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THE CONTRIBUTION OF MICHAEL HOWARD
TO INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY
AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

by

PIERRE BOUCHARD, B.A.

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Norman Paterson School of International Affairs

Carleton University

Ottawa, Ontario

May 31, 1990

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The undersigned hereby recommend to the Faculty of
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ABSTRACT

The fields of international relations theory and strategic studies often lack the historical perspective which would give a stronger basis to the different theories proposed. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by bringing Sir Michael Howard to the debate. It is shown that if Howard reinforces some of realism's core beliefs, concerning concepts such as anarchy, power, security, morality and the role of the state, he questions the proposed stabilizing effects of the balance of power mechanism. He also points to liberalism's inherent contradictions when it comes to defining peace but he somewhat agrees with the necessity for change. A comparative analysis of Aron's and Howard's views on Clausewitz also reveals how different conclusions can result from differing levels of concern for theory. Lastly, Howard's emphasis on the social dimension of strategy is shown to be his greatest contribution to the field of strategic studies.

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INTRODUCTION

The world at the threshold of the 1990s is in a profound transition. After the revolutionary year of 1989 traditional textbooks explaining the reasons for the structure of the international system that we inherited after the Second World War suddenly seem anachronistic. It appears as if everyone was caught by surprise by the recent events in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe.¹

It is natural enough that in these times of change one should turn to history as a means to understand the reasons for past European conflicts and perhaps the ways to avoid such conflicts in the future. The International Institute for Strategic Studies, which has been dubbed by Lawrence Freedman as the 'headquarters' of strategic studies,² certainly believed in this need for an historical perspective when they named as their director British military historian Sir Michael Howard.

¹ It is a sign of the times that some experts are now making a distinction between Central Europe and Eastern Europe, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Austria being part of the former while Bulgaria, Rumania and the 'European' part of the Soviet Union are part of the latter.

² Lawrence Freedman, "Strategic Studies", in Steve Smith, ed., International Relations: British and American Perspectives, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1965, p. 33.

Howard is one of those few historians who fortunately has been 'dragged into' commenting on contemporary strategic and political debates. Sir Michael established himself as a leading military historian with the publication in 1961 of The Franco-Prussian War.³ But, in the words of Geoffrey Best commenting on Howard's masterpiece, "to describe that simply as 'military history' would be like calling Marilyn Monroe simply an 'actress'".⁴

What Best was referring to is what makes Howard such a fascinating writer -- his attempt to understand war, and more generally the nature of international relations itself, in its societal context. Howard's concern in this respect can be traced from the analysis he makes of the nature of French and German societies at the eve of the Franco-Prussian war to his latest article in Survival, where he emphasizes the need to integrate Central and East European societies into the European community of nations.⁵ This aspect of Howard's writing is so captivating that one could be tempted to write

³ Michael Howard, The Franco-Prussian War, New York, Methuen, 1961, 1981, 515 p.

⁴ Geoffrey Best, "What is Military History?", an article collecting the views of leading military historians on this question, published in History Today, Vol. 34, Dec. 1984, p. 12.

⁵ Michael Howard, "The Remaking of Europe", Survival, Vol. 32, No. 2, (March/April 1990), pp. 99-106.

a whole thesis on the subject. However such a thesis would have the unfortunate consequence of missing much of Howard's ideas on a wide range of issues. It would nonetheless be an interesting subject for a future article.

The framework of analysis used for presenting and analyzing Howard's thoughts will thus be the following. First in a short chapter I will justify the fundamental assumption on which the second chapter is based, which in turn forms the centerpiece of the whole thesis. This fundamental assumption is that it is possible to analyze the thoughts of an historian according to a model developed mainly by political scientists, even if that historian could very well reject the usefulness of those models as a means of understanding world politics. I will thus briefly comment on the debate that divides historians and political scientists and on how it is possible to combine the approaches of both groups. In this chapter I will also make a rapid overview of the different paradigms of international relations theory.

In the second chapter, Howard's thoughts will be analyzed in regard to the realist paradigm of international relations theory. The analysis will be both passive and active. It will be passive in the sense that I will 'impose' on Howard's writings a framework of analysis that he would probably reject. I must state my belief in the usefulness of

models in international relations theory, not as a way of explaining every aspect of world politics but as a way of structuring one's thoughts on the subject. I will thus be looking, from the perspective of international relations theory, for consistencies and inconsistencies in Howard's thinking. It is important here to underline the fact that since Howard does not believe in the usefulness of international relations theory as a means for understanding world politics, one can hardly blame the British historian for apparent inconsistencies from the point of view of theory.

But my analysis will also be active in the sense that I will use the writings of the British historian as a way to reinforce or criticize core beliefs of the realist approach. The beliefs examined will concern important debates within the realist tradition such the degree to which the international system can be characterized as anarchic, the continued relevance of the state as the primary actor in that system as well as the relative importance of morality and power in understanding political action. The debates concerning the usefulness of deterrence and of the balance of power mechanism as tools for preserving stability in the system will also be under scrutiny.

Furthermore, since the core beliefs of an approach are

often the criticisms made of another, I believe that in order to make the text more coherent (and to avoid repetition in my arguments) it is more logical to integrate to the chapter on the realist paradigm Howard's views on some of the core beliefs of the liberal school of thought, as they relate to the literature on international relations theory, and to use Howard's own approach in analyzing the liberal tradition in the third chapter.

Since the British historian has written considerably about the ideas of those men and women animated by the 'liberal conscience', and since by contrasting his views on the subject to the rigidity of a theoretical model one would have missed much of the argument, I believe that a separate but short chapter setting out Howard's thoughts on the liberal tradition is preferable. The discussion in this chapter will focus in particular on the definition of the concept of peace and on the means to bring about change in the international system.

In the fourth chapter a comparison will be made between Raymond Aron, the French sociologist who became interested in the phenomenon of war, and Michael Howard, the British war historian who focused on the relationship between war and society. Further, and continuing my examination of the different analytical approaches to world politics -- in this

specific case the phenomenon of war in world politics -- my specific goal in this chapter will be to show how two authors, one animated by theoretical concerns, the other preoccupied with historical accuracy, can arrive at substantially different conclusions while studying the same question.

The writings of a remarkable author will be at the centre of this case study since I will be comparing the views of Aron and Howard with regard to the great Prussian strategist, Carl von Clausewitz. While up to that point the thesis will have focused mainly on a comparison between the historical method and the theoretical attempt to explain international relations, the fourth chapter on Aron's and Howard's respective understanding of Clausewitz will serve as a juncture between this theoretical debate and what could be dubbed as the strategic debate.

My aim in the final chapter will be to present Howard's views on some of the questions that concern strategic analysts, in particular the crucial question of the definition of strategy itself in the nuclear age. But I will not be moving entirely away from the theoretical question. In fact, rather than comparing Howard's views to some analytical model (something that, except for 'middle range' theories, does not exist yet in the field of strategic studies), I will

present and discuss Howard's own framework for analysis for understanding strategy. The British historian identifies four 'forgotten dimensions of strategy' that should be studied by anyone trying to understand war, namely the operational, the technological, the logistical and the social dimensions.

This framework is not an attempt at theorizing, even in the philosophical sense of the word, but rather a guide to understanding the phenomenon of war. For example, Howard does not explain precisely how war and society interrelates. He just observes that in the past the nature of a society has had a tremendous influence on the nature of its military institutions and military strategy. The main advantage of such an approach is to permit us to grasp the richness of Howard's thinking and not simply state and compare his views on, for example, such issues as arms control or nuclear proliferation.

Lastly in my conclusion I will attempt to bring together the different trends observed in Howard's thinking in the different chapters in order to clearly identify Howard's most important contributions to the fields of international relations theory and strategic studies.

To clarify my purposes here I wish to point out the limits that had to be imposed on the extent of the literature

covered, in particular that concerning international relations theory, the writings of Raymond Aron and the enormous corpus of thought in the field of strategic studies. This thesis is primarily concerned with analyzing Howard's writings. No compromises have been made in this regard (except for the texts of some speeches which could be found only in London and that the relevant authorities have inexplicably refused to release). However, since the range of issues covered was so wide and the literature so vast, the potential research for this thesis had all the right ingredients to completely get out of hand (and it almost did). Some choices thus had to be made and I apologize for this shortcoming.

Also I did not make an analysis of the evolution of Howard's thinking, either in an individual chapter or as part of the other chapters. The reasons for this is that, notwithstanding Howard's own apologies with every new book for possible inconsistencies, I have found that Howard's thinking has been remarkably consistent over the years. This does not mean that he has not evolved but simply that his fundamental beliefs about the nature of strategy and of the international system have generally remained constant. The few apparent discrepancies that were observed have been nonetheless pointed out.

CHAPTER 1: History and Theory: A Comment.

The aim of this short chapter is to make the reader aware of the difficulties and dilemmas one must face when analyzing the writings of a self-declared military historian from the perspective of the conceptual models of political science. Indeed I believe that it is necessary to justify the approach that will be used in the next chapter, which forms the central part of my thesis, since I will be attempting to 'force' the entry of Howard into the debate on international relations theory. Sir Michael's obvious lack of interest (and occasional cynicism) for any theoretical enterprise as well as his engagement in so many other fields, mainly military history and defence-related issues, has kept him away from this particular debate. Thus by interpreting Howard's writings according to a certain theoretical model one faces the dilemma of making the type of analysis not only avoided by the British historian himself but one about which the latter might even nurture strong reservations.

Consequently, a central assumption throughout this paper is that it is possible to combine the approaches of both historians and political scientists in understanding world politics. I believe that this assumption demands that I at least enter, if only superficially, the debate on which it is

based. Also included in this chapter is a short introductory section on the field of international relations theory.

Aims and methods of research in history and political science.

Historians and political scientists use very different approaches in their study of international relations. Underlying these different approaches is a fundamental argument over basic assumptions in the study of world politics. This debate deals with several levels. First is the disagreement over the methods of analysis which seems to "stem from a resistance to thinking about methodology, rather than a proclivity for it".⁶ This debate, which in its most extreme form took place mainly during the 1950s and 1960s, opposed those who were normally referred to as the Traditionalists and the Behavioralists.⁷ But also the argument, beyond this question of qualitative over quantitative methods, is at a more fundamental level: how should we analyze the complex process of international

⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, "Expanding the Data Base: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Enrichment of Security Studies", International Security, Vol. 12, No. 1, (Summer 1987), p. 10.

⁷ K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1987, p. 4.

relations? Are we really confronted with what Robert Gilpin calls the "basic dilemma of social science: whether to explain trivial matters with exactitude or to treat significant matters with imprecision"?⁸ Are these the only options available? Probably not. For one thing the gap separating both the approaches of the political scientist and of the historian is probably not as wide as this debate would have us believe and this is what I will now try to demonstrate.

The study of history, and of military history in particular, has evolved greatly since the Second World War. Military historians are no longer retired officers writing about the operational aspects of battles in which they participated. There now seems to be a consistent effort by military historians to extend their research into other fields such as the impact of social, economic or technological factors on armed conflict between nations.⁹ If one can have doubts about the immediate influence of theories brought forth by political scientists on the writings of those historians one can more easily accept the proposition that the challenge posed by the former has forced the latter to be much more systematic in their explanations of

⁸ Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. xiii.

⁹ Brian Bond in "What is Military History", p. 7.

international conflicts.

If some historians seem to be moving away from the explanation of 'trivial matters with exactitude' are political scientists really dealing with 'significant matters with imprecision'? For one thing, the notion that political scientists always deal with important elements taken from a vast array of historical examples is questionable. One only has to look at the substantial literature on the destabilizing effects of offensive military doctrines mainly based on the World War I example.¹⁰ Also questionable is the idea that significant matters are dealt with. Howard certainly disagrees when, for example, he severely criticizes most political scientists for their lack of awareness of other peoples' culture:

"In all too many textbooks on international relations, states are treated simply as entities to be assessed in such quantifiable or behavioural terms as economic potential, military power, technological development, internal political structure or geopolitical imperatives. Such treatment is itself the product of a particular culture--a particular ideology in fact:

¹⁰ See for example Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War" and Jack Snyder, "Civil-Military Relations and the Offensive, 1914 and 1984", in Steven E. Miller, (ed.), Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, pp. 58-146.

Anglo-Saxon political thought".¹¹

Even if this criticism could be directed to many historians as well, it certainly undermines the assumption that political scientists deal with 'significant matters with imprecision'; sometimes important matters can be left out altogether.

Thus the two fields can certainly have a positive influence on one another but is this influence to be found only in mutual criticisms that have to be answered or is it possible to find common points of reference between the two? If political scientists and historians disagree on the methods to be used, they could be closer in the goal of their research. If an historian would probably reject the political scientist's idea that today's events can be somehow linked to history,¹² both might however agree on the ultimate aim of their inquiry. Indeed Carl von Clausewitz, often referred to

¹¹ Michael Howard, "Ideology and International Relations", Review of International Studies, Vol. 15, No. 1, (January 1989), p. 9. Holsti also emphasize this geographical and cultural bias when he asserts that "Almost all of what we call international theory today has been developed by observers from only two countries, Great Britain and the United States.", Holsti, op. cit., p. viii.

¹² John Lewis Gaddis, op. cit., p. 10.

by both sides, combined both the methods of historians¹³ and of political scientists¹⁴ to define that aim quite correctly: "A critic should never use the results of theory as laws and standards, but only (...) as aids to judgment".¹⁵

This is a rather broad interpretation of the role of a theory so it also necessarily implies a liberal definition of theory. Theories can generally be identified within two main categories. The first one is the scientific theory. Anatol Rapoport has defined such a theory as being "un ensemble de généralisations reliées entre elles déductivement et démontrables ou vérifiables."¹⁶ Such a general theory of

¹³ On the question of 'treating trivial matters with precision' and 'treating significant matters with imprecision' Clausewitz is categorical: "(...) a single thoroughly detailed event is more instructive than ten that are only touched on. The main objection to this superficial treatment is not that the writer pretends he is trying to prove something but that he himself has never mastered the events he cites, and that such superficial, irresponsible handling of history leads to hundreds of wrong ideas and bogus theorizing." Carl von Clausewitz, On War, (trans. by Howard and Paret), Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 173.

¹⁴ Michel Fortmann talks about the tendency of Clausewitz and other classical military writers "à sursystématiser et à rationaliser leurs méthodes et leur objet, par analogie avec le modèle des sciences exactes". See Charles-Philippe David et al., Les Etudes Stratégiques: approches et concepts, Montréal, Méridien, 1989, p. 96.

¹⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁶ Quoted in Jacques Huntzinger, Introduction aux relations internationales, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1987, p. 15.

international relations has not yet been found and it seems very unlikely that there will ever be one. The second category is the philosophical theory that Stanley Hoffmann has described as "un jugement de la réalité au nom de certaines valeurs, ou la description de la réalité fondée sur une conception a priori de la nature de l'homme ou de celle de diverses institutions."¹⁷

This last definition is the one that will be adopted when theory will be referred to all through this text mainly because if the role of theory is to be an 'aid to judgement' in analyzing the relationship between different events, either in a single historical situation or through time and space, the choosing of events to be analyzed is primarily a value judgement, as Hoffmann reminds us. Political scientists and historians both make this value judgement, consciously or not, and this is where it becomes possible to analyze the writings of an historian according the models or paradigms developed mainly by scholars in the field of political science.

The goal of this short and necessarily cursory survey of the debate between historians and political scientists over their respective approach to the study of international relations was to lay the foundation of a fundamental

¹⁷ Quoted in Jacques Huntzinger, op. cit., p. 17.

assumption for this thesis which is that it is possible to analyze the writings of an historian according to a model developed mainly by political scientists. We have seen that such an enterprise is not only possible, and beneficial for both groups, but can indeed be facilitated by a broad definition of theory to which both sides could agree on (the philosophical theory), and by the recognition that both groups of scholars are making, consciously or not, a value judgement as to the choice of the events, or variables, studied. These value judgements lead to the division of the study of international relations into different schools of thought which will now be discussed.

International Relations Theory: a Survey.

As always, when discussing different approaches in international relations theory, one faces the problem of definitions. In the following chapter, Howard's writings will be analyzed according to the realist paradigm of international relations theory. This school of thought will be defined gradually as my analysis is developed. Since Howard is obviously most closely related to the realist paradigm, my goal here is not to "classify" the British historian in one camp or the other but to use Howard's writings to reinforce or criticize the major beliefs of this

paradigm.

It is however important in this chapter to situate the realist model in international relations theory. My survey of writings of the field suggests a certain consensus on a division into three paradigms, models or approaches. One is the realist approach according to which the state, seen as a unitary and rational actor, is the main unit of analysis in a world where national security issues are the most crucial aspect of the international scene.¹⁹ Another is the liberal, or the transnationalist, school of thought which "rejette l'idée que le recours à la force pèse d'un poids décisif dans les rapports internationaux et affirme la participation active à la vie internationale de multiples autres acteurs que les Etats".²⁰ Thirdly, the socialist, or marxist, model believes that once class struggles are eliminated the state, instrument of oppression in the hands of owners of capital, will wither away and wars will be unthinkable since once you no longer have the exploitation of man by man within the state, exploitation of one state by another is not possible.²⁰

¹⁹ P. R. Viotti; M. V. Kauppi, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, New York, MacMillan, 1987, pp. 32-34.

¹⁹ Jacques Huntzinger, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁰ Marcel Merle, Sociologie des relations internationales, Paris, Dalloz, 1982, p. 72.

These are of course very general definitions in a field where nobody seems able to agree even on a general definition. A more elaborate analysis will be made for the realist paradigm, which will include a discussion on some of the liberal model's challenges posed to realist theory. While I acknowledge the very significant debate within the socialist school of thought,²¹ no detailed review will be made due to its lack of direct relevance to my analysis. However an example of this debate within the socialist paradigm is the controversy surrounding proponents of the dependency theory. If for the socialist model this theory is as central as the concept of interdependence can be for liberals or the one of balance of power for realists, many advocates of dependency theory would reject the marxist label or even that of socialist.²² However, most international relations theory authors seem to roughly agree with this tripartite division of the field.

Nevertheless, if there appears to be a certain consensus

²¹ An excellent review of that debate can be found in R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1986, 292 p.

²² For a good discussion of Lenin's theory of imperialism and of 'dependencia' theory (developed mainly by Third World and in particular latin american scholars) see James Lee Ray, Global Politics, Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1987, pp. 241-274.

in defining realism and socialism as separate paradigms, the line around liberalism is not so clear. K. J. Holsti in The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory makes the interesting argument that realism and liberalism are not different paradigms but should be included under the same heading, that of the classical tradition of international relations. According to Holsti the liberal school of thought, which emphasizes international organizations and transnational relations, is not fundamentally different from the realist model in that its ultimate goal is to bring peace between states and within the actual system. The images of the world of both schools are of course different but since classical liberalism does not challenge the existing system of independent nation-states (unlike marxism) and has, like realism, the same 'raison d'être', that is the avoidance of war, both approaches can be included in the same classical tradition.²³

Where Holsti makes a distinction is between liberalism within the classical tradition and the distinct paradigm of Global Society. For the author, a different paradigm has to be justified by a different array of problems: "The fact of interdependence has to lead to a problem before it warrants serious attention, just as concern with war, peace, order,

²³ K. J. Holsti, op. cit., pp. 15-40.

and power led to our field centuries ago."²⁴ Indeed, what makes the concept of Global Society a distinct paradigm is that not only does it have a different image of the world (a group of individual states living in anarchy for the 'Traditionalists'), a different level of analysis (the individual²⁵ as opposed to the state), but more importantly, a fundamentally different focus of study:

"the force behind the efforts to develop alternative global paradigms is ordinary human activity in a condition of high technology. It is not 'interdependence' so much as the universal demand for modern life styles that creates the set of problems."²⁶

²⁴ Ibid., p. 47.

