THE RETURN OF *GEWALT*: MIRRORING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

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Introduction

This contribution examines the concept of 'power' starting from the historical-conceptual perspective of Karl-Georg Faber, Karl-Heinz Ilting, and Christian Meier in the analysis of the terms *Macht*, *Gewalt* found in the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, edited by Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner, and Werner Conze. The work contains the analysis of 122 terms, not only from a historical perspective but also highlighting the philosophical, legal, and economic aspects behind each term. It is considered one of the standard tools in academic studies in German-speaking countries. However, as only a few terms have been translated into other languages, the full utilization of this tool is unfortunately limited to scholars who can understand the German language.

The two main aspects of power examined here are precisely those of *Macht* and Gewalt, and their analysis and understanding are useful in highlighting how these two dimensions never completely overlap in history and the changing of societies but rather influence each other over time.

The contribution also examines the transition from Great Powers to World Powers during the 20th century. This shift led to the emergence of global powers that exercise their *Macht* internationally, influencing global relations, the world economy, and global stability. However, the exercise of this power can also involve forms of *Gewalt* that threaten international peace and stability. The last century was characterized by wars,

revolutions, and large-scale violence, in which *Gewalt* was often used as a means to acquire and maintain power.

Despite the optimistic narrative that followed the end of the Cold War, the contribution emphasizes that the dimension of conflict and power in its most violent manifestations is far from disappeared. The case of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict demonstrates that *Gewalt* is still a reality, with significant regional and global implications. Violence and armed conflict can still emerge as means to exercise power, and geopolitical dynamics continue to influence international relations. Hence, the need for a philosophical reflection that, in debating the nature of 'power' and its manifestations, does not solely focus on its disciplinary dimension and social control, seemingly unaware that *Macht* and *Gewalt* are two sides of the same coin, existentially interconnected and both integral parts of human political history.

Power and Violence: A Conceptual Inquiry of the 20th Century based on *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*

In the monumental work *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexicon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Reinhart Koselleck, Otto Brunner, and Werner Conze set out to explore the fundamental concepts in history and politics. In this context, Karl-Georg Faber, Karl-Heinz Ilting, and Christian Meier contribute editing the entry *Macht*, *Gewalt* conducting a comprehensive analysis of the concept of power throughout history, thereby examining various dimensions and facets of the term over time.

The authors perceive the concept of 'power' as encompassing a dual nature, delineated by the terms *Macht* and *Gewalt*. Drawing upon Weber's definition, Faber characterizes the former as "*jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel, worauf diese Chance beruht*" (Faber, 1982, 817). It is associated with a form of legitimate and institutionalized control, based on social consensus and adherence to existing laws, from which its social acceptance derives. The power expressed by the term *Macht* is linked to a predominantly horizontal dimension of emanation, which does not necessarily rely on the use of force to assert itself. From this perspective, *Macht* can be exercised both by political institutions (e.g., governments, parliaments) and by individuals holding a recognized position of authority. This power is therefore understood as 'legitimate' and inherently correlated with the trust that human communities place in institutions and norms that regulate the exercise of power. Consent allows *Macht* to establish and preserve social order (Weber,

1976). On the track of *Macht*, ideas of stability and political order travel, whereby power is exercised through mechanisms of political negotiation, institution-building, and the enactment of laws, aiming to maintain a balance of power within society. The objective is to achieve a framework of temporal duration, rather than transience, wherein institutions and figures of authority can aspire to persist over time as guarantors of stability and political continuity.

Equally crucial for understanding 'power' in historical and political contexts is the aspect of *Gewalt*. It denotes the exercise of physical force or even the threat thereof, with the aim of imposing one's will upon others. *Gewalt* operates in a predominantly vertical dimension, as it is based on coercion, the use of violence, and the ability to establish control through violent means. *Gewalt* can take various forms, such as wars, repression, political oppression, or actions that often violate social and legal norms, rendering them illegitimate. It is interesting to note how Faber identifies the means and events associated with the dimension of *Gewalt* as "*Grundtatsachen des menschlichen Zusammenlebens*" (Faber, 1982, 817), thus asserting that *Gewalt* constitutes an intrinsic aspect of human history, significantly influencing any dynamics related to the acquisition, maintenance, and relinquishment of power. However, it is important to clarify that the concept of *Gewalt* is not limited solely to physical violence, as the use or threat of violence can also take non-physical forms, such as psychological coercion, manipulation of information, or exploitation of economic power. In this sense, *Gewalt* can also be understood as an action (or set of actions) aimed at depriving others of their decision-making capacity, imposing one's will regardless of the means employed to achieve this purpose.

