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Maintenant Renaud, nous parlons de la guerre.

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I again wish to thank everybody who was polite enough to stay to the end, because it is always unpleasant to speak in front of an empty room. I realise my talk is the last one. It will be about the seven faces of modern war.

When we listen to the World Policy Conference debates or switch on international news networks like the BBC or CNN in our hotel rooms, at least half the stories are about that ancestral form of relations between human groups called war.

I'm thinking of a not-too-recent example, before the tragic events in Paris on the 13th of November 2015 that were all over our screens. It was on Monday, the 2nd of November. Three different wars featured in a single BBC newscast: the war between the Islamic State and Russia after Sharm El Sheikh; the Somali shebabs' war against the Mogadiscio government; and the war that Turkish President Erdogan was stepping up against the PKK Kurdish independence fighters.

It might be said that the aim of war has remained unchanged since Greek historian Thucydides described it 2,400 years ago in *The Peloponnesian War*: it is still about one human group, which has often, but not always, organised itself into the form of a State, that wants to impose its political, economic or cultural hegemony on another. The nature of the suicidal clash between Athens and Sparta that Thucydides wrote about, which bled both sides white, enabling the Macedonian monarchy to increase its hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean, was not that different from the First World War, which brought about the European powers' suicide and cleared the way for the United States' eventual hegemony in the West.

War has changed since the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, when the signatories sincerely, but vainly, hoped to ban war as the continuation of politics by other means once and for all. Now it has many faces, all of them, of course, bearing the scars of history. In my view, modern war has seven faces.

- Imperial war

The first is the face of imperial wars. Militarily strong States naturally aspire to prolong their power with an empire. The 2003 US invasion of Iraq resulted from the neo-conservatives' goal of establishing their hegemony in the Middle East by "finishing the job" of the war already won in 1991.

What is called the hybrid war that Putin launched in the Donbass in the summer of 2014 follows the same imperial logic: preventing Ukraine from leaving Russia's orbit, in which it has revolved since the reign of Peter the Great.

- War of intervention

Since Europeans ended their colonial expeditions in the late 1950s, they invented the war of intervention to "protect" civilian populations. What is a war of intervention? It is a half-colonial war. A dictator is toppled, as in Libya, but then



the country is left to its own devices because nobody really knows what or with whom to replace him with or wants to get their hands dirty like Savorgnan de Brazza did in West Africa. Unfortunately, when these half-colonial wars, these wars of intervention, are over, the people being “protected”, those on whose behalf the claim for protection is made — the duty to protect civilians is recognised by the United Nations — often pay a higher price than the protectors.

- Juridical war

The United States was the first country, I think, to understand that blood does not always have to be shed in order to establish hegemony. The strategic retrenchment we have talked about during this conference is not general. Constraint by law and economic war continues.

Take the European Union. At the end of the last century, it looked like a very serious rival for the United States, speaking to it on equal terms. I am referring to the creation of the euro or the European Commission’s decisions on fair competition (for example, the McDonnell-Douglas and Boeing merger took place according to terms laid down by Brussels). Today things have changed. The European Union is no longer capable of standing up to financial and legal standards from across the Atlantic. A bank like BNP (National Bank of Paris) agreed to pay a nine-billion-dollar fine for financing exports of Sudanese and Iranian oil and Cuban cigars, while Europe is incapable of fining Goldman Sachs 30 billion dollars for helping a government cook its books. European companies are now only obsessed with properly applying American laws. They hire monitors to verify whether American law is correctly applied. That is what I mean by juridical war, or juridical hegemony, if you prefer.

- Cold war

There is also cold war, where countries do not kill each other’s citizens, are not on speaking terms and have their vassals fight it out by proxy. That was the situation, of course, between the United States and Russia from the 1950s to the 1980s. Despite the sanctions in the Ukrainian affair, it is no longer the case today between the two powers, the United States and Russia. They are still talking to each other. They are actually talking to each other more than ever today.

But now there is another cold war — it has already been mentioned at this conference — between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The goal, as usual, is hegemony, this time in the Persian Gulf and on the Arabian Peninsula.

Today’s bloodiest conflicts are civil wars. In other words, the distant enemy is never hated as much as the near enemy. These civil wars have two faces: ethnic and religious.

- Ethnic civil war

Ethnic war is not talked about much today, but in South Sudan, the Dinkas and Nuers are locked in an appalling conflict for control of that very new country. You might call it an anachronism at a time when, as Lionel Zinsou pointed out, we have the impression that Africa is overcoming tribalism. Today this war is obviously claiming more lives than the terrorist attacks in Paris on Friday the 13th of November.

- Religious civil war

The religious fanaticism of the Islamist groups operating in the Sahel, Nigeria, the Horn of Africa, the Gulf and, of course, the heart of Europe might seem equally anachronistic. There is no way the Islamists will achieve their dream of replacing modern States, including the rump State of Somalia, which is aided by the African Union, with a seventh-century caliphate.



- Nuclear war

The seventh face of war is obviously a masked one that goes unseen. It is the war nobody wages, for fear of assured mutual destruction. I am referring to nuclear war, of course. We have talked about it here in relation to Iran. We know that the possession of nuclear weapons can change everything in the balance of power between States. That is why this virtual war still exists in our world today. It is a continual reference point.

Lastly, there is classic war, but, in my opinion, the chances of this kind of war breaking out are fading. It could have happened in South-East Asia as a result of China's maritime expansionism but, like you, I think the Seoul summit between the leaders of Japan, China and Korea on the 2nd of November, and President Xi Jinping's visit to Hanoi on 6 November, have diminished the prospects of this classic war. That is fortunate because, since the 20th century, those conflicts have been the deadliest.

They are total wars that have taken, and could take — if war broke out between China and Japan, for example — 100 times more lives than the terrorism that captures so much of our attention. We think we are living in a war-torn world, and we are paralysed because television shows us one bloody event after another.

We consider the attacks on 13 November 2015 extremely serious because they signal the failure of all our systems to educate and integrate French-born citizens from immigrant backgrounds. But it must be remembered that an average of 1,000 Frenchmen died every day in the First World War. During the crucial Marne counter-offensive in September 1914, 20,000 young Frenchmen were killed every day!

So I think things must be put into perspective. I think the coercive security measures being imposed on the whole population are counter-productive. I live next to the Luxembourg Gardens. They were closed for three days. I did not understand why, because this hands the terrorists a victory. I think we must avoid the mistake the Americans made in 2001. They thought 11 September was a strategic attack, even comparing it to Pearl Harbor. It was not a strategic attack. The attack on the Bataclan was not a strategic attack. We are collateral damage in a war splitting the Muslim world between a large majority that perfectly adapts to modernity and a violent minority that wants to restore the practices of seventh-century Islam.

My conclusion is that we must be extremely precise in this war. We must go after the terrorists with precision and nail those spreading hatred. We must contain and ruthlessly destroy them. But let us not take any over-arching steps. If strategic and tactical skill is not used, we might find ourselves gradually and unwillingly drawn into one of those classic wars that, thankfully, have so far spared our world today.