²⁵ The unit of analysis for the Global Society paradigm is debatable. Holsti points out that "For Rosenau, the analytical units are 'aggregations', or aggregative/disaggregative processes which can, conceptually, take the place at any level of social organization (...). Compared to diplomatic-strategic behaviors and processes as units of analysis, the notion of aggregative/disaggregative activities is much more abstract and can include an immense variety of actors. But the starting point is always the activities of individuals." (K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline, p. 52) This claim that ultimately individuals are the main units of analysis for the Global Society paradigm is further substantiated by Rosenau's assertion that "the unfolding of the issues depends on decisions (or lack of decisions) made by countless individuals, none of whom is necessarily aware of what others have decided (or not decided)." (James N. Rosenau, "Capabilities and Control in an Interdependent World" in R.O. Matthews; A.G. Rubinoff; J. Gross Stein, (eds), International conflict and Conflict Management: Readings in World Politics, Scarborough, Prentice-Hall, 1984, p. 221).

²⁶ K.J. Holsti, op. cit., p. 47.

Although one should acknowledge the existence of that radically different view of the world, it is not germane to my discussion since Howard appears not to have responded in any significant way to the growing literature and debate on the topic.²⁷ Relatedly, an article published in the summer of 1989 by Francis Fukuyama seems to have generated a lively debate among American scholars.²⁸ Fukuyama rejects the idea that the concept of balance of power will still be relevant in the relations among advance nations of the 'post-historical' world²⁹ and asserts that the traditional pattern of international relations "sera remplacé par le calcul économique, la quête indéfinie de solutions techniques, les préoccupations relatives à l'environnement et la satisfaction

²⁷ The only, and very short, comment made by Howard on this debate can be found in one of his latest article where, in an obvious reference to Fukuyama, he mentions that 'the end of the ideological cold war will only reveal the vast dimensions of the problems still confronting us. History will go on and it will be far from boring.' in Michael Howard, "The Springtime of Nations", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 69, No. 1, (1990), p. 30.

²⁸ Francis Fukuyama, "La fin de l'histoire?", (translation of the article that appeared in National Interest), Commentaire, No. 47, automne 1989, pp. 457-469. This article has generated responses in the specialized journals of both the United States and France and a discussion at the end of October 1989 with Professor Philip Windsor of the London School of Economics, just back from a recent visit in the United States, has confirmed that it also seems to be the subject of a lively debate in academic circles of that country.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 467.

des exigences de consommateurs sophistiqués."³⁰ These ideas can be understood within the paradigm of Global Society³¹ but once again they will not be discussed any further in my analysis. Howard's writings will instead be analyzed from the realist perspective, referred at earlier but that I will now define in more detail.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 469.

³¹ I only argue here that the ideas proposed by Fukuyama in the above mentioned article can be understood within this paradigm of Global Society. In other articles Fukuyama makes analyses that are much closer to the realist model. See for example his chapter on 'Escalation in the Middle East and Persian Gulf' in G.T. Allison; A. Carnesale; J.S. Nye, Hawks, Doves, and Owls: An Agenda for Avoiding Nuclear War, New York, Norton, 1985, pp. 115-147.

CHAPTER 2: Howard and the Realist Perspective.

The analysis of the writings of a particular author according to a specific paradigm in international relations theory could be done in several ways. One approach is to use the framework for analysis proposed by a prominent author in the field and to compare the writings of Howard (in this case) according to that framework. If such an approach is attractive due to its simplicity and clarity, I do not believe that it would give an adequate picture of the thoughts of the British historian. Indeed, this sort of analysis could be distorted due to the possibility that important aspects of Howard's writings could be left out altogether because they do not correspond to any elements in the framework proposed.³²

Another approach is to try to 'classify' the writings of the author analyzed according to a certain paradigm of international relations and according to specific schools of thought within that paradigm (for example between classical and structural realism or between pure and contemporary

³² The limitations of this approach was realized after I attempted such an analysis (in this case comparing Howard's writings with the models proposed in R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, in a paper presented to professors Hampson and Mandell of the NPSIA, Carleton University, winter term, 1988, and entitled "Michael Howard and his conceptual framework").

liberalism). If this type of analysis seems the most widespread in books and articles on international relations theory where one author is often 'attached' to one school of thought, as is the case with Kenneth N. Waltz and structural realism,³³ I again believed that such a method would not be appropriate in this case. The main reason for this is that Howard has written very little about such distinctions within different paradigms of international relations theory and I suspect that he has very little time for them. The consequence of this is that he does not feel constrained in his analysis to follow the logic of those schools of thought. The only logic he will follow will be his own.

This leaves me with a third option which is to identify and define the principal, and most widely accepted, beliefs, problems and solutions of each paradigm (realism and liberalism in this case) and to explain how Sir Michael's writings reinforce or undercut those beliefs, problems and solutions. If this approach loses in terms of precision in my ability to 'pinpoint' exactly where Howard is situated in the field of international relations theory, it however gains immensely in flexibility and my ability to cover as much

33 In this case Waltz readily identifies himself with such a distinction. See Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", in R.I. Rotberg; T.K. Rabb, The Origins and Prevention of Major Wars, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 39-52.

material as possible written by Howard. In the course of my analysis I have found that the advantages of studying someone with the breadth and the 'profondeur' of Sir Michael is that one can talk about the opinion of the British historian on a wide range of issues. However the main disadvantage is that if one becomes too specific about the problem analyzed one will find out that his whole argument in explaining Howard's thoughts will be based on a very few articles or pages of a book. This is why this less precise but more flexible method of analysis will be used throughout my study of the realist model.

In this chapter I will thus look at some of the fundamental concepts of the realist approach. First I will start by analyzing the image of the world held by realists, which is the Hobbesian view that regards states as living in fact in a state of nature where an international society more or less exists. Then I will look at the role of the state as the principal actor on the international scene, but also as a necessary focal point for the population. Following this, I will analyze a central concept for the realist school of thought which is the one of power and how moral factors should affect our understanding of it. I will lastly end my discussion of this paradigm by looking at the mechanism called balance of power and which, according to the realist model, should bring stability in the international system.

The goal of this analysis will thus be to demonstrate how, ultimately, Sir Michael can indeed be considered a realist but also, and more importantly, I will seek to show the way in which the British historian seriously questions some of the fundamental assumptions of this approach. Since the realist paradigm seems to be coming under an increasing amount of criticism for not being able to explain certain aspects of international affairs, Howard could indeed provide both some answers to those criticisms (in questioning their validity) as well as some arguments for improving the paradigm itself and thus underscoring its continued relevance.

Anarchy in the international system.

The most fundamental aspect of any paradigm of international relations is probably the image it holds of the international system. From this image will then normally flow the logical arguments about the beliefs, problems and solutions that make the paradigm one coherent school of thought different from the others. This view of the world for the realist model is one of anarchy, or lack of a central government with a monopoly of legitimized force, in the international system.

When realists talk about the lack of a central authority on the international scene, as opposed to the situation on the domestic scene, the classical thinker who will most often be referred to is Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes has a very pessimistic view of the inherent nature of man: "So that in the first place, I put for a generall inclination of all mankind, a perpetuall and restlesse desire of Power after power, that ceaseth onely in Death".³⁴ The English philosopher sees man as living in a state of nature where life, if no Leviathan or central authority exists, will be "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short".³⁵

If Hobbes is very pessimistic about the life of man in a society with no central authority, different interpretations can be made about his views on the state of nature at the level of relations among independent states. One approach is to say that Hobbes' analysis of the international scene was similar to his views of the domestic one (war of all against all) and to portray him as the most pessimistic theorist of the realist paradigm: "Thomas Hobbes pousse au bout de sa logique l'analyse de Machiavel sur l'état de nature et

³⁴ Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, Aylesbury, Penguin, 1968, p. 181.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 186.

l'anarchie absolue des rapports internationaux".³⁶ Another approach proposes that Hobbes made a distinction between the domestic and international situation and that he was more optimistic about the chances of the latter to preserve some kind of order and relative peace in the absence of a central authority. Accordingly, the English philosopher accepted the moderating effect of deterrence and natural law and "conceded the possibility of a convergence of interests between states and observed that in wars and conflict between states, unlike civil wars, 'a certain mean was wont to be observed'".³⁷

If Howard seems to agree with the first interpretation of Hobbes, his analysis of the international system is much closer to the second:

"This society of states is, as Professor Hedley Bull has termed it, 'anarchic' not in the sense of disorderly, but in lacking a common government. According to the Hobbesian analysis this puts it automatically, at least in principle, into a state of war. In practice a more or less stable international order exists without a common sovereignty."³⁸

However a certain international order and the absence of open violence do not necessarily mean that a condition of peace

³⁶ Jacques Huntzinger, Introduction aux relations internationales, p. 34.

³⁷ K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline, p. 20.

³⁸ Michael Howard, "Weapons and Peace", in The Causes of Wars, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1984, p. 267.

exists. Hobbes believe that as long as states live in a state of nature and have the capacity to harm one another, peace has not really been achieved: "So the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary. All other time is Peace."³⁹ If Howard basically agrees with Hobbes on this point ("Given the State system, peace is possible only when there is freedom from all fear of coercion"⁴⁰), he goes further in his analysis by showing us the real nature of the 'peaceful' society in which we live today and the consequences of disrupting the order on which this society is based so as to achieve a 'true' state of peace:

"If by 'peace' we mean order and social tranquility, this may involve acceptance of inherent, structural injustice. If we mean an ideal, just society, we may have to disturb the placid complacency of our neighbours, and, if all else fails, use violence to disrupt the 'frozen violence' that holds this unjust order together."⁴¹

This last statement by Howard is interesting if one relates it to international relations theory. Indeed, when Sir Michael talks about "just society" and "structural

³⁹ Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 186.

⁴⁰ Michael Howard, "The Relevance of Traditional Strategy", in The Causes of Wars, p. 85.

⁴¹ Michael Howard, "The Concept of Peace", Encounter, Vol. 61, No. 4, (December 1983), p. 20.

injustice", he uses vocabulary which would be familiar to those analyzing the world scene from a socialist perspective.⁴² If the British historian is likely to disagree with most of socialist thoughts, from their interpretation of history to their beliefs about the nature of man, he seems to agree with certain claims made by this school of thought,⁴³ and especially by the proponents of the Dependency theory, that the international system in which we live today, and of which we are trying to preserve the stability and order, contains a necessary political⁴⁴ structural injustice toward many Third World nations. This point will be further discussed in my analysis of Howard and the liberal conscience.

Howard therefore seems to perceive Hobbes' thinking as being the same either on the domestic or the international scene. States, like individuals living in a society where no

⁴² See R.D. McKinlay, R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, pp. 54-70.

⁴³ See Immanuel Wallerstein, "Tendances et prospectives d'avenir de l'économie-monde", in Bahgat Korany, Analyse des relations internationales: approches, concepts et données, Montréal, Gaëtan Morin, 1987, pp. 107-119.

⁴⁴ The socialist paradigm, and the defenders of the Dependency theory, will of course emphasize the economic aspects of this structural injustice but they also give a certain importance to its political side (the creation by western democracies of most of the international institutions after the Second World War, with a system of laws that represented their values, or the East-West conflict that has dominated the international scene for more than four decades).

central government has the monopoly of violence, live in anarchy or state of nature. Therefore war between states will, as for individuals living in anarchy, be essentially characterised by indiscriminate violence where there will be "no Propriety, no Dominion, no Mine and Thine distinct; but onely that to be every mans that he can get; and for so long, as he can keep it."⁴⁵

With this interpretation of the English philosopher in mind, Sir Michael strongly disagrees with Hobbes' logic on the type of society one will encounter if anarchy exists at the domestic level and how in turn this model can be reproduced at the international one. The British historian is opposed to this idea that war of "man against every man" is inevitable in the state of nature and that the only solution to end this violence would be the creation of a central authority (in the form of a state) with the monopoly of violence which will bring stability and order. Incidentally, from this reasoning, Hobbes would then explain the origins of states structures. Indeed, from Howard's point of view, Hobbes is wrong in believing that men would voluntarily agree to a 'social contract'⁴⁶ and relinquish power to that central authority, or even that this power would be forcefully taken away from them by a powerful prince, in both cases in the

⁴⁵ Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan, p. 188.

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 189-201.

normative goal of bringing about 'peace'. For Sir Michael, the creation of a state still needs a relative necessary consent of the subjects or citizens but this consent will not be based on a concern for peace at home.

According to the British historian, the state was not created in order to bring peace at the domestic level but to be more efficient in war at the international one: "Indeed the requirement for social control imposed by the necessities of war has normally been a major element, if not the major element, in the development of state structures."⁴⁷ Hence, war is not the result of a situation of anarchy:

"War, at least as the term has been understood in western societies since the Middle Ages, is not the condition of generalized and random violence pictured by Thomas Hobbes as 'the state of nature'. It is on the contrary a highly social activity -- an activity indeed which demands from the groups which engage in it a unique intensity of societal organization and control."⁴⁸

From this assertion stems a crucial element in Howard's thinking: war is not an uncontrollable and natural recurring phenomena in the history of mankind due to the bellicosity of

⁴⁷ Michael Howard, "Temperament Belli: Can War be Controlled?", in Howard (ed.), Restraints on War: studies in the limitations of armed conflict, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

men⁴⁹ living in a state of nature. On the contrary, war is primarily a 'social activity' thus being, by definition, a phenomenon that can be brought under control if one understands the nature of the society in which it takes its roots as well as the nature of state's structures and, if it is the case, the nation it embodies.

The consequence of this assertion for the realist paradigm is to question the almost inherent pessimism of realists about international politics and to point out one avenue for research into the causes of wars. It also provides an argument against the tendencies of neorealists to portray states as being 'forced' into war because of the nature of the system instead of understanding their involvement in wars as a consequence of their own structures and nature of their society. As will be pointed out again later on, this emphasis on the 'social' aspect of warfare is a constant preoccupation

⁴⁹ If Hobbes is the philosopher most often mentioned by realists when discussing the concept of the 'state of nature', the English thinker's belief in the inherent aggressive nature of human beings is by no means shared by all proponents of this paradigm. Neorealists such as Kenneth Waltz explicitly reject the Hobbesian personality oriented explanation of international relations: "Because of the difficulty of knowing such a thing as a pure human nature, because the human nature we do know reflects both man's nature and the influence of his environment, definitions of human nature such as those of Spinoza and Hobbes are arbitrary and can lead to no valid social or political conclusions". (Kenneth N. Waltz, Man, the State and War: a Theoretical Analysis, New York, Columbia University Press, 1954, p. 166.)

of Howard. For now however I will focus my attention to the vision of the state held by realists, the criticisms it receives and Howard's views on these matters.

Howard and the State

After looking at the image of the world held by realists, to use the political scientist language, I must now identify the main unit of analysis (or actor in the international system) for this school of thought.

In the realist approach, states are the principal actors in the study of world politics.⁵⁰ This does not mean that the role of other (nonstate) actors on the international scene is not recognized, but that relations between states have been, are and still will be in the future the dominant and most important aspect of international relations. Indeed realists, like Kenneth N. Waltz, emphasize not only the predominance of states but also the control that they have over nonstate actors:

"Though they may choose to interfere little in the affairs of nonstate actors for long periods of time, states nevertheless set the terms of the intercourse, whether by passively permitting informal rules to

⁵⁰ David Fromkin, The Independence of Nations, New York, Praeger, 1981, p. 41.

develop or by actively intervening to change rules that no longer suit them."⁵¹

Another major writer of the realist paradigm, Robert Gilpin, has seen "little evidence to support the view that they have been very successful in replacing the nation-state as the primary actor in international politics" and that far from decreasing "the role of the nation-state in economic as well as political life is increasing."⁵² The argument behind this last statement is that more involvement by the state will be necessary to counter the effects of increased participation in national economies of multinational corporations (MNCs).

Lastly an important figure in the field of international relations theory, Robert O. Keohane, now seems to have moved from beliefs associated with the liberal school of thought, such as the decreasing role of the state in international affairs because of the effects of phenomena such as interdependence and international regimes, to those associated with realism:

⁵¹ From Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics, 1979, reprinted in R.O. Matthews; A.G. Rubinoff; J.G. Stein, International Conflict and Conflict Management, p. 367.

⁵² Robert Gilpin, in R. Maghroori; R. Ramberg, eds., Globalism Versus Realism: International Relations' Third Debate, quoted in Morgan, Patrick M., Theories and Approaches to International Politics: What Are We to Think?, New Brunswick, (U.S.A.), Transaction Books, 1988, p. 298.

"Keohane arrive à la conclusion selon laquelle il n'aurait pas été possible jusqu'à maintenant - ni même souhaitable - d'éliminer la prédominance du réalisme dans l'analyse des relations internationales. Les raisons sont simples: par son insistance sur des concepts tels la puissance, les intérêts et la rationalité du comportement international, l'école réaliste représente à ce titre une composante essentielle de toute analyse cohérente (...) de ce domaine d'étude."⁵³

However I must emphasize here that this apparent change of allegiance of Keohane does not mean he believes that the Realpolitik tradition (which will be discussed later on), with its emphasis on the predominance of the state, the drive for power and the anarchic nature of international relations, is a sufficient tool to analyze world politics:

"Realist theories that seek to predict international behavior on the basis of interests and power alone are important but insufficient for an understanding of world politics. They need to be supplemented, though not replaced, by theories stressing the importance of international institutions."⁵⁴

This line of thought is not alien to realism. Indeed the dominating approach within the realist paradigm agrees that a

⁵³ Bahgat Korany, Analyse des relations internationales, p. 299. Korany also mentions that this about face must be underlined since Keohane "a été l'un des premiers auteurs américains à mettre l'accent sur les relations transnationales par opposition au modèle interétatique".

⁵⁴ Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 14.

certain importance should be given to international institutions and regimes as long as they reflect the existing distribution of power in the international system.⁵⁵ This approach, referred to by some authors as contemporary realism, is a combination of two traditions: the Realpolitik line of thought which postulates that each individual (and by extension states) has an innate need of power and the more liberal tradition which believes that "the defining characteristic of human beings is their sense of morality: an ability to distinguish between right and wrong."⁵⁶ So realists do give a certain importance to values and norms although the degree to which they do so varies significantly.⁵⁷ More evidence supporting this assertion will be given below. I should mention here that since contemporary realism represents the mainstream realist approach I will simply speak of the realist paradigm when referring to it. Otherwise I will speak of the Realpolitik school of thought. In fact this distinction has to be underlined. I have found in my study of international relations theory that opponents of realism, or those who have little time for any theory explaining world politics, often tend to oversimplify the realist paradigm and criticize its most objectionable aspect,

⁵⁵ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 84.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

⁵⁷ Paul R. Viotti; Mark V. Kauppi, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, p. 34.

which is this Realpolitik school of thought, even if the 'original' version of the latter is not defended anymore in recent realist writings.⁵⁸

Keohane could thus be said to agree with realism. However it is interesting to note that if Keohane acknowledges that the elaboration and initial formation of international institutions and regimes need to reflect the existing power structure in the system, he nonetheless believes that the patterns of behavior acquired during this initial period could continue, the participants having realized the benefits of cooperation, and that those institutions and regimes could still function, albeit with some adjustments, even if they no longer reflect the distribution of power in the system. The example given by Keohane is that of those institutions and regimes initiated while the United States was the hegemonic power and still surviving today even as we are witnessing the relative

⁵⁸ An example of this type of oversimplification can be found in a recent publication where C.P. David portrays the realist approach as being totally unconcerned by aspects of world politics such as the role of morality and values in restraining the use of force, the need for the existence of an international society as a means to keep stability in the system or the potential destabilizing effect on that system of serious global economic problems. See C.P. David, Les études stratégiques: Approches et concepts, pp. 76-80.

decline of that power.⁵⁹

The aim in developing those institutions and regimes is to form an international society where, according to Hedley Bull, "a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share the working of common institutions."⁶⁰ The concept of international society must be distinguished from the one of international system, familiar and acceptable to the proponents of the Realpolitik school of thought, where states must simply acknowledge that the range of their actions is limited by the power held by other states and that they might even gain by keeping order and stability in this international system. Cooperation is thus not based on common values but rather on a recognition of the benefits of a stable balance of power.

