Western Governments, and their manifest impotency to guard the interests of European civilisation against Russian encroachment, cannot fail to work out a wholesome indignation in the people who have suffered themselves, since 1849, to be subjected to the rule of counter-revolution."[119]

But how is the interrelation between the breakout of a general war and radical social transformation ushered in by revolution conceptualised in Marxian and Engelsian terms? The answer is to be found in the following excerpt; it is worth quoting in full: "But we must not forget that there is *a sixth power in Europe* [my emphasis], which at given moments asserts its supremacy over the whole of the five so-called 'great' Powers, and makes them tremble, every one of them. That power is the Revolution. Long silent and retired, it is now again called to action [...]. From Manchester to Rome, from Paris to Warsaw and Pesth, it is omnipresent, lifting up its head and awakening from its slumbers. Manifold are the symptoms of its returning life, everywhere visible in the agitation and disquietude which have seized the proletarian class. A signal only is wanted, and the sixth and greatest European power will come forward, in shining armour and sword in hand, like Minerva from the head of the Olympian. This signal the impending European war will give, and then all calculations as to the balance of power will be upset by the addition of a new element which, ever buoyant and youthful, will as much baffle the plans of the old European Powers, and their generals, as it did from 1792 to 1800."[120]

In lieu of a Conclusion

In this paper, I analysed Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' dispatches on the events of the Crimean War in the *New York Tribune*. After indicating and discussing the gap in the theorisation of modern war as a distinct element in the Marxian philosophical constellation, I turned to their reports to unearth their perspectives on the particular events. I tilted my emphasis towards the two thinkers' approach to war as a contingent precipitant of a pan-European revolution, which was meant to overthrow the post-Vienna Congress die-hard reactionary Powers of the continent and the social order they had peremptorily devised and largely entrenched.

Given that the time during which I was working on this paper has been rife with developments on the war front, and beyond, which can hardly leave one dispassionate, I should also broach the matter of textual reception.

It is not uncommon for receivers of a text, be them researchers or readers, "to 'decontextualise' the author[s] they are engaging with in order to make [them] fit their own context and aspirations,"[121] "to claim them for their own camp,"[122] often deploying them as "sources of transhistorical wisdom."[123] "When great thinkers are used as weapons to defend particular projects or

[119] Ibid, p. 75 [Russia and the Western Powers].
[120] Ibid, p. 220-21 [The European Power].
[121] Vergerio, "Context, Reception, and the Study of Great Thinkers," 42.
[122] Ibid, p. 41.
[123] Ibid, p. 21.

ideologies over others," underscores Claire Vergerio, "the *agency* [my emphasis] lies with those who wield their name, and the intellectual force [...] comes to be mediated through the minds of those who claim these authors' legacy for themselves."[124] "Marx," as such —to echo Terrell Carver— "as he was, is not the arbiter of current research on himself or anything else."[125] The utility of his and Engels' insightful accounts rests on us entirely.

Having thus by now argued, citing relevant snippets, that Marx and Engels held no sympathies for Tsarist Russia, it would not be a paradox for one to come to extrapolate that the two men would have been unequivocally supportive of the Allied camp. Historical realities are way more intricate though. And rendering the two men as what we could anachronistically dub "pro-Western" is hardly a thesis that withstands historical scrutiny. For it is the same Russophobic Marx who writes:

> "It was equally a mistake to describe the war against Russia as a war between liberty and despotism. [...] liberty would be for the nonce represented by a Bonaparte, the whole avowed object of the war is the maintenance of the balance of power of the Vienna Treaties —those very treaties which annul the liberty and independence of nations."[126]

Indicative of their double-mindedness is also their ambiguous stance concerning the maintenance of the status quo.[127] They knew that following its overturn there existed two potential outcomes: the one they were hankering after, i.e. the outbreak of a pan-European proletarian revolution that would shatter the European capitalist order; the other outcome they despised, i.e. the further Russian aggrandisement that would come as a result of the devouring of Ottoman lands. In a continuum of two extremes, they had, therefore, to mindfully strike a balance between two inimical poles, namely European capitalism and Tsarist Russia;[128] and on this occasion they saw their revolutionary interests, which were conditioned on the defeat of Russia, aligning better with those of the Allied powers. Their siding with them though was neither wholehearted nor uncritical, but rather pragmatic and opportunistic.[129] "[They] hailed the war," notes Riazanov, "[f]or after all the war did mean that the three major powers which had been the mainstay of counter-revolution, had fallen