However the notion according to which it is logical for states to promote an international society is one of the

⁵⁹ Keohane's conclusion is thus that "We need to go beyond Realism, not discard it". Robert O. Keohane, After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy, pp. 14-17.

⁶⁰ Hedley Bull, The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics, New York, Columbia University Press, 1977, p. 13.

beliefs of the realist paradigm.⁸¹ Relations among nations are not a zero-sum game and cooperation can be in the interest of a majority of states. The ultimate goal in the creation of a society of states is thus the achievement of a certain order and stability based on common values, rather than on the fear that force will be used, which will ensure the preservation of peace.

Howard basically agrees with this proposition but he gives serious warnings on the way this international society can be built. First he emphasizes that if he supports the goal of forming an international society we must realize that we are still very far from achieving that aim: "International order is based rather on recognition of disagreement, and of the limitation on one's own capacity to secure agreement."⁸² A second objection concerns the peace activists' idea according to which 'peace' can be achieved without going through the painful process of learning the language, history and above all the 'mentalité' of the peoples we want to make peace with; as if peace was a concept that everyone would readily accept. To Sir Michael, those who promote the development of an international society must not "assume a

⁸¹ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 86.

⁸² Michael Howard, "Military Power and International Order", in Studies in War and Peace, London, Temple Smith, 1970, p. 208.

culturally homogeneous world which does not exist, and which could be created and maintained only by methods far from peaceful."⁸³

Howard also warns against the belief that this 'peaceful international community' can be built behind the backs of governments by 'transnational flows'. To those who believe that progress in communications and transportation will allow national elites to understand each other's points of view, and thus diminish the probability of conflict, the British historian points out that "Seldom have elites communicated so freely and so amicably as they did in the years before 1914."⁸⁴ Furthermore, Howard points out that these 'transnational flows', even if efficient in the Western World, stop at the Iron Curtain and the frontiers of the Third World who too often see these movements as instruments of 'cultural Imperialism'. For Howard, peace is maintained and enhanced by those "bureaucrats, diplomats, lawyers, businessmen and political leaders (...) whose boring work, prudent foresight and hard-won mutual understanding across cultural barriers actually preserves it."⁸⁵

⁸³ Michael Howard, "Weapons and Peace", in The Causes of Wars, p. 267.

⁸⁴ Michael Howard, "A New Path To Peace? Leonard Beaton's Last Testament", Round Table, No 249, 1973, p. 133.

⁸⁵ Michael Howard, "The Concept of Peace", Encounter, vol. 61, no 4, Dec. 1983, p. 24.

On the other hand, Howard believes that, if it is a time consuming process, it is nonetheless possible to develop a common understanding on values and norms and he points out certain geographical areas where they did develop such as, for two centuries, Scandinavia and more recently western Europe.⁶⁶ Howard is therefore skeptical that transnational flows (he rarely uses the term 'interdependence') will produce any tangible results in the near future but he remains optimistic as to their long-term potential benefits:

"We now have enough evidence to know that functional cooperation does not erode national and ideological hostilities. The streets of Belfast alone provide plenty of evidence to the contrary, and the Common Market does not provide much in favour. History provides no more support for the myths of Adam Smith and Cobben than it does for those of Lenin and Marx. But the advantage of this cautious, non-ideological, traditional approach lies in the fact that even if it does not produce the hoped-for benefits, it continues to keep the options open. Transnational flows may not do as much to erode ideological confrontation as the functionalists believe, but they do a great deal more than would autarkic non-communication."⁶⁷

It is however interesting to note that if the British historian is suspicious that an international society could, because of those 'transnational flows', be developed by the

⁶⁶ Michael Howard, "Military Power and International Order", p. 211.

⁶⁷ Michael Howard, "Helsinki Reconsidered: East-West Relations Two Years after the 'Final Act'", Round Table, No. 267, (1977), p. 247.

'back door' of interstate relations, he also has strong reservations about the benefits of too much 'front door' exposure that international institutions sometimes give. Indeed, Howard believes that the United Nations has served as a forum, by airing speeches to a worldwide audience through television, for Third World leaders to express their grievances (in an often radical way) to the First World but also to the benefit of their own domestic public. The result, according to Sir Michael, has been to make "much more difficult the delicate process of reconciling differences and reaching complex agreements between the representatives of mutually suspicious and culturally alien communities."⁸⁸

It must be emphasized here that, as I mentioned earlier, realists believe in the success of international institutions and the promotion of an international society only if these reflect the distribution of power in the international system. Furthermore, the proponents of this paradigm point out that a lack of understanding of this principle would not only mean the essential irrelevance of those institutions and values; it could also be the road to conflict. It is thus necessary that "as a means of avoiding conflict, states must accept that their ability to shape the rules and institutions governing international society must be dependent upon their

⁸⁸ Michael Howard, "Realists and Romantics: On Maintaining an International Order", Encounter, Vol. 38, (April 1972), p. 35.

position in the international power hierarchy."⁸⁸ Therefore, a state with deep concerns about international law but with no coercive power will have almost no influence on the international society.

Howard recognizes this point except that he accords greater emphasis to ethics over international laws and institutions because of the inherent flaws he sees in institutional and legal aspects of international society. Howard repeats over and over again in several of his writings that a number of non-Western nations do not accept the actual status quo on the international scene and that for many people of the world, war is an acceptable way of life. International laws and institutions will thus be seen by those people as another form of imperialism aimed at preventing them from developing their own distinctiveness.

For this reason Howard will prefer the term 'ethics' and he emphasizes that states not only have to recognize that their ability to enforce ethical norms will only grow with their power but that it is also their responsibility to promote such ethical norms: "Thus political action, whether in the international or any other sphere of activity, needs to be diagonal. Ethical goals should become more ambitious as

⁸⁸ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, op. cit., p. 86.

political capability increases."⁷⁰

It seems to me that on this last point Howard diverges somewhat from the realist approach. Indeed, for Howard the promotion of ethical goals is given an equal value to power consideration in the conduct of foreign policy. Here Sir Michael quotes Reinhold Niebuhr who wrote that "Politics will, to the end of history, be an area where conscience and power meet, where the ethical and coercive factors of human life will interpenetrate and work out their tentative and uneasy compromises."⁷¹ If in this regard Howard would seem to be looking for the same goals as most liberals, he would however greatly differ in the means to achieve them. The British historian's thoughts on this important question will be further developed later in the text.

Lastly concerning this concept of an international society, at a time when, as I mentioned earlier, there seems to be a debate in the Anglo-Saxon community of scholars on whether or not, as Fukuyama believes, we are witnessing the 'end of history' where any ideas of nationalism will have lost all meaning among the populations of western

⁷⁰ Michael Howard, "Ethics and Power in International Policy", in The Causes of Wars, p. 62.

⁷¹ Reinhold Niebuhr, Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics, 1932, quoted in Howard, "Ethics and Power in International Policy", p. 63.

democracies,⁷² Howard is not surprisingly pessimistic. If, as I discussed earlier, Sir Michael has strong reservations about the desires of Third World peoples to eventually become part of this international society (in fact he believes that as they develop economically and politically they might even be less prone to do so), his warning for those who think that nationalism is disappearing from our societies is even gloomier. I believe it is necessary here to quote at length what Howard had to say about this subject in one of his most recent articles:

"And even within the West, the growth of an internationally-minded 'overclass' with their credit cards, overseas business contacts and holidays abroad, the growing internationalization of their cities, and increased provision for servicing tourism, all combine to leave behind a semi-educated and resentful underclass which defiantly takes as its symbols the national flags abandoned by the élites - the Union Jack, the Stars and Stripes, perhaps even the swastika - and displays them on new and less glorious battlefields. These debased relics of national identity are often all they have left of their self respect."⁷³

If Howard seems to believe in the idea of an international society, it is thus for him a very distant possibility in the future. This discussion now bring me to the last element in Sir Michael's thoughts that I want to analyze in this section on 'Howard and the State' which is the role of the nation-

⁷² Francis Fukuyama, "La fin de l'histoire", pp. 466-469.

⁷³ Michael Howard, "Ideology and International Relations", p. 9.

state as a focus point for the loyalties of individuals.

Another important aspect of the realist approach is the belief that the nation-state is "the best available type of political organization."⁷⁴ If the Treaty of Westphalia signed in 1648, following the Thirty Years' War in Germany, gradually brought about the recognition of the state as a sovereign entity,⁷⁵ it took the French and American revolutions to establish the principle that "La souveraineté doit appartenir en conséquence à la nation et non au prince."⁷⁶

Realists however see the risks associated with this principle. If the idea of the nation-state legitimizes and reinforces the role of the state as the main actor on the international scene it can also seriously disrupt the stability and order of the latter if pushed to the limit. The German political philosopher Friedrich Meinecke attempted to come to grips with the problem by stating, on the one hand, that "one cannot operate here with universally valid axioms, that it would mean unleashing a war of all against all were one to grant the right ... to every nationality still

⁷⁴ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 84.

⁷⁵ James Lee Ray, Global Politics, p. 158.

⁷⁶ Jacques Huntzinger, Introduction aux relations internationales, p. 121.

politically dependent to create its own nation-state" while on the other, refusing the status quo and proposing as a solution that "the answer would vary from case to case as a compromise between 'biological and historical and cultural considerations.'"77

Howard is well aware of this inherent contradiction within the realist approach concerning the nation-state. Sir Michael recognizes both the positive necessity and the negative effects of nationalism. However he does not attempt to solve this dilemma other than by promoting mutual understanding and respect between peoples of very different cultures and between the diplomats and politicians representing these peoples, ideas already referred to earlier.

On the necessity of the existence and strengthening of the nation-state, Sir Michael again looks at the situation from the eyes of common people rather than from those of elites. Howard believes that the nation-state, even when considering its numerous flaws, is still "the only mechanism by which the ordinary man and woman achieves some sense, however limited, of participation in, and responsibility for,

77 Friedrich Meinecke, Probleme des Weltkriegs, Munich, R. Oldenbourg, 1917, quoted in Richard W. Sterling, Ethics in a World of Power: The Political Ideas of Friedrich Meinecke, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 195.

the ordering of their own societies and the conduct of the affairs of the world as a whole."⁷⁸ For those who believe that nationalism causes peoples to become narrow minded, the British historian reminds them that "Parochialism came before nationalism. The creation of national self-consciousness was, for the mass of mankind, a widening of horizons, not a narrowing of them."⁷⁹

Sir Michael also believes that in the case of a gradual withering away of the nation-state, not only in its structure but as a symbol for the peoples, we would not witness the emergence of new 'citizens of the world' but rather a return to a certain form of parochialism:

"The abandonment of the nation as a focus for loyalty means that loyalties focus not at a higher level, but at a lower: upon class, or regions, or sects (or indeed sex), or on race, or simply upon gangs--groups in continual and often murderous conflict with one another."⁸⁰

Lastly on the possibilities of such a process taking place in the near future Howard is quite categorical: "The withering away of the Nation State at present remains a dream and, in

⁷⁸ Michael Howard, "War and the Nation State", p. 32.

⁷⁹ Michael Howard, "Ideology and International Relations", p. 8.

⁸⁰ Michael Howard, "Is Winston Churchill Still Relevant?", Encounter, April 1985, vol. 64, p. 25.

the eyes of the masses of the peoples of the world, not even a beautiful dream."⁸¹

If Howard believes in this positive necessity of the nation-state he also acknowledges its negative effects. Later on I will discuss at greater length Howard's thoughts on the causes of wars so for now I will only mention that Sir Michael sees in nationalism one of the two principal sources of conflicts. The British historian identifies as the first main cause of wars the natural tendency of a state to expand (which will normally be checked by an equally powerful state, thus creating a certain stability in the international system). However, the forces of nationalism, the second main cause of wars that he identifies, can be much more destructive and difficult to control and have been "the principal source of internal and international conflict over the past hundred years."⁸² Lastly, Howard believes that after witnessing the dilemma in which the Versailles powers in 1918 found themselves regarding the principle of self-determination and its future implications regarding the defeated Germany, the victorious Postdam powers in 1945 'de facto' "subordinated national self-determination to the

⁸¹ Michael Howard, "War and the Nation State", p. 33.

⁸² Michael Howard, "Problems of a Disarmed World", in Studies in War and Peace, p. 228.

maintenance of their own hegemony."⁸³

Howard therefore gives no clear answer to this dilemma. If he supports the development of the nation-state as a regrouping point for individuals, he acknowledges that the same nation-state (or the desire to form one) has been the main cause of conflict in recent history. Also, even if he observes how the return to a certain balance of power has brought stability back to the system, I cannot say that he accepts the latter as a solution to the problem. My analysis thus far points in the direction, and will seek to confirm, that Sir Michael is not a proponent of the status quo. He realizes the dangers inherent to a prolonged antagonism, especially in the nuclear age. However if he believes in the possibility of developing an international society, this process will be time consuming and could only take place in a stable environment. I will now turn my attention to analyzing if Howard agrees with the realist paradigm on the best ways to obtain and preserve this stable environment.

Morality, Power and Security in World Politics

So far I have analyzed the anarchic view of the world

⁸³ Michael Howard, "Realists and Romantics: On Maintaining an International Order", p. 35.

held by realists as well as the reasons why they believe that the state is the principal actor on the international scene. The most important question for realists is then: how do we keep order and stability in a world with no central authority where, at worst, most states are trying to find ways to increase their power and influence or, at best, where all states have at the top of their priority the crucial concern to at least survive as an entity? Before elaborating on the tentative answers proposed by the realist school of thought to this question I will first of all discuss the different beliefs of this paradigm, hinted at in this question, concerning the most important motivating factors for states' behavior in world politics: the drive for power and the need for security. Also, I will analyze how morality in the actions of statesmen has become a concern in the development of realist thought. Lastly, in the course of my analysis, I will make a comparison between Howard and Morgenthau since the latter, notwithstanding criticisms from neo, structural and contemporary realists, produced a textbook that has influenced students of international relations theory for more than forty years.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ David Fronkin, basing his assertion on a study made by James Rosenau et al., notes that "A recent study has verified that it (Politics Among Nations) is still the textbook most frequently assigned to students in beginning international relations courses." in The Independence of Nations, p. 13.

The realist model in international relations is often identified with names such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes or Clausewitz. This is the Realpolitik tradition which takes for granted that the drive for power is at the centre of international relations. Proponents of this school of thought see military force as not only a legitimate but almost a natural means to express that power.

Machiavelli was probably the one who phrased this idea in the most direct way: "La guerre est la vraie profession de quiconque gouverne; c'est pour avoir négligé les armes et leur avoir préféré les douceurs de la mollesse qu'on a vu des souverains perdre leurs Etats."⁸⁵ According to this view, ethics would have a very small role, or no role at all, to play in the relations among nations and Machiavelli, followed by Clausewitz almost three hundred years later, would even say that it would be foolish for any head of state to take into account such considerations.

Hans Morgenthau is often associated with this Realpolitik school of thought.⁸⁶ For Morgenthau "The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through

⁸⁵ Quoted by Jacques Huntzinger, Introduction aux relations internationales, p. 28.

⁸⁶ See for example K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory, p. 16, and Marcel Merle, Sociologie des relations internationales, p. 25.

the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power."⁸⁷ For this scholar the struggle for power is thus at the core of international relations.

However Morgenthau, contrary to classical realist thinkers, does give a certain importance to values and ethics in his understanding of world order.⁸⁸ Morgenthau believes that the role of morality in international relations is relative and twofold in that "certain principles are applicable in one period of history and not applicable in another...(and) that certain principles are obeyed by some nations, some political civilizations, but are not obeyed by others."⁸⁹ Even with those qualifications, Morgenthau, by giving a certain importance to morality in the conduct of foreign policy, thus appears to be one of those "self-styled realists, writing after the Second World War,(...) reasserting the traditional Realpolitik line of thought. But, in fact, almost invariably, these realists were endeavouring

⁸⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau; Kenneth W. Thompson, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, Sixth Edition, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1985 (first published in 1948), p. 5.

⁸⁸ See P.R. Viotti; M.V. Kauppi, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, p. 34.

⁸⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau; Kenneth W. Thompson, op. cit., p. 275.

to fuse the ideas of idealism with those of Realpolitik."⁸⁰ Nonetheless, with these reservations in mind, I will consider Morgenthau as a representative of the Realpolitik school of thought.

In reference to my earlier discussion, it is interesting to note the parallels and contrasts between the American analyst and our British historian. Here both men accept the pluralistic nature of human action.⁸¹ On this question of the relationship between morality and power in international politics it is possible to trace a certain evolution in Howard's thoughts. More than two decades ago, Howard made an argument very much in line with realist thinking:

"The criterion which the statesman must apply in determining the nature of the intercourse between his own and other states will be, not moral approval of the régime in question, but the interests, in terms of physical safety and well-being, of the community for which he is responsible."⁸²

⁸⁰ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 84.

⁸¹ Both scholars use strong words to describe political action unconcerned with morality. Howard will say that "To accumulate coercive power without concern for its ethical ends is the course of the gangster, of St Augustine's robber bands." (in "Ethics and Power in International Policy", p. 62) while Morgenthau writes that "A man who was nothing but 'political man' would be a beast, for he would be completely lacking in moral restraints." (in Politics Among Nations, p. 16).

⁸² Michael Howard, "Morality and Force in International Politics", 1968, in Studies in War and Peace, p. 246.

The statesman could thus be led to use the power at his disposition, in the form of foreign pressure, in order to further his nation's interests, even if these actions would be in contradiction with his moral beliefs. The British historian nonetheless pointed out that unwanted effects can result from foreign pressure by giving the examples of the Anglo-French intervention in Egypt in 1956, the Bay of Pigs fiasco, and even the British pressures on the white régime in Rhodesia.

However less than a decade later (but before the Lancaster House agreement ending the whites' monopoly on power in Rhodesia), Howard would, as I mentioned before, give equal importance to morality and power. Sir Michael is careful in underlining that one cannot be subordinated to the other, but he points out certain cases where force might and should be used to defend widely accepted moral principles, such as in the case of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia in 1935. Contrary to realist beliefs on the matter, Howard asserts that to do so would have brought support to the rule of law and that "a pattern of peace-keeping would have been successfully established."⁹³

⁹³ Michael Howard, "Ethics and Power in International Policy", 1977, in The Causes of Wars, p. 60.

The contrasts between Howard and Morgenthau are thus interesting. If to Morgenthau (even after giving some thought to the role of moral factors) "power has been conceptualized both as a means and an end",⁸⁴ to Howard morality, if not an end in itself, must at least go hand in hand with power considerations. I should not however overemphasize the originality of this idea by Howard. Two decades before Sir Michael analyzed to its full extent this concept on how to combine power and ethics Henry Kissinger, also often 'classified' as belonging to the Realpolitik school of thought,⁸⁵ expressed similar ideas:

"By word and deed we must demonstrate that the inexorable element of international relations resides in the necessity to combine principle with power, that an exclusive reliance on moral pronouncements may be as irresponsible as the attempt to conduct policy on the basis of power considerations alone."⁸⁶

On the other hand, Kissinger's definition of 'principle' or morality is probably in sharp contrast with Howard's since in the same breath he states that "Condescending as it may seem to say so, the United States has an important educational

⁸⁴ James E. Dougherty; Robert L. Pfalzgraff, Contending Theories of International Relations: A Comprehensive Survey, Second edition, New York, Harper & Row, 1981, p. 87.

⁸⁵ See Herbert J. Spiro, World Politics: The Global System, Homewood, Dorsey Press, 1966, p. 207.

⁸⁶ Henry A. Kissinger, Nuclear Weapons and Foreign Policy, New York, Norton, 1957, p. 220.

task to perform in the uncommitted third of the world."⁸⁷ My conclusion here is then that instead of focusing on the necessity to combine power and morality, an idea that seems widely accepted even among the post-Second World War proponents of the Realpolitik school of thought, Howard should re-direct his energy in developing a more complete definition of the role of ethics in the formulation of foreign policy.

If Sir Michael hints at a definition by saying that ethics would consist of forming a society where peaceful change can take place and where "a community of cultures peacefully co-exist within which every individual can find fulfillment",⁸⁸ such a statement is much too broad to be of any use when analyzing, for example, the limits of superpower involvement in the Third World. As I mentioned before, Howard recognizes that to have peace as a goal might mean freezing unacceptable political situations in certain parts of the world, while to use force to support what we believe is moral might only alienate the people we are trying to help. Since clear-cut cases like the Abyssinian crisis seem to be the exception rather than the rule (as the recent American intervention in Panama, and the mixed reactions it received,

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Michael Howard, "Ethics and Power in International Policy", p. 61.

has demonstrated), a more complete analysis of the problem by the British historian would be welcome, even if I realize that the complexity of this dilemma has driven away more than one historian or political scientist.

If Howard has some interesting insights on the role of morality in world politics, his analysis on the role of power is even more interesting. I have found that over the years the position of Sir Michael on this important question has been both supportive and critical of realist beliefs. In 1964 the British historian stated that "The desire for, acquisition, and exercise of power is the raw material of politics, national and international, and violence may sometimes prove an effective means to secure or retain it."⁹⁹ Almost twenty years later Howard would reiterate this position by saying that for statesmen "it is very seldom that their attitudes, their perceptions and their decisions are not related, however remotely, to the fundamental issues of power."¹⁰⁰

If in his earlier days the British historian acknowledged that violence is rarely the best way to resolve conflicts, he now brings up the very interesting idea that

⁹⁹ Michael Howard, "Military Power and International Order", 1964, in Studies in War and Peace, p. 203.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Howard, "The Causes of Wars", in The Causes of Wars, p. 13.

the development and reinforcement of certain norms and values might actually decrease the utility of war as an expression of power:

"The question that arises today is, how widely and evenly spread is that intense revulsion against war that at present characterizes our own society? For if war is indeed now universally seen as being unacceptable as an instrument of policy, then all analogies drawn from the past are misleading, and although power struggles may continue, they will be diverted into other channels."¹⁰¹

What Howard is thus saying is that if the nature of political action is unchanging (the drive for power), the means available to statesmen are changing. Sir Michael often emphasizes that power does not mean exclusively military power; economic strength and cultural influence must also be reckoned in a state's power balance. Howard even argues that if for example the United States' ability to project power by military means has decreased since the Vietnam war, its overall power could stay the same or even increase if the Americans skillfully use the diplomatic, economic as well as cultural means available to them.¹⁰²

If Howard, by stressing the role of power in world

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁰² Foreword by Michael Howard in Christopher Coker, US Military Power in the 1980's, London, Macmillan, 1983, p. xi.

politics, is reasserting in a very strong way one of the main premises of the realist approach, he nonetheless challenges some important aspects of this school of thought. Realists to a great degree defend their logic and beliefs on historical facts and to have an historian (even more a military one) only suggest that historical analogies on the use of violence might become irrelevant must be highly distressing. On top of that if most realists can accept the role of economic factors in the power balance, to give an almost equal weight to cultural factors must seem highly unusual to them. Lastly, to propose that ethical awareness should grow as power capability increases might appear to be a very destabilizing proposition for the defenders of the realist model. But I will now turn my attention to an analysis of the concept of security in Howard's thoughts.

According to the realist paradigm, states must maintain an adequate level of armed forces. The need for those forces is however defensive in nature: "The necessity for these defensive arrangements arises, however, not because states possess an inevitable and insatiable drive for power, as adherents of Realpolitik assert, but because of the ambiguity and uncertainty which characterizes an anarchic international arena."¹⁰³ Security or, in its most restrictive definition,

¹⁰³ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 85.

the assurance of the state's survival, is thus a crucial aspect of the realist model. Kenneth N. Waltz brings together these concepts of power and security by saying that if "neorealism sees power as a possibly useful means (...) in crucial situations, however, the ultimate concern of states is not for power but for security."¹⁰⁴

However, the size of those forces needed for defensive purposes should not be unnecessarily large and the definition of what constitutes national security should not be overextended if one has only defensive intentions.¹⁰⁵ Indeed the realist approach recognizes very well the dangers of the security dilemma and is very critical of the pure liberal approach on this point which, by using symbols such as 'liberty' or the 'threat of communism', has led to the American involvement in Vietnam for example. To Hans Morgenthau, who was one of the great critics of this ideological aspect of American foreign policy after the Second World War, "A nation can only take a rational view of its national interests after it has parted company with the crusading spirit of a political creed."¹⁰⁶ More recently,

¹⁰⁴ Kenneth N. Waltz, "War in Neorealist Theory", in R.I. Rotberg; T.K. Rabb, The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars, p. 40.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau; Kenneth W. Thompson, Politics Among Nations, p. 588.

Robert Jervis has made some very interesting analyses of this concept of the security dilemma which he defines simply as "an increase in one state's security decreases the security of others."¹⁰⁷

Howard's thoughts are very much in line with what has just been described above. Howard gives examples of the security dilemma when he talks about the situation immediately after the Great War when the General Staff of both Germany and Great Britain had very extended definitions of national security. The Germans believed that even Finland had to be under their control in order to achieve security for the Fatherland while the British believed that they had to control the area between the Caspian and the Black Sea so that they could protect the frontiers of India.¹⁰⁸

On the ideological aspect of the security dilemma, it is interesting to point out the parallel between Howard's thoughts and McKinlay and Little's assertion that realists are "deeply suspicious of demands for universal or sweeping changes, recognizing that often there is little substance

¹⁰⁷ Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under The Security Dilemma", in Robert J. Art; Kenneth N. Waltz (eds), The Use of Force: International Politics and Foreign Policy, Second Edition, New York, University Press of America, 1983, p. 37.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Howard, "The Strategic Approach to International Relations" in The Causes of Wars, p. 46.

behind the demands."¹⁰⁸ Howard is perfectly in line with this argument when commenting on Nixon's statement that 1973 would be 'the Year of Europe': "The American penchant for oratorical hyperbole and grandiose statements of principle is little appreciated in Britain; the more elevated the tone of American policy declarations, the flatter they fall over here."¹¹⁰

As we can see, the definition of what constitutes national security is one of the major problems that realists have to deal with. To conclude this chapter on Howard and the realist paradigm I will now analyze the most important concepts of balance of power and stability in the international system.

Stability and the Balance of Power

So far in this chapter on the realist paradigm I have concentrated my attention, to use the language of political science, both at the state and system levels of analysis. We have seen that states, the main actors on the international scene, are supreme in their authority; living in a world with

¹⁰⁸ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, op. cit., p. 86.

¹¹⁰ Michael Howard, "NATO and the Year of Europe", Survival, vol. XVI, no 1, (Jan/Feb 1974), p. 21.

no central governing body they must base the conduct of their foreign policy on this fundamental reality. Some of them might try to profit from the situation and increase their power, probably using violence in the process. Others might simply be looking for assurances to their survival and security. I used the term 'simply' but in fact, as Sir Michael reminds us "So imperceptibly one may extend along a gamut, from the microdefence which is the defence of one's own territory to concepts of megadefence, which may appear to others to involve little short of world conquest."¹¹¹ The problem of the security dilemma is thus another concern for realists. Lastly, the question of morality adds to this already complex equation.

Taking into account these realities, what is then the principal goal for the realist and which mechanism does he believe will be the most suited to achieve that goal? Looking at the situation from a system level of analysis, the realist paradigm proposes that the primary and most important goal to achieve is to preserve peace through order and stability in the international system, and that the concept of balance of power is the best means that will help reach that goal.¹¹² Since these concepts are also central to the field of

¹¹¹ Michael Howard, "The Strategic Approach to International Relations", p. 46.

¹¹² See K.J. Holsti, The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory, pp. 15-39.

strategic studies, they will be further discussed in my last chapter but for now I will focus on this mechanism of balance of power which is considered to be necessary by realists in order to keep stability in the international system.

The concept of balance of power could be simply defined as the "conscious attempt to check the preponderance of any one state."¹¹³ However, as some authors have pointed out, realists themselves seem to interpret this term in several different ways.¹¹⁴ Beyond the dispute over definitions another battle that seems to be raging among scholars is the one over the type of balance of power that will best preserve stability in the international system.

Indeed, realists disagree in their analysis on which of the two systems, the bipolar or the multipolar, is more likely to produce wars. This question is even more pressing as the world seems to be moving from the former to the latter system on the eve of the 1990s. On one side of the dispute one will find, for example, J. David Singer who believes that a multipolar system "is likely to be more stable than a bipolar system because a multipolar system allows each actor

¹¹³ Hedley Lull, The Anarchical Society, p. 32.

¹¹⁴ Viotti and Kauppi in International Relations Theory, p. 64., mention that Morgenthau has found four meanings for balance of power while another critic has found eight.

a larger number of normal interaction opportunities."¹¹⁵ Individual states will thus have more flexibility in their foreign policy and, consequently, less chances of being 'forced' into a war by rigid alliance commitments. On the other hand Kenneth N. Waltz, with similar logical arguments, arrives at the exact opposite conclusion: "Flexibility of alignment limits a state's options because, ideally, its strategy must please potential allies and satisfy present partners."¹¹⁶

Formally, Howard has not taken sides in this inconclusive debate,¹¹⁷ which of course tends to be mostly centered around the World War I example. However his opinions about the causes of the Great War permit me to speculate on his possible answers to this discussion. First of all Sir Michael reminds us that the above mentioned arguments are based on facts taken from diplomatic history and that behind diplomacy are statesmen:

¹¹⁵ James Lee Ray, Global Politics, p. 433.

¹¹⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory", in Rotberg; Rabb, The Origins and Prevention of Major Wars, p. 44.

¹¹⁷ One author concludes that "findings regarding the relationship between polarity and war are inconsistent, as are those regarding the relationship between power distributions and war, and one must be accordingly uncertain about the 'real' relationships between these factors." See Ray, op. cit., p. 435.

"The German commitment to Austria was certainly as vital a part of her policy as was the British guarantee to Belgium; but it could have been -- as in Bismarck's hands it surely would have been -- a stabilising and not a disturbing factor, a reassurance to Vienna rather than a temptation to adventure.¹¹⁸

The British historian then goes on to dismiss those who believe that the war was the result of irreconcilable differences between European states: "Anglo-German colonial rivalries were never so acute as Anglo-French, and even the famous naval race was no greater a factor in embittering relations than had been the far greater naval panics of 1859-61 or 1885-9."¹¹⁹ Indeed, Sir Michael sees the causes of the Great War as being rooted in the nature of military machines but also, more importantly, he believes that only in analyzing the nature of society at the time can one really understand the profound causes of the war. As he reminds us "The flower of British and French manhood had not flocked to the colours in 1914 to die for the balance of power."¹²⁰ Thus the nature of the international system (bipolar or multipolar) does not seem as important for Howard in understanding the roots of conflicts as it is for some proponents of the realist model. Howard's beliefs on the causes of wars will be further discussed in the chapter on

¹¹⁸ Michael Howard, "Reflections on the First World War", in Studies in War and Peace, p. 101.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 105.

strategic studies. But for now I will return to my analysis of this concept of balance of power.

Traditionally the balance of power has been identified as a mechanism that has ensured the survival of European states from the seventeenth century until the eve of the First World War. In this multipolar system of states, the role of the 'pivotal power' was seen as crucial. The 'pivotal power' is the state which, by its ability to easily go from one coalition to the other, is able to keep functioning the mechanism of balance of power. The theory thus assumes that this 'pivotal power' is strong enough so that its decisions will in fact allow it to 'control' the system.¹²¹ The European state most often identified with this role of the 'pivotal power' has normally been Great Britain: "The continental policy of England, thenceforth, was fixed. It was to be pacific, mediating, favourable to a balance which should prevent any power from having a hegemony on the continent or controlling the Channel coasts."¹²²

Howard, by his historical analysis, shows where this theory of the 'pivotal power', when using the Great Britain

¹²¹ On the literature concerning this 'pivotal power' concept see James Lee Ray, Global Politics, pp. 319-321.

¹²² J. Pirenne quoted in Paul M. Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery, London, Ashfield Press, 1983, p. 25.

example, can go wrong. First of all, the British historian reminds us that at times, and at crucial moments in European history, the British accepted the de facto hegemony of one state in Europe. In his superb study The Franco-Prussian War, Howard points out that Great Britain, even if she had had the capacity (which according to him she did not), saw no reasons to challenge German hegemony on the European scene:

"This neutrality Bismarck, by his careful restriction of German naval and overseas expansion, was to work assiduously to preserve; and so long as he remained in office the British were to acquiesce in a German hegemony of Europe which bore no resemblance to the pattern which they were traditionally supposed to cherish, of a European Balance of Power."¹²³

This situation of a German hegemony in Europe, accepted by the other European states as long as Germany showed restraint in her foreign policy, is particularly interesting in the context of recent events in East Germany where talks of German re-unification bring fears of renewed German domination of the Old Continent. Even if I agree with Howard that we should "mistrust historical analogy as a lazy substitute for analytic thought",¹²⁴ it would be interesting

¹²³ Michael Howard, The Franco-Prussian War: The German Invasion of France, 1870-1871, p. 454.

¹²⁴ Michael Howard, "Surviving a Protest", in The Causes of Wars, p. 132.

to hear the British historian's answers¹²⁵ to those realists who, because of recent changes in Eastern Europe, seem to see their dream come true: a return to the old, multipolar Europe of the 19th century regulated by the (original) balance of power mechanism!¹²⁶

If I preceded here balance of power with the adjective 'original' it is because, as I mentioned before, realists have several definitions for this mechanism. Indeed, in the nuclear bipolar world of the post-Second World War era, realists have had to modify their thoughts on the subject and, at first much to their surprise, now see the 'balance of terror' as a much better mechanism to keep stability, and thus peace, than the 'original' balance of power: "So the emergence of bipolarity and deterrence did not constitute a negation of the balance of power, but rather a continuation of the balance system, in an 'altered form' and elevated on

¹²⁵ A very recent article published in Foreign Affairs by Howard allows us to speculate that the British historian believes more in a 'European' Germany than in a 'germanized' Europe. A new unified Germany would thus show restraint in her foreign policy. Howard states that "In spite of her (Thatcher) resistance the development of a strong, centralized European Community, capable of absorbing East Germany and acting independently on the political scene, seemed by the end of the year to be more probable than less". in Michael Howard, "The Springtime of Nations", p. 28.

¹²⁶ See for example Stanislav J. Kirschbaum, "Quel avenir pour le Vieux Continent?", in Le Devoir, Saturday, December 9th, 1989, p. A-11.

to the global stage."¹²⁷

With this notion of balance of power in the form of nuclear deterrence, Sir Michael somewhat agrees. As a matter of fact, Howard sees in this 'balance of terror' a way to keep the great powers from going back to the old system dominated by the traditional balance of power. The British historian also agrees that "nuclear weapons have become a factor making for stability rather than the reverse."¹²⁸ However to Howard the stability of the international system since the Second World War has been the result of much more than simple nuclear deterrence:

"By the 1950s the international order appeared to rest on nothing more substantial than what a leading American strategic analyst, Albert Wohlstetter, termed 'a delicate balance of terror'. The passage of time has made it possible to suggest, cautiously, that in fact peace rests on a rather less precarious basis: the acceptance by the major world powers on the status quo as the only feasible framework for the conduct of their policies, and a common reluctance to tolerate any major disturbance; the basis, in fact, on which the peace of Europe rested for half a century after the Napoleonic wars."¹²⁹

In fact, the British historian strongly believes that

¹²⁷ R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, Global Problems and World Order, p. 243.

¹²⁸ Michael Howard, "Realists and Romantics: On Maintaining an International Order", p. 37.

¹²⁹ Michael Howard, War in European History, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1976, p. 136.

security cannot be based on military means alone and that ultimately trust between political leaders -- and for that matter between whole societies -- will provide the foundation for a lasting peace:

"Security is a subjective condition, a state of mind. It is based upon two elements: first, the assumption that no one wishes to attack us; and second, the belief that, even if they have the will and the capability to do so, they will be deterred by our evident capacity to resist. Of those two elements, the first is, of course, by far the most important: security based simply on military deterrence is a very poor second-best to security based on mutual confidence, and provides by itself a totally inadequate framework for world order."¹³⁰

Therefore if Howard certainly recognizes the benefits of nuclear deterrence for the stability of the international system, he seems reluctant to explain that stability on military grounds alone. This reluctance to give nuclear deterrence too much credit for keeping a relative peace between the superpowers since 1945 is consistent with his beliefs concerning the stabilizing effects of the balance of power mechanism as will be seen below.

Howard also finds unrealistic solutions proposed by realists such as R. Steel who believes that "a true balance of power must be based on spheres of influence which grant to

¹³⁰ Michael Howard, "Illusions that Fuel Pressures for Arms Control", The Atlantic Community Quarterly, Vol. 24, No. 2, (Summer 1986), p. 120.

the Great Powers certain rights in areas that they deem essential to their own security."¹³¹ Howard sees these proposals as unrealistic in the sense that no Western governments could possibly adopt such a policy. Writing in the 1950s, in the midst of the cold war, he pointed out that

"If our main object is to relax tension and stave off the risk of world war, the best way might be cold-bloodedly to accept the existing frontiers and spheres of influence in Europe as final. But this type of realism leaves much out of account. The fate of Eastern Europe has stirred Western sympathies and affected Western policy at least since the Bulgarian massacres of 1876, and the genuine idealism of humanitarian, middle-class democracies must be recognized as a vital element in calculations of international politics."¹³²

The above statement supports the argument that Howard is more realistic than the realists themselves. Indeed, by not feeling obliged to support and follow the logic of a theoretical model, the British historian is able to explain events as he understands them following, once again, no logic but his own. This approach has the advantages of underlining the weaknesses of arguments from different approaches and increasing our understanding of the 'profound' forces (such as the social element) affecting international politics. The disadvantage however is that, in the manner of the

¹³¹ Quoted in R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, op. cit., p. 243.

¹³² Michael Howard, Disengagement in Europe: An Examination of the proposals since the war for re-unifying Germany and liberating Eastern Europe from communist control, Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1958, p.18.

philosopher, Howard raises many questions and points to many problems but has very little solutions. The solutions he proposes seldom go beyond the call for prudence on the part of statesmen (thus in a sense supporting or explaining government's policy), calls for moderation and understanding, in particular vis-à-vis other cultures, and support for the continuing patient work, slowly leading to gradual change, of our faceless bureaucrats.