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[124] Ibid, p. 48.
[125] Carver, "Reading Marx," p. 3.
[126] Marx, *The Eastern Question*, 373 [Speeches —St. Arnaud]. With regards to justifying the methodological remarks I made above, it is useful to cite the comment made on this snippet by Marcello Musto, a scholar critical of the role of the US in the war in Ukraine: "If we replace Bonaparte with the United States of America and the Vienna treaties with NATO, the observations seem as if written for today." See Musto, "War and the Left," p. 523.
[127] On the one hand, the maintenance of the status quo was decried as a dishonourable and humiliating pretext to the irresoluteness of the Allied powers to take action against Russia. On the other hand, it was considered the best possible solution to the Eastern Question at that time.
See Kondylis, *Η Ελλάδα, η Τουρκία και το Ανατολικό Ζήτημα* [Greece, Turkey and the Eastern Question], 17, 20-21.
[128] Kondylis, p. 15-19.
[129] Ibid, p. 19; Riazanov, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, p. 107-8; Kissin, *War And The Marxists*, p. 19. Engels writes: "Russia is decidedly a conquering nation [...] But let Russia get possession of Turkey, and her strength is increased nearly half, and she becomes superior to all the rest of Europe put together. Such an event would be an unspeakable calamity for the revolutionary cause. [...] *In this instance* [my emphasis] the interests of revolutionary democracy and England go hand in hand." See Marx, *The Eastern Question*, p. 18-19 [The Real Issue in Turkey].

out, and when thieves fall out, honest folks are likely to benefit by it."[130] Based on these remarks, I would argue that, in the instance of the Crimean War, it would have been historically accurate to take Marx and Engels as "defeatists,"[131] in the sense that they drew an explicit connection and placed the focus on the interaction between defeat in war and revolution. "The upshot, in plain terms, is that they felt total antipathy towards both belligerents, they would have welcomed any result which offered better chances for an early proletarian revolution," to put it the way Kissin does.[132]

I wrap up by citing an allegorical story that Marx, in all likelihood, did not employ randomly but rather constitutes a distillation of his perception of the particular political parameters that could hold sway over the course of events in the above-discussed phase of the Eastern Question. I presume that some readers may find it of contemporary relevance: "There is a facetious story," he writes, "told of two Persian naturalists who were examining a bear; the one who had never seen such an animal before enquired whether that animal dropped its cubs alive or laid eggs; to which the other, who was better informed, replied: 'That animal is capable of anything.' The Russian bear is certainly capable of anything, *so long as he knows the other animals he has to deal with to be capable of nothing* [my emphasis]."[133]

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[130] Riazanov, p. 107.

[131] Kissin, *War And The Marxists*, p. 68. The attribution of the said characterisation, however, is strictly ad hoc and based on one's reading and interpretation of primary sources. It should therefore not be accepted without any qualification. Henze ("Marx on Russians and Muslims," *Central Asian Survey* 6, no. 4 [1987]: p. 35), for example, writes of Marx that "he was sympathetic to the Ottoman Empire, seeing it as threatened and pressured by Russia and deserving of Western backing." This view is at variance with those of Kondylis (*Η Ελλάδα, η Τουρκία και το Ανατολικό Ζήτημα* [Greece, Turkey and the Eastern Question], p. 21-23, 40-53) and Riazanov (*Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels*, p. 108). Even Kissin himself employs variegated adjectives to describe the stance of the two men on a range of conflicts: In the Prussian-Danish War of 1848-49, Marx and Engels were seen as "patriots," who "[i]n conflicts involving the Germans did not back the German side 'right or wrong'; their support went to the party they regarded as more progressive" — such "patriotism" is paradigmatically reflected in their stance on the Franco-German War of 1870-71; in the Italian revolt against the Habsburgs, he identifies them as advocates of "revolutionary defencism," i.e. "determined resistance to the external enemy combined with internal struggle to replace a reactionary monarchy with a progressive radical republic"; in the case of the suppression of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-59 by the British, he argues that their "defeatism" "was limited to the domestic weakening of the colonial power and did not extend to total British defeat in the colonial war"; while in the case of a potential Russo-British war in the 1870s, he argues, "the two friends would have supported the British war effort wholeheartedly; [...] Their policy in such a contingency would have been without a trace of defeatism, revolutionary or otherwise." See Kissin, *War And The Marxists*, p. 5, 9, 35, 69-81, 83-84.

[132] Kissin, p. 69.

[133] Marx, p. 53 [Russian policy against Turkey].

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