Lastly I will end this discussion on the concept of balance of power by quoting some typically 'Howardian' statements in that they seem revolutionary by realist standards, but the reader is left by himself trying to gauge how far the author wanted to go since the latter did not explain thoroughly what he meant. In this case, analyzing the realist approach that Kissinger (the "Merlin to King Arthur") applied to his conduct of foreign policy, using concepts such as 'linkages' and 'leverage', Howard, in opposition with a core realist belief, stated:

"The concept of balance of power may not have been outdated in the 1960s, but it was obsolescent, because the nature of power itself was changing. Great states, either individually or in concert, were losing their capacity to control events. Military strength and alliances were increasingly irrelevant to a world where change was being determined by social, economic and ideological developments beyond the power of any state

to affect more than marginally."¹³³

In another article, Sir Michael is even more critical of this balance of power mechanism when, after criticising liberal solutions to the problem of war, he portrays the alternative in the following way:

"On the other hand the realists' Balance of Power system has, with mournful regularity, failed to keep the peace, and each failure has been more catastrophic than the last. Systems of mutual deterrence have repeatedly led to expensive and inflammatory arms races which, so far from creating stability, have engendered a war psychosis and hastened the very conflict they were designed to prevent."¹³⁴

At last, answering to criticisms from liberals that the balance of power causes wars, Howard then set to the task of defending this concept! The British analyst points out that the balance of power is power politics or "the politics of not being overpowered" and then goes on to argue that "it is the business of statesmen and diplomats to make it unnecessary to fight such wars or to ensure that, if they do come, their country should not be confronted by a coalition so overwhelming (...) that it fights in a hopeless cause."¹³⁵

¹³³ Michael Howard, "Conducting the Concert of Powers", Armed Forces and Society, Vol. 6, No. 4, (1980), p. 665.

¹³⁴ Michael Howard, "A New Path to Peace? Leonard Beaton's Last Testament", p. 129.

¹³⁵ Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience, p. 132.

These apparent contradictions suggest several tentative conclusions on the role of the balance of power mechanism in Howard's thoughts. First, statesmen are not powerless people who are restricted in their actions by the type of system they live in. Second, the definition of power itself is changing. It is no longer to be understood primarily in terms of military power. Economic, ideological, cultural and, most importantly, social factors are altering the nature of the equation in such a way that traditional concepts, such as the balance of power, may not be relevant anymore.

Nonetheless, as we have seen, Howard does emphasize the role, and continued relevance, of military force in international relations. Since the British historian underlines this fact most often when he talks about the necessity for the statesmen to ensure the survival of his nation, this suggests that he sees military force, even if used as a means to sustain the balance of power, as necessary for the defense of the state but increasingly useless as a means to impose one's will on another nation.

Conclusion

To conclude this study of Howard and the realist

paradigm, let me remind the reader of my principal findings. First of all, in the discussion of the Hobbesian image of the world held by realists I have found out that if Sir Michael agrees with proponents of this paradigm on this question, that states live in a system characterized by anarchy and where an international society more or less exists, he however maintains that such a condition by itself is not a necessary reason for war. Howard reminds us that states structures were created not in order to bring peace at home, as Hobbes would have us believe, but rather to make war more efficient abroad. Consequently, war cannot be seen as a necessary recurring phenomenon due to anarchy in the international system. War, as Sir Michael points out, is a highly social activity and its roots can be found primarily in the internal structure of states and of societies themselves.

This analysis was thus followed by a study of the nature of the state and its role as a primary actor on the world stage. We saw that the realist paradigm, and for that matter Howard himself, believes in the continued relevance of the state as the most important factor in international relations. Responding to challenges on this question coming mainly from proponents of the interdependence theory, the Sir Michael emphasizes that history has shown that increased communications among people does not necessarily mean

increased understanding. As for the role of the nation-state as a focal point for the individual, Howard again recalls the fact that the creation of the nation has met for most individuals a widening of horizons, not a narrowing of them, and that the disappearance of nationalism would probably mean a return to parochialism.

On the question of the relationship between morality and the use of force in world politics it was found that Howard believes that concern for ethics and values should increase as power grows. Howard, and realists for that matter since they also accept that morality should play a role in world affairs, walk an uneasy line on that question. To be sure, the distinction between having ethical and power considerations go hand in hand and using power as a means to enforce ethical goals (as the pure liberals would have it) is not always clear. On the nature of power itself Sir Michael diverges somewhat from realist thinking by giving importance to non-military aspects of power such as economic factors, ideology or even cultural influence.

Lastly, concerning the usefulness of the balance of power as a mechanism to keep stability in the international system, Howard comes up with an ambiguous response. On the one hand he voices grave doubts about the utility of such a concept as a means for avoiding war (both before and after

the arrival of nuclear weapons) while on the other, he admits that one of the prime responsibilities of any statesmen is to prevent a hostile coalition of states to grow to such a strength that he would have no choice but to capitulate in the event of a conflict. My conclusion here was that Howard accepts the use of the balance of power as a means for protecting oneself but rejects its utility as a tool for controlling and imposing a certain order on a particular international system.

Howard can therefore be associated with the realist paradigm but, as we have seen, he has serious reservations, or different interpretations, about some of the most fundamental aspects of realist thinking. However it should be pointed out that his most severe criticisms are often directed at dimensions of the realist model which are mostly associated with the Realpolitik school of thought.

CHAPTER 3: Howard and the Liberal Conscience.

In the last chapter on the realist paradigm I compared Howard's writings with that school of thought in a rather comprehensive way. I have interpreted Sir Michael's views according to the realist model as defined by international relations theory experts or by realists themselves writing about particular concepts. As we have seen, Howard's criticisms of the realist paradigm were often based on an interpretation of the latter which was sometimes closer to the Realpolitik school of thought than to the more mainstream contemporary realist approach. Howard criticizes proponents of the former for giving an overwhelming importance to military force and not enough to economic strength, cultural influence and ideological drive in their calculation of the power available to a state.¹³⁶ Nonetheless, by most accounts and according to the definition of the paradigm that was adopted earlier, Howard can be said to be a member of the realist approach, even if he might very well reject this assigned membership to such a club.

This analysis of Howard's writings and the liberal approach will however be less comprehensive and this for

¹³⁶ Michael Howard, "The Strategic Approach to International Relations", in The Causes of Wars, p. 41.

several reasons. First of all, by the nature of this study of the realist model I have already shown Howard's skepticism to some of the central concepts or theories of the liberal school of thought. This is the case for ideas such as the level to which an international society has developed (thus reducing the negative effects of anarchy), the relative decline of the nation-state, the relevance of non-state actors, the degree of importance that should be given to transnational movements and the phenomenon of interdependence and, lastly, the impact that morality should have on government policy. Some of these concepts might be looked at from different angles in this chapter, but it is taken for granted that they have already been discussed in a more comprehensive way above.

A second reason for my reluctance to compare Howard's thoughts to the liberal model is because of the confusion that reigns in international relations theory textbooks as to whether or not such a paradigm exists at all. Indeed, if some authors believe that it is possible to talk of a liberal paradigm,¹³⁷ others argue that liberalism is not a distinct paradigm in itself but is only a part, with the dominating realism, of the same classical tradition of international

¹³⁷ See for example R.D. McKinlay; R. Little, op. cit.

relations theory.¹³⁸ Some maintain that one cannot talk of a liberal approach but only of a group of 'middle range' theories (such as the theory of interdependence or functionalism) not related among them into one coherent framework of analysis. Lastly, another group of scholars will talk of an overall paradigm, often called pluralism,¹³⁹ which will include traditional liberalism in addition to theories on transnationalism and interdependence.¹⁴⁰

Lastly, an analysis focused exclusively on the liberal

¹³⁸ K.J. Holsti for example believes that realism and liberalism are part of the same paradigm since "The search for essentials, for patterns and recurrence, the normative concern with the war and peace problem, and the debates concerning the existence and/or effectiveness of legal and other types of order-producing mechanisms, have united the figures into a coherent tradition." in The Dividing Discipline: Hegemony and Diversity in International Theory, p. 32.

¹³⁹ For example John D. Young describes the evolution of pluralism in the following terms: "The paradigmatic prism through which its practitioners approach their research agendas and in conformity with which they frame and conduct their theorizing is still consolidating and comprises an imperfect amalgam of earlier or concurrently developing strands in the IR literature, including functionalism, communications theory and cybernetics, bureaucratic politics modeling, integration theory, game-theoretic models of cooperative interaction strategies, and transnationalist and complex interdependence thinking." John D. Young, "International Political Theory, Political Science and the Inter-Paradigm Debate: The Natural Selection of Realism", Centre for International Relations Occasional Paper No. 19, Kingston, Queen's University, June 1987, p. 11.

¹⁴⁰ See for example Paul R. Viotti; Mark V. Kauppi, International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism, pp. 192-398.

model as seen by authors in the field of international relations theory would have the unfortunate consequence of missing the great bulk of Howard's thoughts on the topic which is directed more toward the peace activists than toward the theory itself. Of course as a military historian interested in the social aspect of war, Sir Michael has documented thoroughly the theoretical evolution of the traditional liberal paradigm, even as it evolved into the pure liberalism of American foreign policy after the Second World War. However, beyond some occasional remarks, Howard has not really made known his views on the growing body of literature on 'middle range' theories, often associated with the liberal paradigm, on topics such as the role of third party intervention in conflict management or the impact of regimes as a tool for regional conflict resolution. Therefore my inquiry will be centered around Howard's answers to some of the traditional peace activists' arguments as he presents them.

Liberals and the Concept of Peace.

It is interesting to look at the definitions Howard gives to liberals, realists and determinists (or marxists). First Howard gives to liberals a very 'generous' definition:

"And by 'liberals' I mean in general all those thinkers who believe the world to be profoundly other than it should be, and who have faith in the power of human reason and human action so to change it that the inner potential of all human beings can be more fully realised."¹⁴¹

Then Howard goes on to give what can be perceived to be a negative definition of realists: "This excludes on the one hand those conservatives who accept the world as it unalterably is and adjust to it with more or less good grace" and of determinists as those "who see men as trapped in predicaments from which they can be rescued only by historical processes which they may understand but which they are powerless to control."¹⁴²

Sir Michael thus seems to have a positive view of liberals which he associates, most of the time, with peace activists. However, in the book that summarizes his thoughts on the question, War and the Liberal Conscience, Howard presents the arguments that have been at the core of liberal thinking for the past five hundred years, and then shows how they were sometimes in contradiction with one another and how historical events have proven them wrong time after time. Nonetheless, Howard takes the unusual step of giving those liberals much credit for what he feels they have

¹⁴¹ Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience, p. 11.

¹⁴² Ibid.

accomplished: "It is thanks to the patient work, over nearly two centuries, of the men and women who have been inspired by the liberal conscience that so much progress has been made in the creation of a global community."¹⁴³ If Howard thus agrees with the ultimate goal of liberal thought he however differs with some of the means proposed by this approach.

First of all, Sir Michael has gone to some considerable length in order to define and understand the concept of peace. With characteristic humour, the war historian says of his interest for this notion that "Like the clown with his suppressed passion to play Hamlet, I have always wanted to consider the problem and nature of peace."¹⁴⁴ In attempting to define the idea of peace, Sir Michael shows immediately the inherent contradictions of that concept. Indeed if one goes beyond the simple definition of peace as 'the absence of violence', one comes up with the dilemma that "Peace in fact is a just order. An unjust order is not peace but oppression. Hence arises the paradox, of which we have heard so much during the past couple of decades, that it may be necessary to use violence to obtain peace."¹⁴⁵ Howard often points out cases where peace movements used slogans that were by

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Howard, "The Concept of Peace: On Its Illusions and Achievements", p. 18.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

definition contradictory, such the one of the 1930s "Against fascism and war."¹⁴⁶

Because of this inherent contradiction in the definition of the concept of peace, Howard thus defines two types of peace movements. The first one, most familiar to us, is the one composed mainly by people from the middle-classes of western industrial countries and for whom peace means preserving and reinforcing the status quo. The second one, more surprisingly, is according to Howard composed by those "fighters for 'national liberation' of all kinds, and those Marxist-Leninists who regard the bourgeois-imperialist structures of the world as being so intrinsically incompatible with a just society that they must be destroyed."¹⁴⁷ The British historian, in his books and articles, very often comes back to this theme of the necessity, whenever one talks about the concept of peace, to remember that war must not be considered in isolation with society but rather as a means of last resort to force change in that very society, especially since the last war in those Third World countries where dictatorships and totalitarianism still prevail. Considering this fact, it is indeed surprising that Sir Michael has written so little about the unique

¹⁴⁶ Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience, p. 99.

¹⁴⁷ Michael Howard, "Weapons and Peace", in The Causes of Wars, p. 268.

relationship between the army and the state in those countries.¹⁴⁸

The concept of peace for Howard cannot thus be defined as simply being the absence of violence. He indeed recognizes the possible existence of structural violence both at the international and domestic levels. For the domestic scene, Sir Michael maintains that "The first characteristic of peace, then, is social and political order; and if such order is to be effective and continuing, it must be freely accepted by all politically-conscious members of the community where it prevails."¹⁴⁹ Consequently, the present situation in South Africa does not constitute peace for Howard. If most liberals would agree with Sir Michael's views on this matter, they would probably find it more difficult to follow his logic when it comes to the international system. Indeed if peace can be achieved only when coercion is absent on the domestic scene, the same must be said at the international level:

¹⁴⁸ In some articles such as "Many Reasons for Vietnam" and "Empire, Race and War in pre-1914 Britain" (History Today, Vol. 31, Dec. 1981), Howard does talk about the colonization and decolonization movements but always from the point of view of the imperial power. One answer to our question might be that not being an area specialist of one of those regions, Howard may feel that he does not have the necessary knowledge to discuss those questions.

¹⁴⁹ Michael Howard, "Problems of a Disarmed World", in Studies in War and Peace, p. 226.

"Given the State system, peace is possible only when there is freedom from all fear of coercion; and in the absence of any supranational authority enforcing a universal rule of law, such freedom from fear still depends at least partly on independent or collective military capability."¹⁵⁰

Sir Michael, by defining clearly the concept of peace both at the domestic and international levels, is able to show its inherent contradictions. Howard does not advocate foreign support for movements of national liberation nor constant increases in the level of our armed forces. Neither is he an absolute supporter of the status quo: "The preservation of the status quo as an objective in itself ceases to be practicable when it can be justified only in terms of protection against perils which a growing proportion of the population has never experienced."¹⁵¹ Howard in fact promotes change but only if it takes place in a 'framework of power and order', the nuclear era not leaving us any other choices.¹⁵²

Therefore if it could be said that Howard agrees with most liberals on the ultimate goal of political action, the achievement of a more just society, he however disagrees with

¹⁵⁰ Michael Howard, "The Relevance of Traditional Strategy", in The Causes of Wars, p. 85.

¹⁵¹ Michael Howard, "Realist and Romantics: On Maintaining and International Order", p. 39.

¹⁵² Ibid.

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the means proposed by the latter as well as their lack of logic and the inflammatory rhetoric often surrounding their arguments. An example of one of those liberals criticized by Howard is E.P. Thompson. Without going into the details of the argument, let me just say that Thompson castigated Sir Michael for being too close to the 'establishment' when in fact the latter expressed doubts as to the logic of a major aspect of the British government defense policy (which in this case was the alleged necessity of cruise-missiles and the strategic deterrent).¹⁵³

However, the most serious criticism that Howard directed at Mr Thompson concerned directly the argument developed above: the lack of understanding of the fact that peace does not only mean the absence of violence but, most importantly in the nuclear age, is also 'freedom from the fear of coercion'. Writing in 1980, Howard was concerned not about the imminence of a Soviet invasion but about the possibility of 'finlandization' of Western Europe (when ironically, less than a decade later, and along with other political analysts, he would talk about the 'finlandization' of Eastern Europe¹⁵⁴). Howard stated that the consequences of Mr Thompson's proposals to create a nuclear-free zone from

¹⁵³ Michael Howard, "Surviving a Protest", in The Causes of Wars, p. 116.

¹⁵⁴ Michael Howard, "The Springtime of Nations", p. 29.

Poland to the Atlantic, would be to force Western Europe:

"to abstain from causing them (the Russians) internal or external embarrassment; to provide them with trade on highly advantageous conditions; to accept (as does Eastern Europe) their hegemonial leadership; and, not least, to eliminate those elements in our political systems that they found disturbing."¹⁵⁵

This example of a criticism that Sir Michael directed at a leader of a peace movement thus shows his belief in the necessity to protect one's nation both against actual and threatened violence and to maintain 'a framework of power and order'.

The Necessity for Change.

If a realist would have little trouble accepting the arguments made above by the British analyst, he would probably find it more difficult to embrace Howard's views when it comes to his ideas on the necessity for change. As John Burton has pointed out, for a realist, who accepts war as a legitimate instrument of state's policy, to believe in the necessary modification of the status quo "would immediately confront the analyst with no alternative but to acknowledge war as the only available mechanism for

¹⁵⁵ Michael Howard, "Surviving a Protest", p. 133.

change."¹⁵⁶ Howard's argument here would probably be that since he does not see military force as the sole, or even in some cases as the principal, instrument at the disposal of the state to express its power, change becomes possible without the use of violence.

One of those proposals for change, suggested by an author from the liberal tradition, receives an interesting review from Howard which tells us much about the ideas of the British historian on this question. In his book The Reform of Power,¹⁵⁷ Leonard Beaton defends the idea according to which an effective international security system could be put into place as part of a gradual process. Beaton's main argument is that "there is an international security interest over and above, but not necessarily opposed to, national security interests" and that a region where such a common security interest exists is Central Europe.¹⁵⁸ Recognition of that fact would lead to cooperation being institutionalized, following lines similar to those of the OECD or the IMF, and, gradually, the new organization would be attributed an increasing amount of power but always in respecting the

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in Robert Gilpin, War and Change in World Politics, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Leonard Beaton, The Reform of Power: A Proposal for an International Security System, London, Chatto & Windus, 1972.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Howard, "A New Path to Peace? Leonard Beaton's Last Testament", p. 131.

fundamental security interests of the member states, such as is the case with NATO.

Commenting on this proposal, Howard observes that "It would be a functionalist development comparable to those in the fields of trade and communications which have gradually been building up a true world community through transnational links; and as Beaton points out, we have gone part of the way already."¹⁵⁹ If Sir Michael then points out that too much should not be expected of those transnational links, his main criticism of this scheme is that "The further one moves along the path Leonard Beaton charts for the world, the more one comes up against the old dilemma of disarmament: to be effective it requires a type of behaviour which, if it existed, would make disarmament unnecessary."¹⁶⁰ Howard thus predicted, unknowingly at the time, the one reason which would cause the MBFR talks (which had just started at the time) to be such a failure and which would then prove to be the bedrock of the INF agreement as well as the START and CFE negotiations, which should also give positive results in the next few months. Hence the British historian is consistent in his criticism of the pacifist movements' tendencies to separate political from defence-related issues. Nonetheless, and surprisingly enough for those realists who agreed with

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 133.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

the above criticism, Howard concludes his review by accepting the general ideas proposed by this functionalist approach: "whether he is on the whole right, and that, whether or not one accepts his detailed proposals, the direction he indicated offer the best prospect for constructive change."¹⁶¹

Lastly, it is important here to underline once again Howard's fundamental belief that men and women inspired by the liberal conscience must play a crucial role in the strategic debate. Even if he points out that the liberal tradition "has certainly been a tradition often marred by naiveté, by intellectual arrogance, by ignorance, by confused thinking and sometimes, alas, by sheer hypocrisy",¹⁶² Howard nonetheless firmly maintains that

"More often than not, questions they (the peace activists) raise and the criticisms they make about Western defence postures are entirely legitimate. They furnish our societies not only with a conscience but also with a critical intelligence. (...) They are the 'philosophers' whose freedom of expression Kant modestly claimed to be a condition of Perpetual Peace, and with whom dialogue is the essential prerequisite of a free society."¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Michael Howard, War and the Liberal Conscience, p. 134.

¹⁶³ Michael Howard, "Social Change and the Defence of the West", in The Causes of Wars, p. 72.

This concern for constant dialogue is reflected in the number of articles and books written by Howard on questions raised most often by peace activists and we could say that his preoccupation for the moral aspect in the use of force, discussed earlier, is probably not alien to this concern.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter on the liberal conscience, let me once more recall Howard's main positions when it comes to this question. First I pointed out that the main reason for which I did not believe that it would be appropriate to make a thorough analysis Howard's thoughts according to the liberal paradigm (once again if such a paradigm exists at all) was that the British historian concentrated the bulk of his writings on this question in discussing the peace activists' concerns. A method of analysis similar to the one used in the chapter on the realist paradigm would thus have missed much of his arguments. Then I looked at how Sir Michael defines the concept of peace. The British historian believes that peace means the absence of the fear of coercion, both at the domestic and international levels which, in the latter case, poses a problem to the proponents of disarmament.

I also analyzed Howard's thoughts on the question of change which, as we have seen, is a controversial topic in realist thought. Even more controversial from this point of view is not only Howard's acceptance of the necessity for change, but his apparent belief that the functionalist approach has much to offer in terms of the general direction that one should follow if one wants to reduce tensions in the international system. Lastly I emphasized once again Sir Michael's firm belief that dialogue with members and supporters of the peace movement is a necessary step in the achievement of a more just society.

CHAPTER 4: Aron and Howard: the Philosopher of War and the Military Historian.

The late Raymond Aron and Michael Howard are two towering figures in their own fields. Aron, the French analyst, has written immensely in his field of political philosophy, as well as on the phenomenon of war, and is gradually being recognized as one of this century's greatest authors in this domain. Howard, the British historian born in the generation that followed that of Aron, is also a pioneering figure in his field in that he is considered by some as the father of this generation of post-World War Two military historians who tried to understand the relationship between war and society.¹⁸⁴ We thus have, on the one hand, a political philosopher and sociologist who became interested in the problem of war while, on the other, we have a military historian who tries to comprehend how war and society mutually affect one another.

However, before attempting to compare these two great figures within European political and strategic debates, one

¹⁸⁴ See the comments on this point from Geoffrey Best and Brian Bond in the article "What is military history?". Bond in particular, who talks about this tendency to understand war in its full political, economic and social aspect, asserts that "Probably the outstanding individual influence on this trend has been that of Professor Michael Howard".

needs to warn the reader of the difficulties of discussing such a broad topic in such a limited space. Because of this fact, it will be necessary to limit my incursion into this immense field to the problem that has attracted so much of the attention of these two authors, and which is of course the definition of the nature of war and its relationship to the state as a political entity. More specifically, since both Aron and Howard have devoted a great deal of attention to the classical military thinker who more than anyone else has tried to define this relationship, Carl von Clausewitz, my discussion in this chapter will be centered around both authors' interpretation of the thoughts of this strategist.

The reasons for these limitations are that to formally compare Aron's views to those of Howard's concerning the realist paradigm would be repetitive since it would become necessary to restate Howard's thoughts on the question. The same can also be said concerning a comparison between the two on major strategic issues. I would in a way 'preempt' the arguments that will be made in the last chapter. Lastly on the topic of the liberal conscience, it is interesting to note that Aron believed that it was necessary to direct his criticisms not at the peace movements but mainly at the ideological challenge presented by Marxists. This can most probably be explained by their academic backgrounds, the very different political scene of both countries as well as the

different times at which both authors produced their major works.

Clausewitz: The Philosophical and the Historical
Approaches.

If by most accounts, and because of different approaches, the writings of Aron and Howard on Clausewitz often seem to contradict one another, in some respects they can be seen to be complementary. Indeed I believe that a comparative analysis as will be done below shows how an analyst like Sir Michael can provide both historical perspective and, to a certain extent, direction to the development of a theory, in this case by the French political philosopher Raymond Aron. It is thus necessary to begin this analysis by looking at some of the fundamental assumptions that form the basis of both authors' inquiries into the thoughts of Carl von Clausewitz.

In the first instance Aron, the political philosopher, assumes that it is possible, much in the manner of Clausewitz, to more or less develop a general theory of international relations. In his most famous work, Paix et Guerre entre les nations, Aron clearly states his theoretical ambition:

"Mais, en allant de la théorie formelle à la détermination des causes, puis à l'analyse d'une conjoncture singulière, j'espère illustrer une méthode, applicable à d'autres objets, montrer tout à la fois les limites de notre savoir et les conditions des choix historiques."¹⁸⁵

Aron also leaves no doubt as to which paradigm of international relations will form the bedrock of his theoretical enterprise: "La théorie des relations internationales part de la pluralité des centres autonomes de décision, donc du risque de guerre et, de ce risque, elle déduit la nécessité du calcul des moyens."¹⁸⁶ In this short statement, the French analyst states the most important beliefs of the realist paradigm. The 'pluralité des centres autonomes de décision' refers to the existence of autonomous states, living in a state of anarchy ('donc du risque de guerre'), and thus ultimately having to rely on force for their survival ('elle déduit la nécessité du calcul des moyens').

Howard has some interesting thoughts on this attempt by Aron to develop a general theory of international relations. In a rare review article of one of Aron's works, Howard says of the latter's Paix et Guerre entre les nations that "His

¹⁸⁵ Raymond Aron, Paix et Guerre entre les nations, Paris, Calmann-Lévy, 1962, p. 16.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

theory consists, like that of Aristotle in the Politics or Montesquieu in L'Esprit des Lois, of conclusions drawn from explicit fundamental assumptions. It provides a guide to the understanding of the world; not a tool for changing it."¹⁸⁷ If Howard seems to grant to Aron that he has developed a 'theory' of international relations, he is however critical of the outcome of the entire enterprise: "His methodology is highly traditional (...) his style though lucid, is discursive. His analysis, though penetrating, produces no really new insights."¹⁸⁸ Although we cannot assume that Howard would have made similar remarks had he written a review of Aron's work on Clausewitz,¹⁸⁹ it does nonetheless provide some interesting clues as to the usefulness of theories for international relations in Howard's mind.

¹⁸⁷ Michael Howard, "Power Politics: Raymond Aron's Theory of Peace and War", Encounter, February 1968, p. 56.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁸⁹ The only direct reference made by Howard of Aron's thoughts on Clausewitz is in a bibliographical note at the end of his Clausewitz (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983) when he refers to Aron's Penser la guerre, Clausewitz (2 vols, Paris, Gallimard, 1976) as a "comprehensive survey of Clausewitz's thought and influence by another distinguished non-German scholar". This endorsement is at best lukewarm, and probably contains a degree of unwritten criticism, when one compares it to his praise of Paret's Clausewitz and the State (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976) where he comment that it is an "authoritative biography and a comprehensive study of Clausewitz's thought which renders all previous studies in any language out of date." Anyone who has read Paret's work would however probably agree that, although penetrating, it is far from the conceptual analysis provided by Aron.

If Aron believes in the possibility of developing a general theory of international relations, and here I refer of course to the 'philosophical' theory as defined in the first chapter, he is consequently very receptive to Clausewitz's attempt to elaborate a similar theory explaining the phenomenon of war. Aron will therefore analyze Clausewitz's thoughts from a philosophical perspective, and will tend to see the Prussian general as being primarily a philosopher of war: "Au point de départ, j'invoquerai un argument à la fois simple et irréfutable. Les problèmes que se pose Clausewitz, le projet de son oeuvre, caractérisent par excellence l'entreprise philosophique."¹⁷⁰ According to Aron, the prime concern of Clausewitz was to develop a general theory of conflicts and, even if he went only part of the way in that direction, he can nonetheless be considered as one of the "fondateurs de la sociologie de l'action ou parmi ceux qui ont pressenti les cadres formels d'une praxéologie rationnelle ou d'une théorie des jeux."¹⁷¹

Howard, on the other hand, sees Clausewitz's work in a much less grandiose fashion. According to the British

¹⁷⁰ Raymond Aron, "Sentiment et Entendement dans la pensée de Clausewitz", 1972, in Sur Clausewitz, Bruxelles, Editions Complexe, 1987, p. 53. (Note: This book is a collection of articles on Clausewitz written by Aron between 1972 and 1980).

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p. 54.

military historian

"it must not be forgotten that Clausewitz was a soldier writing primarily for soldiers; that he looked forward to the continuation of war as something natural and inevitable; and that his teaching was intended for successive generations of patriotic Germans fighting for their Fatherland--not for world statesmen conducting international politics in an age of nuclear plenty. Too much should not be read in Clausewitz, nor should more be expected of him than he intended to give."¹⁷²

This does not mean that Sir Michael does not believe in the continued relevance of Clausewitz's thoughts. Quite the contrary, he sees some of the Prussian general's ideas to be even more pertinent in the nuclear age as they were before, as will be demonstrated later in this discussion as well as in the next chapter on strategic studies.

What Howard is up against is the tendency by many contemporary political analysts, in which I tend to think Aron would be included even if Sir Michael does not mention him by name, to take Clausewitz's teachings out of their political and historical contexts and use his conceptual framework, as a whole, to extrapolate on Clausewitz's probable interpretation of contemporary political events. It is one thing to take some of Clausewitz's most interesting

¹⁷² Michael Howard, "The Influence of Clausewitz", (introductory essay), in Carl von Clausewitz, On War, (trans. by Paret and Howard), Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976, 1984, p. 44.

ideas, such as the definition of war as the continuation of policy by other means, and show how they can help our understanding of today's strategic debates. However it is quite another to consider, and defend against criticisms, his work as a coherent whole that can explain the source and the nature of most armed conflicts. This type of work can become highly speculative and since Clausewitz's On War is, by his own admission, incomplete, it becomes very tempting for an admirer of Clausewitz to 're-write' On War for its author according to the ideas of the first chapter of Book One¹⁷³ and the 'Note of 1827'.¹⁷⁴ Howard warns the reader of On War of the difficulties in interpreting this work when he says that "It is not easy, however, to give a fair and comprehensive summary of Clausewitz's strategic doctrine, since it is presented with infuriating incoherence."¹⁷⁵ What

¹⁷³ Aron openly admits that he will attempt such a reconstruction when he says that one of his prime objectives in writing his study of Clausewitz was to answer the following question: "Qu'est-ce qu'aurait exigé la révision du livre à la lumière de ce que j'appelle la synthèse finale, le testament intellectuel ou la cathédrale conceptuelle, à savoir le premier chapitre du livre I?" In Penser la guerre, Clausewitz: L'âge européen, vol. 1, p. 156.

¹⁷⁴ In the 'Note of 10 July 1827', Clausewitz makes known his intention to revise his entire work according to two concepts. The first one is that war can be of two kinds, limited or total, while the second one is the much quoted concept according to which "war is nothing but the continuation of policy with other means". In a second unfinished note, presumably written in 1830, Clausewitz admitted that "The first chapter of Book One alone I regard as finished." On War, pp. 69-70.

¹⁷⁵ Michael Howard, Clausewitz, p. 40.

makes me believe that Howard sees Aron as belonging to this group of authors that he criticizes is what I will now be discussing.

On War: Aron and Howard

Analyzing Clausewitz from a very philosophical or conceptual approach, Raymond Aron believes in an obvious logic in On War, even if again Michael Howard sees only a work 'presented with infuriating incoherence': "Le Traité (On War), tel qu'il nous est parvenu, s'organise selon un plan qui, me semble-t-il, se dégage de lui-même."¹⁷⁶ Aron will thus use as a framework for analysis, using like the Prussian general a dialectical method, what he believes to be Clausewitz's 'System'. This 'System' according to the French political philosopher is composed of the three following antitheses: moral-physical, means and ends, defense and attack.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, Aron sees the two ideas of the 'Note of 1827', the two types of wars (limited and total) and the subordination of war to political ends, as a natural continuation of Clausewitz's thinking on means and ends. However, it is interesting to note here that Aron believes

¹⁷⁶ Raymond Aron, Penser la guerre, Clausewitz: L'âge européen, p. 151.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 153.

that in Clausewitz's mind,

"Cette dualité des espèces précède la subordination de la guerre à la politique parce que Clausewitz, dans un livre de stratégie, ne peut étudier en détail les diverses fins que se proposent les Etats belligérants mais qu'il rencontre une opposition majeure, celle de la victoire décisive et de l'avantage relatif."¹⁷⁸

This opposition of limited and total war has therefore priority over the one of war and policy in Clausewitz's mind, according to Aron, since it provides a more definite dialectical opposition with which he can analyze war as a strategist. The opposition between war and political ends would then be a less useful tool for Clausewitz, the definition of the latter (which according to Aron Clausewitz could not study) being necessary in explaining the nature of the former.

I have elaborated on this last conceptual argument because I believe that it shows how different approaches can lead our two authors to different conclusions. Aron, the political philosopher, seems to be 'obsessed' with the dialectical method in analyzing Clausewitz, therefore seeing the latter as thinking primarily in dialectical terms, thus being more concerned with the conceptual coherence of his arguments than with the actual relevance of his dialectical

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 156.

concept in reality.

Indeed, Howard asserts that this whole opposition between limited and total war, when analyzed in view of the idea of war as a means to a political end, is in fact insignificant: "Given that considerations of policy are paramount, and knowing that the requirements of policy may be almost infinitely various, war can surely be of any kind, not only of two."¹⁷⁹ What Howard is saying here is not that to distinguish between different types of wars is irrelevant but that to analyze this problem using the dialectical method can lead to trivial conclusions. In opposition to Aron, Howard leaves the door open to the possibility that Clausewitz could have abandoned in this important case his dialectical method in order to consider other types of wars: "The implication of this possibility of gradation, as opposed to the sharp distinction between two categories, Clausewitz did not live to explore."¹⁸⁰

I do not want to imply here that Howard did not appreciate the importance of the dialectical method in understanding some of the most important Clausewitzian concepts. To be sure, Howard at first seems to analyze Clausewitz's writings along lines similar to that of Aron:

¹⁷⁹ Michael Howard, Clausewitz, p. 50.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

"One could not understand the nature of war unless one appreciated the dialectic between moral and physical forces. But one could not have a practical theory for the conduct of war unless one understood the relationship between ends and means; in particular the political end of war and the military means used to attain it."¹⁸¹

Nonetheless Howard differs with the French analyst in that he does not attempt to take Clausewitz's ideas and build them into an all-embracing conceptual model, 'distilling' from it a general theory of war.¹⁸² Consequently Howard will feel more at ease in criticizing important aspects of Clausewitz's thoughts, not having the impression of destroying a whole conceptual model and thus, the validity of the ideas themselves.

One of the most serious criticisms of Clausewitz's writings made by Howard concerns his total lack of consideration for the economic aspect of warfare:

"It demanded a very narrow view of the nature of war to study the Napoleonic period as intensively as did Clausewitz without taking into account the part played in Napoleon's strategy, and perhaps in his downfall, by the Continental System - his attempt to use economic as well as military instruments to consolidate and extend

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁸² Howard points out that Clausewitz himself considered On War "a collection of material from which a theory of war will have to be distilled". Quoted in Clausewitz, p. 40.

his conquests."¹⁸³

To this type of criticism Aron, once again defending Clausewitz's conceptual framework, answers in an article published in 1976 that non-military means, such as propaganda or commercial exchanges, are in fact related to the Staatspolitik (the state's policy) and if, in time of peace, they are used to prepare for war, in time of war "ces mêmes moyens sont complémentaires des moyens militaires; ces derniers demeurent le noyau de la lutte; c'est dans le combat que la lutte polymorphe se décide."¹⁸⁴ Aron thus interprets Clausewitz's thinking on this question in the following way: since economic factors do not directly affect the core aspect of war, the shock of armies on the battlefield, it is legitimate that they should not be included in a general theory of war. Violence is the prime characteristic of war, and to include non-violent means into a theory of conflicts would lead, according to Aron, to the inversion of the 'formula': peace would become the continuation of war by other means.¹⁸⁵

Hence we see once more how Aron's theoretical model of

¹⁸³ Michael Howard, Clausewitz, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴ Raymond Aron, "Sur l'expression de stratégie politique" (1976), in Clausewitz, p. 170.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 169.

Clausewitz's writings leads the French political philosopher into such conceptual rigidity that he justifies the non-inclusion in a theory of war of a factor that, at least for the great majority of strategic analysts of this century, is considered to be of prime importance in explaining both the source and the nature of war.

Lastly I will present a last example showing how Aron's dedication in defending Clausewitz's 'System' against almost any criticisms leads him to take extreme positions as far as 'Clausewitzian studies' are concerned. But let me first present Howard's argument. The question here concerns Liddell Hart's interpretation of Clausewitz, considered by the famous British captain to be responsible for the massacres of the First World War because of his preference for principles which called for the direct assault and absolute wars.¹⁰⁰ If Howard believes that ultimately Liddell Hart's view of Clausewitz's writings was "distorted, inaccurate, and unfair", he nonetheless acknowledges that

"In many respects Liddell Hart's critique of Clausewitz

¹⁰⁰ However Liddell Hart admits that this was due in part to a lack of understanding of Clausewitz's thoughts by those generals: "The outcome of his (Clausewitz's) teaching, applied by unthinking disciples, was to incite generals to seek battle at the first opportunity, instead of creating an advantageous opportunity. Thereby the art of war was reduced in 1914-18 to a process of mutual mass-slaughter." In B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy, London, Faber, 1954, p. 208.

was quite justified: the reiterated emphasis on battle, the small concern for maneuver, a definition of 'strategy' which ignored all save purely military means, the ignoring of naval and economic factors, the tortuous and self-contradictory quality of much of the writing."¹⁸⁷

To be sure, Sir Michael admits that, in their historical context, these faults are understandable, but that they still need to be underlined.

Raymond Aron, for his part, sees this question of interpretation of Clausewitz in terms of extremes (once again!). At one extreme he positions Liddell Hart who considers Clausewitz as a "Stratège qui ignore ou méprise la manoeuvre, qui recherche le choc direct" while, surprisingly, Aron openly admits that "L'autre interprétation extrême, le lecteur la trouve, pour l'essentiel, dans les chapitres précédents de ce livre."¹⁸⁸ Aron's position is that if one goes to the limit of Clausewitz's 'Formula', that war is the continuation of policy by other means, one cannot advocate any rigid military doctrine since any such doctrine will have to be adapted to the political situation of the

¹⁸⁷ Michael Howard, "The Influence of Clausewitz", in On War, p. 40.

¹⁸⁸ Raymond Aron, Penser la guerre, Clausewitz: L'âge européen, p. 357.

moment.¹⁸⁹

This example, at last, demonstrate how two very different approaches (the historical and the philosophical), used by Howard and Aron in their analysis of Clausewitz's teachings, can lead to substantially different interpretations of some aspects of his thought.

Conclusion

I believe that it is appropriate to conclude this chapter on Aron's and Howard's interpretations of Clausewitz's thoughts by putting the above criticisms of the French analyst's views into perspective. First of all, one question that needs to be answered is why does Aron defend with such dedication the works of Clausewitz? One tentative answer, which could be proven only by an in-depth analysis of his works, is that Aron, in his admiration for Clausewitz's approach to the problem of war, develops the logical consequences of some of the ideas expressed in On War to such an extent that the resulting model is no longer the one of

¹⁸⁹ Aron states that his interpretation "consiste dans la subordination, poussée jusqu'à son terme logique, de l'instrument militaire à l'intention politique" thus leading to the "polymorphisme des guerres en raison leur insertion dans le contexte du commerce politique entre les Etats et les peuples." Ibid., p. 358.

the Prussian general, but rather that of the French political philosopher. Consequently, as was shown in the last example, Aron seems to feel that a criticism against Clausewitz becomes a criticism against 'his' model and will thus go to 'extremes' to defend it. What is unfortunate in this process is that Aron, by clearly admitting that Clausewitz's analysis although a landmark now needs to be modified and refined, could have developed a much more solid model for analyzing war, using his penetrating understanding of world politics and not feeling constrained in defending the 'purity' of the 'original' conceptual framework.

At the beginning of the preceding section I mentioned that Aron's and Howard's views on Clausewitz could be seen in certain aspects as complementary. The reader probably found it difficult to understand which aspects these were since I mostly pointed out differences rather than similarities between the two authors. However, as was suggested above, this complementary nature of their writings must be seen not according to their interpretation of a certain author, but rather from the point of view of theory. Historians can and must, even if only by the nature of their criticisms, bring perspective and direction to the valuable efforts of political scientists and philosophers alike in their search for, if not a theory, at least a conceptual framework which can guide our understanding of world politics.

CHAPTER 5: Strategic Studies and the Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy

If theorists of international relations often complain about the lack of agreed and clear delimitations of their area of study, their problems might appear mild to those trying to define the field of strategic studies. In fact, not only are the areas of inquiry diverse but their relevance to one another are often tenuous. For example, an undergraduate program in strategic studies might comprise courses in fields such as the history of war, classical military thought, nuclear strategy, arms control, terrorism and guerrilla warfare, sociology of war, comparative defence policy, current strategic issues, conventional strategy, defence economics, game theory, decision-making, technology of armaments, in addition to standard courses in international relations. This is of course a limited description of a strategic studies curriculum since some will also include 'Peace Studies' and approaches to conflict resolution in the field. Further, the methods of analysis used will be at least as varied as those described earlier for the field of international relations theory.

The wide range of issues associated with strategic studies thus makes it almost impossible to look at Howard's views in all of these facets. Not only are there limitations

of space, but Howard himself has sometimes made only passing references to the issues outlined. For instance, a rare-- but telling -- comment made by the British historian on negotiation theories was that the principles on which diplomacy was based in the years following the development of a new international system (1945-1963), were very similar to those developed in the European state system over three centuries except that now

"Career diplomats had to listen with professional courtesy as enthusiastic young academics from Harvard expounded to them, with much jargon and many mathematical equations, principles of international negotiation which they had absorbed with their mother's milk."¹⁸⁰

If Howard did not write much on the topic one can certainly not accuse him of once again leaving the reader uncertain as to his real opinion on the subject!

Since the definition of the field of strategic studies seems to be a contentious issue in itself, I will present Howard's views on this matter after first setting out a brief overview of the definitions of some of the field's leading practitioners. As part of this defining process, the particular role of technology in the nuclear age will be examined as well as the question of the ongoing relevance of

¹⁸⁰ Michael Howard, "Realists and Romantics: On Maintaining an International Order", p. 35.

strategic thought as a constituent element of international relations. Also presented in the section on Howard and the definition of strategy will be the views of the British historian on the role of conventional forces in an eventual nuclear battlefield.

In addition, since throughout this study Howard's writings have been analyzed according to a pre-established conceptual framework, I will at last leave to Sir Michael 'le choix des armes' in that I will present Howard's views on strategy according to a framework developed by the British historian himself in "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy."¹⁸¹ In this remarkable article Howard identifies four dimensions of strategy: the operational; the logistical; the technological; and, the social. From this conceptual framework it will thus be possible to analyze Howard's views on a range of issues that would otherwise be overlooked if one concentrated one's attention only on contemporary strategic debates.

The objective here is once again as in the preceding chapters to present the views of an historian on issues that are too often the domain of analysts who have little or no historical background. Those few historians who are often

¹⁸¹ Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", in The Causes of Wars, pp. 101-115.

'dragged into' these contemporary strategic debates thus offer an original perspective for studying these crucial issues.

The Field of Strategic Studies

In a recent book that seems to be gradually becoming a reference work in the field, Barry Buzan asserts that "the main concepts of Strategic Studies are arms racing, nuclear proliferation, defence, deterrence, arms control, and disarmament."¹⁸² According to Joseph Nye, this conception of the field reflects the narrow definition of strategy which is "the planning and directing of large-scale military operations" while the broader definition, borrowed from Hedley Bull, describes strategy as "shaping means to promote ends in any field of conflict."¹⁸³ Notwithstanding Nye's interpretation of Buzan's perception of strategy,¹⁸⁴ the

¹⁸² Barry Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies: Military Technology & International Relations, p. 8.

¹⁸³ Joseph S. Nye Jr, "The Contribution of Strategic Studies: Future Challenges", Adelphi Papers, No 235, (Spring 1989), p. 22.

¹⁸⁴ While one can agree with this distinction in the different definitions of strategy, one finds it much harder to understand Nye's assertion that the narrower definition is reflected in Buzan's book. After all, even if the author himself acknowledges that he had for obvious reasons to narrow his field of inquiry (p. 5.), to study deterrence or nuclear proliferation demands a thorough understanding of the relationship between

broader definition appears to be widely accepted by authors in the field.¹⁸⁵ Lawrence Freedman gives a good example of this Clausewitzian interpretation of strategy when he asserts that "Strategic studies can be defined as the study of the use of military means to achieve political ends."¹⁸⁶

However if Clausewitz would obviously agree with this broad definition of strategy, he would probably be surprised to see that in the nuclear age 'strategists' tend to equate military means with technology.¹⁸⁷ Buzan expresses a widely accepted belief when he states that "The subject matter of Strategic Studies arises from two fundamental variables affecting the international system: its political structure,

military means and political ends.

¹⁸⁵ One notable exception is André Beaufre. In fact the French general believes that the 'broad definition' is not broad enough. Beaufre postulates that one should look beyond the simple definition of strategy as being the study of the use of force in order to achieve political objectives. Instead one should focus his attention at a higher level and analyse the relationship between two opposing wills. According to Beaufre strategy is thus "l'art de la dialectique des volontés employant la force pour résoudre leur conflit". See Général André Beaufre, Introduction à la stratégie, Paris, Economica, 1985, p. 16.

¹⁸⁶ Lawrence Freedman, "Strategic Studies", in Steve Smith, ed., International Relations: British and American Perspectives, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1985, p. 30.

¹⁸⁷ Clausewitz gave almost no consideration to the technological dimension of strategy simply because up to Clausewitz's days military technology did not evolve fast enough to give one of the contestants an undue advantage over the other in a specific conflict.

and the nature of the prevailing technologies available to the political actors within it."¹⁹⁸ Colin Gray also follows along the same lines when he argues that "The history of strategy is the history of the complex relationship among strategic ideas, military technology, and policy."¹⁹⁹

Strategic studies, and in particular nuclear strategy, thus seem to have been dominated since 1945 by, on the one hand, the 'micro analysis' of military technologies and, on the other, by the 'macro analysis' of the effects on international politics of the introduction, and continuing development, of nuclear arsenals. But between these two levels of analysis the former seems to have received most of the attention. According to Freedman:

"Because of the remarkable constancy in the fundamental relations between the major powers throughout the nuclear age, the political framework has been taken too much for granted and strategic studies have become infatuated with the microscopic analysis of military technology and the acquisition of equipment by the forces of both sides."²⁰⁰

This criticism that contemporary 'strategists' give an

¹⁹⁸ Barry Buzan, An Introduction to Strategic Studies, p. 6.

¹⁹⁹ Colin S. Gray, Strategic Studies and Public Policy: The American Experience, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1982, p. 11.

²⁰⁰ Lawrence Freedman, The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy, p. 399.

overwhelming importance to technology at the expense of political factors is one that both Hedley Bull and Colin Gray have sought to answer. Interestingly enough, Bull points out that probably one of the main reasons for this lack of interest in the diversity of political situations could be that "If the political terms in the strategists' equations were more complex and were changed more frequently, the beauty of much of the ratiocination would be destroyed."²⁰¹ However Bull believes that this shortcoming is not inherent in the work of authors in the field of strategic studies and that rectifications can come from the 'strategists' themselves.²⁰²

Colin Gray on the other hand tends to defend strategic studies against this criticism. Gray believes that this accusation is true only for a few 'culprits' and that in any case "Strategists may have neglected the full panoply of 'political variety and change,' but they can reply that their work rests upon a sophisticated and stable understanding of the political value of military force."²⁰³ Gray's argument is that 'strategists' are correct in focusing on military

²⁰¹ Hedley Bull, "Strategic Studies and Its Critics", in Klaus Knorr (ed.), Power, Strategy, and Security, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1983, p. 75.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 76.

²⁰³ Colin S. Gray, Strategic Studies: A Critical Assessment, Westport, Greenwood Press, 1982, p. 68.

capabilities rather than on the declarations of political leaders since the latter can change overnight while the former cannot.

Howard and the Definition of Strategy

Michael Howard comes to this debate with some interesting insights. Not surprisingly, Howard adopts the broader and very Clausewitzian definition of strategy. However, his definition allows us to transcend the apparent barrier erected by nuclear weapons in the path of the development of strategic thought:

"Military strategy is organized coercion. It can be defensive or offensive: either posture involves the use or the threatened use of force to compel an adversary to abandon his preferred course of action and conform to one's will."²⁰⁴

By defining strategy as 'organized coercion' Howard achieves a common appreciation of the role of force in international politics both before and after the advent of nuclear arsenals. Indeed, by pointing out that a military strategy could be only defensive in its object (thus preserving the status quo) and could involve only the threatened use of

²⁰⁴ Michael Howard, "The Relevance of Traditional Strategy", in The Causes of Wars, p. 85.

force as its means, Howard reminds us that deterrence existed before Hiroshima. The British analyst nonetheless underlines the distinct nature of strategy in the nuclear era:

"The object of strategy had remained unchanged since before the advent of the nuclear age -- coercing one's opponent into abandoning his preferred course of action by posing the alternative of unacceptable punishment; but that object was now to be achieved less by manipulation of actual forces than by manipulation of risks."²⁰⁵

This emphasis on the 'manipulation of risks' as the means by which the object of policy will be achieved leads Howard to some very interesting thoughts as to the crucial and very distinctive role of conventional forces in the nuclear age. Howard sees their role not in isolation but as being intertwined with nuclear forces in this strategy of manipulation of risks:

"Their (conventional forces) object must be to make the use of nuclear weapons unnecessary while at the same time making the prospect of it convincing. As in the days of pre-Napoleonic strategy, the movement of forces once again becomes part of the bargaining process, an indicator of resolution or of willingness to consider accommodation."²⁰⁶

Also intertwined with these conventional and nuclear elements of strategy is the social aspect of war. How cohesive and

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 99.

supportive of their governments will societies be in the advent of a nuclear war? This last question will be discussed at greater length later in the text.

If the operational and social dimensions are critical in Howard's definition of strategy in the nuclear age, how important is the technological dimension discussed earlier on? Taking into account the weight given to operational, social and (as we will see later on) logistical factors, the British historian nonetheless falls in line with other strategic thinkers discussed previously when he states that "the quality of strategic thinking in the nuclear age is related to an understanding of international relations, on the one hand, and of weapons technology on the other."²⁰⁷ Sir Michael even goes further by pointing out that "No thinking about deterrence is likely to be of value unless it is based on a thorough understanding of 'the state of the art' in weapons technology."²⁰⁸

However this insistence on the need for a keen knowledge of nuclear arsenals does not mean that Howard directs his attention, in Freedman's words, on the 'microscopic analysis of military technology'. Quite the contrary Howard has

²⁰⁷ Michael Howard, "The Classical Strategists", in Studies in War and Peace, p. 182.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 183.

written very little on the potential impact of weapons systems on the strategic balance. In fact in a very telling article on nuclear strategy, the British analyst makes clear the utmost priority he gives to the political aspect of nuclear strategy:

"When I read the flood of scenarios in strategic journals about first-strike capabilities, counterforce or countervailing strategies, flexible response, escalation dominance and the rest of the postulates of nuclear theology, I ask myself in bewilderment: this war they are describing, what is it about? The defence of Western Europe? Access to the Gulf? The protection of Japan? If so, why is this goal not mentioned, and why is the strategy not related to the progress of the conflict in these regions? But if it is not related to this kind of specific object, what are we talking about? Has not the bulk of American thinking been exactly what Clausewitz described -- something that, because it is divorced from any political context, is 'pointless and devoid of sense'?"²⁰⁸

One could quote Howard almost endlessly over this absolute necessity to link strategy, and nuclear strategy in particular, with its political object. Thus Sir Michael can be said to be solidly entrenched in this British tradition, described by Freedman, of paying more attention to politics while Americans seem to be more attracted by the technological side of the nuclear equation.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Michael Howard, "On Fighting a Nuclear War", in The Causes of Wars, p. 140.

²¹⁰ See Lawrence Freedman, "Strategic Studies", in Steve Smith, ed., International Relations: British and American Perspectives, pp. 31-41. It is ironic however that Howard seems to have written this article largely

The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy

What is remarkable about Howard's thoughts on warfare is that in a single integrated framework of analysis he assembles the four most important factors about war. One can find this framework of analysis in "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", an article that, along with "The Relevance of Traditional Strategy", probably constitutes the most important contribution by Howard to the study of strategy.²¹¹ These four dimensions of strategy, some of which were hinted at in the preceding section, provide the student of strategy an essential tool for understanding military history, by pointing out the essential elements that have shaped the nature of warfare from Thucydides to the nuclear era.

These dimensions of course have been analyzed before by other strategic thinkers. For example, Paul Kennedy in The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers analyses both the technological and economic (what Howard by combining military logistic and economic potential includes under the heading

in order to continue the argument of one of the founders of American strategic studies, Bernard Brodie, after the latter's death and that he has directed his attack in this particular article at a British expatriate, Colin Gray.

²¹¹ Both articles can be found in The Causes of Wars, pp. 101-115 and 85-100 respectively.

'logistical') dimensions of conflicts. The logistical factor, or the capacity to sustain an army in the field for a prolonged period of time, has been particularly dominant in the two great wars of this century. On the other hand the technological dimension, as was demonstrated above, has been a central element of strategic thought since 1945.

The operational dimension, or the role of the commander on the battlefield, for its part has been the central preoccupation of the great majority of military historians and strategic thinkers up to the First World War, and a good number of those after. Lastly the social dimension was first most eloquently analyzed by this great interpreter of the wars of the French revolution, Carl von Clausewitz. It then attracted the attention of a good number of military historians after the Second World War²¹² and Michael Howard has been, in the words of Brian Bond, "probably the outstanding individual influence on this trend."²¹³

Thus Howard did not demonstrate rare insight in identifying any of those dimensions. However, by his capacity

²¹² See in particular the series of books published by Fontana Press on the 'History of European War and Society' (editor: Geoffrey Best) and with contribution from John Hale, Geoffrey Best, V.G. Kiernan, Brian Bond and M.S. Anderson.

²¹³ Brian Bond in the collective article "What is Military History?", p. 7.

to integrate these four dimensions of strategy into a single integrated framework for analysis, Howard has shown a profound understanding of the causes of wars, and of those societies in which those wars were fought.

The Logistical Dimension

One aspect of military history where Howard can be noticed for his original thinking is the emphasis he gives to the logistical dimension in his analysis of warfare.²¹⁴ Because of this, he is able to give a substantially different interpretation of the reasons for the outcome of certain battles or wars. The most striking example of this assertion is probably the masterpiece that he published in 1961, and that made him almost a celebrity overnight, The Franco-Prussian War.²¹⁵

In this study, Howard shows that one of the major reasons for France's defeat was her total lack of logistical

²¹⁴ Once again Howard's understanding of the logistical dimension comprises the military definition (which in its limited sense involves the supply in fuel, munitions and food to an army in the field) as well as the larger 'economic' definition which pertains to the industrial and financial ability of a nation to sustain a prolonged war effort. In that sense Paul Kennedy has studied only one aspect of this dimension.

²¹⁵ Michael Howard, The Franco-Prussian War, 1961.

organization prior and during the war. He demonstrates how French commanders had to adopt unadvantageous strategic and tactical positions because the food and ammunition supplies were not at the right place at the right moment, this being due to the lack of organization in the rail system. As for the operational abilities of the commanders in the field, Howard points out to flaws in both General Staffs and concludes that it is very hard to decide which side had the best commanders.

In regard to differences in the technological development of the weapons, except for the fact that the Germans had a more technologically advanced artillery (breach-loaded as opposed to the French's muzzle-loaded), Howard does not see a decisive role for technology in that war. Lastly, as for the commitment of the soldiers on both sides, the French can be supposed to have had a higher commitment since they were defending their Motherland and that there were still feudal disputes within the German army.

The Franco-Prussian war was not the only one where the logistical dimension played a decisive role. In a comment that might surprise many, Michael Howard makes a serious criticism of the military thinker he admires most, Carl von Clausewitz, because of the latter's lack of interest for logistical considerations:

"(...) even in his own day, the commanders he so much admired--Napoleon, Frederick the Great--could never have achieved their operational triumphs if they had not had a profound understanding of the whole range of military activities that Clausewitz excluded from consideration."²¹⁸

As was pointed out before, Howard is not an unconditional admirer of Clausewitz. As we will see later on, he also gives importance to a dimension that the Prussian general did not consider important -- the possible advantage gained by the technological advance in the development of certain weapons.

The British historian nonetheless gives credit to Clausewitz for at least being the first to clearly identify the logistical and technological dimensions. The main reason for which the latter did so, and also the one underlying his dislike of the logistical dimension was, points out Howard, because Clausewitz wanted so much to dissociate himself from this tradition of Prussian military writers who gave an overwhelming attention to manoeuvre warfare and logistical considerations.²¹⁷

Howard is also very critical of his fellow military historians: "(...)logistical factors have been ignored by

²¹⁸ Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", p. 102.

²¹⁷ Michael Howard, Clausewitz, p. 15.

ninety-nine military historians out of a hundred--an omission which has warped their judgments and made their conclusions in many cases wildly misleading."²¹⁸ Howard also criticizes Liddell Hart's analysis of the American Civil War because the latter tried to explain the defeat of the South by pointing to operational deficiencies on the part of the Southern commanders. According to Howard, the Civil War was a classic example of the importance of logistics since the best commanders, Lee and Jackson, were found in the South but the North was able to win because of its capacity to mobilize superior industrial strength and manpower.²¹⁹

Since Howard also disagrees strongly with Liddell Hart's interpretation of the usefulness of Britain's past 'indirect approach' strategy²²⁰ as well as his interpretation of Clausewitz, I question seriously the degree of influence that Liddell Hart could have had on Howard's thoughts.²²¹

²¹⁸ Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", p. 102.

²¹⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

²²⁰ See in particular Michael Howard, "The British Way in Warfare: A Reappraisal", in The Causes of Wars, pp. 169-187.

²²¹ In the proposal for this thesis the suggestion was made that Howard's line of thought might be traced back to such authors as J.F.C. Fuller, Liddell Hart and Clausewitz. This suggestion was abandoned after it was found that Howard barely mentions J.F.C. Fuller in his writings and criticises very strongly the ideas of Liddell Hart (even if he admires the man). As for Clausewitz the extent to which Sir Michael agrees with

The Operational Dimension

Taking into consideration the comments made above on the logistical dimension, Howard as a military historian gives substantial importance in his studies of battles to the operational abilities of the commanders. On this point, Howard is very much in line with the teachings of Clausewitz concerning the needed qualities of a commander such as initiative, "great strength of character, as well as great lucidity and firmness of mind (...)."222

Again since Howard gives importance to three other dimensions of warfare, the abilities of the commander in the field will be analyzed in regard his capacity to operate in an environment where those four dimensions interact with one another. For example, Napoleon III was regarded by most military historians as a complete failure in the Franco-Prussian war. However, although he was a failure as a military commander during the war itself, he is nonetheless given credit by Howard for being one of the few in the French leadership who before the war unsuccessfully pushed for more military preparations in France.

his method and ideas is discussed in chapters four and five.

222 Carl von Clausewitz, On War, p. 178.

The British historian also has very interesting thoughts on matters that almost everyone has taken for granted. For example, on the nearly unanimous condemnations of the generals on both sides in World War One for their failure to understand, before the war, that offensive tactics did not work against machine-guns, Howard points out that the last great war that the generals had in mind before 1914 was not the Boer war but the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905: "But most important of all was the general consensus that infantry assaults with the bayonet, in spite of the South African experience, were still not only possible but necessary. The Japanese had carried them out time and again, and usually with ultimate success."²²³

Because of his original understanding of certain events, Howard is able to provide different interpretations for the reasons certain strategies were adopted in past wars, and why these strategies were ultimately successful or unsuccessful. This in turn leads him to sometimes criticize strongly those who because of their theoretical concerns use their often inadequate knowledge of history as a basis for their models or theories.

²²³ Michael Howard, "Men Against Fire" in Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 53.

The Technological Dimension

If Howard, as was demonstrated above, is critical of those self-styled 'nuclear strategists' who, after World War Two, have given an overwhelming importance to technological factors (although he agrees that in the nuclear age these must be given substantial consideration), he nonetheless concedes that the technological dimension has become of predominant importance in understanding the nature of modern conventional warfare.²²⁴

In the regard Sir Michael has written in 1973 a most illuminating article entitled "Military Science in an Age of Peace."²²⁵ Once again in this article Howard raises some fundamental questions, in this case about the effect on the nature of warfare of social and technological changes, but does not dare to suggest answers. First as a military historian he dutifully reminds us that "There was probably no period when more intelligence, more effort, more cooperative scholarship was devoted to studying warfare than in the years between about 1890 and 1914."²²⁶ This is a sobering thought

²²⁴ Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", p. 111.

²²⁵ Michael Howard, "Military Science in an Age of Peace", RUSI, Vol. 119, No. 1, (1973), pp. 3-11.

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

for those who believe that another 1914, in terms of the fundamental flaws in strategic analysis, could not happen today.

Concerning the impact of new technologies on the modern battlefield, Howard asks a question that most thinkers of conventional strategy²²⁷ are desperately trying to come to grips with these days: "Has the development of the missile not transformed the battlefield as completely as the development of the rifle firing smokeless powder? Can armour, can aircraft, really survive on the modern battlefield any better than did the cavalry in 1914-15?"²²⁸ To this question Sir Michael answers that it is almost impossible for us to know until the next war and that the side who will win this next war will be the one who, as in the Great War, is able to adjust the fastest to the new situation.

The British historian leaves no doubts however as to his opinion concerning the relative importance of technology to social change for the character of warfare:

"Some of the greatest changes in the nature of war have not been the result of technological innovation at all.

²²⁷ See for example John J. Mearsheimer, Conventional Deterrence, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1983, pp. 189-202.

²²⁸ Michael Howard, "Military Science in an Age of Peace", p. 7.

They have been the result of massive political, economic and social developments in the structure of society as a whole."²²⁹

Indeed, Howard does not see technology as having fundamentally changed the nature of strategy either. Since a gap in weapons technology rarely lasts for very long between two belligerents in a prolonged interstate conflict, the strength of the social base is seen by Howard as being the deciding factor in a war. According to the British historian, ultimately the lessons of World War Two were similar to those of the Great War in that

"The social base had to be strong enough to resist the psychological impact of operational set-backs and to support the largest possible logistical build-up by land, sea and air. The forces thus raised had then to be used progressively to eliminate the operational options open to the enemy and ultimately to destroy his capacity to carry on the war."²³⁰

One can thus see a certain gradation in the importance of the different dimensions of warfare in Howard's thinking going from the social, the logistical and then the operational. The technological dimension seems to be for Howard a sort of 'neutral' dimension. If technology per se can be of a crucial importance for the nature of a conflict, the fact that in a

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³⁰ Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", p. 107.

prolonged war (and often in the period of time preceding it) the belligerents will usually put their resources to work in order to avoid the existence of a significant technological gap with one another makes technology less important as a deciding factor in explaining the reasons for victory of one side over the other.

The Social Dimension

If, as was mentioned before, the logistical dimension is one aspect of military history where Howard can be noticed for his original thinking, the extent to which societies shape the nature of conflicts, and are affected by those conflicts in return, will truly prove to be the area of study to which Michael Howard brought his most significant contribution.

The Napoleonic wars were the first to show in a spectacular way the importance of the social dimension of warfare. The small, professional army which had been so successful to Frederick the Great in the eighteenth century could not hold its own in front of those massed French soldiers charging yelling "Vive l'Empereur!" and "Vive la France!". As the Prussians painfully learned at Jena in 1806, they had to adopt for themselves these concepts of 'nation'

and 'levée en masse' if they wanted to beat the French invaders.

Clausewitz was probably the greatest interpreter of the Napoleonic wars. He was certainly the first who fully realised the fundamental changes Napoleon brought to the conduct of warfare. Howard, as an admirer of Clausewitz's writings, also gives the social dimension an utmost importance in his interpretations on the causes of wars.

According to Howard, the causes for World War One and for the American intervention in Vietnam were not to be found only in too rigid railway timetables, or in a security dilemma situation or even in the lack of judgement of the political and military leaders on the possible outcomes of those wars. Indeed, Sir Michael looks at society at large and draws some very interesting conclusions. Bernard Brodie quotes with admiration Howard's views concerning the profound causes of the Great War when the latter considers the nationalist nature of the writings in the press, or the speeches from different elites of the future belligerent countries, and from which "one learns far more about the causes of the First World War than in a lifetime of reading diplomatic documents."²³¹

²³¹ Michael Howard, "Reflections on the First World War", in Studies in War and Peace, quoted in Bernard Brodie, War and Politics, New York, Macmillan, 1973, p.

In the case of the American involvement in Vietnam Howard observes that

"Further, there was in the United States of the early '60s an enormous self-confidence and pride not unlike that of the Germans before 1914; a consciousness of national greatness seeking an outlet, a search for an appropriate challenge to their powers, a refusal to believe that any problem was beyond their capacity to solve."²³²

However, Howard's most interesting and valid statements are to be found in his thoughts on the importance of the social dimension in the nuclear era. Howard rejects the idea that in the nuclear era only the technological dimension, the quantity and quality of the means of delivery, still has any importance.

Sir Michael asks difficult questions such as how would the popular reaction at the start of a war between two nuclear armed camps affect the will of the leaders to continue the war? What would be the nature of military operations in such a war? According to Howard, social cohesion prior and during the war is as important to deterrence as any weapons-systems: "The maintenance of

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²³² Michael Howard, "Many reasons for Viet Nam", Encounter, Vol. 52, May 1979, p. 21.

adequate armed forces in peacetime, and the will to deploy and support them operationally in war, is in fact a symbol of that social unity and political resolve which is as essential an element in nuclear deterrence as any invulnerable second-strike capability."²³³

Howard is therefore in line with Aron, Brodie, and many others when he asserts that since the survival of a whole society is now at stake, war has never been so closely related to the political object. War, or the threat of war, is thus more than ever "the continuation of politics by other means".

Conclusion

The field of strategic studies as the one of international relations is still in search of a clear definition. As was seen in this chapter, the definition of strategy itself seems to create some controversy. Has strategy been reduced in the nuclear age to the way by which technological means are used, or threatened to be used, in order to achieve the political object? And in this relationship between means and ends, has an overemphasis on

²³³ Michael Howard, "The Forgotten Dimensions of Strategy", p. 111.

the microscopic analysis of military technology, to the expense of the nuances of international politics, brought the study of strategy dangerously close to a reversal of Clausewitz's formula by which the means would now dictate the ends?

Michael Howard certainly thinks so. If he recognizes the importance of an in-depth understanding of nuclear weaponry in today's world, he nonetheless insists on the necessity to adjust the threat of use of nuclear weapons to the specifics of the political situation. In this regard Howard emphasizes the crucial role of conventional forces in the early stages of a conflict, communicating intentions of resolve or accommodation. But once again one cannot assume an overall unchanging political scene, characterized by a 'stable' antagonism, in order to concentrate one's attention on elaborate (often nuclear) war scenarios mostly based on pure speculation as to the possible 'logical' reactions of political leaders.

According to Howard it is necessary to bring the study of strategy back into its proper social environment. Howard is probably the most prominent thinker of this postwar generation of war historians who try to portray the nature of warfare and of national military institutions as a reflection of society itself. The British historian thus proposes an

original framework for analyzing strategy by identifying four 'dimensions of strategy'. In addition to the social dimension, which is for the British historian the foundation on which the other dimensions will rest, Howard emphasizes the often forgotten logistical dimension. According to Sir Michael this factor, as was the case in the Franco-Prussian war, does far more in explaining the issue of a conflict than some of the other dimensions. The operational dimension is of course also important but interestingly enough Sir Michael judges the abilities of a commander in his capacity to integrate in his thinking all four dimensions of strategy.

Lastly concerning the technological dimension Howard believes that if it is important to understand the effect of technology on the nature of warfare, especially in the nuclear age, too much emphasis should not be given to this dimension. The British historian points out that since opposing sides often have at their disposition similar weaponry, the issue of a conflict can seldom be explained away on technological considerations alone.

To conclude one should again re-emphasize the predominant role played by social and cultural factors in Howard's thinking. This preoccupation of Howard permeate almost all of his writings. Howard's knowledge and understanding of this particular dimension of strategy will

truly prove to be his lasting legacy to the field of strategic studies.

CONCLUSION

Michael Howard ends his latest article, published in Survival, with a statement that ironically captures in a nutshell what could be dubbed as the 'Howard Enigma'. The British historian, commenting on recent events in Central and Eastern Europe, leaves the reader with the following thought: "Until now our concern has been how to preserve the world. Now it must be how to change it."²³⁴

Coming from another scholar this statement could be seen as just an honest hope that statesmen on both sides of the rapidly crumbling Iron Curtain will seize this unique opportunity of the post-war era to create a non-confrontational world order based on a mutual understanding of security needs. However coming from Howard, this statement also probably reminds the reader of questions that I have tried directly or indirectly to answer throughout this text.

These questions can probably be said to be at the core of the debates in both the fields of international relations theory and strategic studies since they are concerned at a more basic level with the aggressive or pacific nature of man, his need to identify himself with certain societies and

²³⁴ Michael Howard, "The Remaking of Europe", p. 106.

the capacity of those societies to live in peace with one another. At a theoretical level we ask questions about the necessity of the nation-state or the different ways to preserve stability in the international system (through such mechanisms as the balance of power or deterrence for example). All of these questions surely challenge our capacity to 'change' a system that we have tried to 'preserve' so far. The 'Howard Enigma' is thus a question as to how great, according to the British historian, is our capacity to change the present system. Can we really build a world where force will have little or no role at all to play in the relations among sovereign states?

The answer that one will give to this last question is usually a good indicator of one's fundamental beliefs about the ways the international system is or should be structured. These fundamental beliefs will in turn affect one's image of the world as well as one's choice of the characteristics of the international system that should be studied. It is on this last point that rests a fundamental assumption for this thesis -- the belief that it is possible to analyze the writings of an historian according to a theoretical model developed mainly by political scientists.

If both historians and political scientists make choices, consciously or not, about the facets of world

politics that deserve attention, they however disagree on the methods to be used. Historians generally believe that only by studying a particular historical event in great detail can one truly understand the reasons why leaders, nations and whole societies acted the way they did. Thus historians are usually highly skeptical of attempts to generalize about completely different historical events since they believe that each event is unique in itself. At best, some of them believe that through an historical analysis one might be able to identify the relevant aspects, or dimensions, of world politics.

Political scientists on the other hand generally believe that one can get lost in historical detail and that one should instead focus attention on the most important aspects of a series of historical events in order to be able to generalize or even develop a theory of international relations. Where can we find common ground for these two different approaches? Perhaps such common ground can be found not only in a loose definition of theory -- the aspects of world politics that one believes, because of value judgments, to be worthy of analysis²³⁵ -- but also in a limited definition of the role of a theory which should be seen as an aid to judgement rather than as a tool for explaining or

²³⁵ See the definition by Hoffmann quoted earlier from Huntzinger, op. cit., p. 17.

predicting every aspect of world politics.

It is with these definitions and interpretations in mind, explained in more detail in the first chapter, that we analyzed the writings of Michael Howard according to the realist paradigm in the second chapter. My principal findings were as follows. First, without any doubt Howard is closer to the realist paradigm than to any other paradigm in international relations theory. Howard agrees with the realist belief that the international system is primarily characterized by its anarchic nature -- or lack of a central government -- where an international community more or less exists.

However the British historian disagrees with Thomas Hobbes' suggestion that just as a state of constant war existed on the domestic scene before the advent of state structures, a constant threat of war will loom over the heads of nation-states as long as anarchy will characterize the international scene. Howard does not believe that wars are the result of the inherent aggressive nature of human beings but that they are rather a highly social activity that makes necessary the development of state structures. Consequently, these structures were created primarily not in order to bring peace at home but to make wars more effectively abroad. The profound causes of wars are thus not to be found in the

nature of the international system nor in the nature of human beings. They are rather to be found in the nature of societies, their structures and their values.

If Howard is critical of the realist interpretation of the origin of state structures, he reinforces one of the core beliefs of that paradigm concerning the role of the state as the main actor on the world scene. Howard is very critical of the assertion made by proponents of the liberal tradition that we are witnessing the relative decline of the nation-state. The British historian not only believes that the nation-state is the ideal focal point for individuals but that the possible abandonment of that focal point would probably mean not a widening of horizons for individuals but rather a return to parochialism. To this assertion liberals would certainly respond that nationalism has been, at least since the French Revolution, one of the main causes of wars. Howard perfectly agrees with this point but he still does not see in the abandonment of the nation-state the solution to the problem. Howard instead sees the solution to this dilemma in the gradual development of a genuine international community where societies would share common values.

Howard also has interesting thoughts on the role of ethics in international relations. However, his belief that power considerations should go hand in hand with ethical ones

cannot be said to go against realist thought since realists themselves seem to be divided over the issue. The same comment could almost be made concerning his definition of the concept of power if it were not for his emphasis on the non-military aspects of power such as economic factors and in particular ideological and cultural influences.

It is nonetheless with his views on the concept of balance of power that Howard can be said to be most critical of realists and that in return, realists could criticize him for his apparent inconsistencies. On the one hand Howard rejects the idea that the mechanism of balance of power has maintained stability in the international system in the past while on the other he accepts the need for the nation's leader to ensure that an overwhelming coalition of hostile forces does not develop against his country. If one can agree that, from the point of view of theory, Howard clearly seems to be contradicting himself on this point, one could nonetheless propose an explanation in the sense that the balance of power could be seen as useful in a defensive manner while being dangerous when one tries to impose through this mechanism one's understanding of an orderly international system. Therefore Howard definitively sees limitations to the use of the balance of power as a mechanism for preserving world order.

In the third chapter an analysis was made of Howard's views concerning what he calls the 'Liberal Conscience'. Howard's interest in this matter began in the late 1950's when he believed that it was necessary to answer the criticisms made by the newly formed British group 'Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament' (CND). In this short chapter we saw that Howard bases much of his argument on his definition of the concept of peace itself -- the absence of the fear of coercion both at home and on the international scene -- in order to criticize both those who want to unilaterally disarm as well as those who refuse the necessity for change in the international system. Concerning this last argument it was pointed out that Howard seems to believe in the virtues of a functionalist approach and in the possibility of different societies developing common values (particularly in Europe) which in themselves, according to Howard, are the foundations of a true state of peace.

In the following chapter a comparative analysis was made of Howard, a British military historian who became interested in the relationship between war and society, and Aron, the French philosopher and sociologist who tried to understand the phenomenon of war. The juncture point for this analysis was a strategist who had attracted the attention of both authors, Carl von Clausewitz. The most interesting finding from the point of view of theory in that chapter was probably

that Aron, who has obvious theoretical concerns (if only in the philosophical sense of the word), seems to have developed Clausewitz's conceptual framework for analyzing war to such a logical extent that it seems to have become his own, thus forcing him in a sense to go to extremes in order to defend against criticisms the 'purity' of the original conceptual framework.

Some of those criticisms are formulated by Howard (Aron however does not respond directly) who is himself an admirer of the Prussian general but who nonetheless believes that Clausewitz's conceptual framework should be analyzed in its proper historical context and that, consequently, too much should not be read out of it. I concluded that this comparative analysis of both authors' views on Clausewitz is a good example of how historians can bring perspective to the useful work of sociologists and political scientists.

In the last chapter Howard's writings are analyzed from the point of view of strategic studies. Special attention is given to his definition of strategy in the nuclear age. It is shown that if the British analyst agrees with most contemporary strategic thinkers in their understanding of strategy -- the relationship between technological means and political ends -- his definition of strategy as 'organized coercion' permits a conception of strategy that transcends

the nuclear age. The role of conventional forces is thus assessed not in isolation but in combination with that of nuclear weapons in their ability to convey intentions of resolution or of compromise.

However Howard's most important contribution to the study of strategy is without any doubt the identification in a single integrated framework for analysis of four dimensions of strategy. These are the operational, the logistical, the technological and in particular the social dimensions. It is also without any doubt for his understanding of the social dimension that Howard will probably be gradually recognized as one of the great strategic thinkers of this century. Howard believes that ultimately it is whole societies who go to war and that if one wishes to understand the nature of wars one must first understand the nature of societies who fight them. All other dimensions of strategy will therefore depend, at one point or another, on this critical social dimension.

If the study of the social dimension of strategy is without any doubt Howard's most important contribution to the field of strategic studies it could also be said to be his most important contribution to the field of international relations theory. In fact Howard has both criticisms and praises for certain liberal and realist beliefs. On the one

hand he agrees with the liberals' emphasis on the need for change in the international system and on the usefulness of functionalism as a means for gradually bringing about that change. On the other hand he strongly disagrees with the notion that the ultimate goal of these functionalist developments should be to gradually undermine the role of the nation-state as the main actor on the international scene. Not only does Howard believe that such a relative decline of the role of the nation-state is unlikely but in the event that national elites would gradually abandon the nation-state as their focal point, Sir Michael foresees a dangerous -- and destabilizing -- backlash from the resentful underclass of each and everyone of those countries. The recent rise of right-wing extremism in Europe certainly gives weight to this argument. Accordingly the British historian believes that the most important role of functionalism should be to develop a genuine international community where common values -- such as the rejection of force as an instrument of policy -- would be widely shared.

However Sir Michael is also critical of the realist belief that in the absence of a central government nation-states will need to continue relying on force as the last means at their disposal to preserve the nation's security. Here again Howard indicates that behind the instrument of violence are the societies who are willing to use them and

that ultimately realists should envision a world without a central government, with an absolute monopoly on the instruments of violence, but where a true state of peace will nonetheless exist because whole societies will have rejected violence as a means to resolve conflicts. Howard could thus be said to expand realism by including the social dimension.

Howard's contribution to international relations theory is therefore certainly not as a theory builder but as a critic who reinforces or criticizes a number of beliefs. His insights concerning certain questions, and in particular his concern for the role of societies in shaping world politics, even provides new avenues for research. It would be unfortunate if these questions would not be analyzed more in-depth simply because they might question the coherence of a certain paradigm (by looking at a different level of analysis for example).

Theorists of international relations could characterize Howard's approach as eclectic and his arguments as being sometimes inconsistent and not fully developed to their logical conclusion. These are valuable criticisms if one is interested in developing a coherent framework -- or even a theory -- for understanding world politics. However Sir Michael has no such interest. He has not written and will most probably never write a book resuming his thoughts

concerning debates in the field of strategic studies, let alone those in the field of international relations theory.

However political scientists should be careful when criticizing historians for their lack of theoretical concerns. After all, Howard's historical approach to the study of strategy and international relations is probably the reason why he is able to provide both guidance and insights to those searching for a coherent framework of analysis which would help us better understand the world in which we live.

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