From the historical-conceptual analysis of 'power' conducted by Ilting, Meier, and Faber, it is also evident that "*die Bedeutungsfelder der beiden Begriffe [...] sich keineswegs decken, sondern in einem sich im Laufe der Zeit verändernden Umfang überschneiden*" (*ibid.*), as they are dependent on the theories and political approaches adopted in a specific historical period. An important example of this overlap between the two aspects of power is provided by ancient Greece. The Greeks, in fact,

> "*haben da begrifflich nicht unterschieden, genauer: sie haben weder einen Macht-noch einen Herrschaftsbegriff gebildet, sondern sich im ganzen Bereich zwischen Macht, Überlegenheit und Herrschaft mit elastisch auf die jeweiligen Positionen zielenden Worten und Sätzen ausgedrückt*". (Meier, 1982, 820)

From Meier's exposition, it emerges that in ancient Greece there was a predominance of the aspect of *Macht* over *Gewalt*. In Greek society, legitimate power was associated

with the ability to influence, govern, and impose one's will through authority, persuasion, and social consensus. *Macht* belonged to those who held positions of authority, such as rulers or aristocrats, and political institutions, such as citizen assemblies, provided an important formal context for the exercise of legitimate power (Ober, 1996). Moreover, Greek political culture assigned fundamental importance to persuasion and rhetoric as means to obtain consensus and legitimacy, thereby making discourse a tool of power. In fact, orators, including the sophists, developed rhetorical skills to influence public opinion and acquire political power, as "the speech is particularly revealing of the different ways in which power, in the democratic polis, related to equality and inequality, to the private and public realms, and to the social environments inhabited by elite aristocrats and ordinary citizens" (Ober, 1996, 86). Political competition, therefore, was based on the ability of persuasion and compelling arguments, rather than primarily relying on the use of physical force. This explains why different terms such as "ἀρχή, κράτος, ἐξουσία" (Meier, 1982, 820) can be accurately translated both as 'power' and 'dominion'.

This does not imply that the dimension of *Gewalt* was completely absent in ancient Greek history. In situations of conflict or political instability, the use of force could be employed as a means to acquire and/or maintain power. However, it was clear that it needed to remain purely instrumental within a historical period where war was an inevitable phenomenon, to be accepted "like birth and death about which nothing could be done" (Momigliano, 1966, 120, as cited in Berent, 2000, 257). If *Gewalt* had exceeded its instrumental dimension, it could have posed a threat to social and political stability, that is, to *Macht* itself, as violence was a harbinger of anarchy and the ruin of institutions. In other words, when *Gewalt* is no longer in service of *Macht*, that is, of institutionally legitimate power, there is a risk of fuelling a state of constant war, where individuals behave according to the primal impulse to exercise power for the sole purpose of accumulating more power, and where "*die menschliche Natur besonders elementar zum Ausdruck*" (Meier, 1982, 827).

The analysis by Faber, Ilting, and Meier continues in the work of Koselleck on one hand by highlighting the different evolutions that the institution of power undergoes throughout history – "'*Macht' und 'Gewalt' bei den Römern*"; "*Die systemgebundene Funktion von 'Macht' und 'Gewalt' im Mittelalter*"; "'*Gewalt' und 'Macht' im frühneuzeitlichen Reichs- und Territorialstaatsrecht*"; "'*Gewalt' und 'Macht' in den Lexika des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*"; "'*Macht' und 'Gewalt' zwischen Aufklärung und Imperialismus*" (Faber *et al.*, 1982, 830-ff.). On the other hand, it highlights its articulations and facets within various political theories and the contributions of important philosophers over time, particularly Marx and Nietzsche. However, the dual nature of the concept of 'pow-

er' remains underlying, and the necessity for the aspect of *Macht* to prevail over *Gewalt*, or more precisely, for the former to utilize the latter to ensure the exercise of legitimate power while always maintaining an authority that is both a guarantor of stability within its borders and a symbol of strength against any potential external enemy. An interesting parallel can be observed here with the concept of "sovereignty" according to Calise, Lowi & Musella (2021), who also characterize it as "*un concetto duale. Esso si compone infatti di una dimensione "esterna" (sovranità come indipendenza da poteri sovra-ordinati) e da una dimensione interna (sovranità come potere assoluto sul proprio territorio e sui corpi intermedi)*" (Calise, Lowi & Musella, 2021, 300). The need to maintain a clear conceptual distinction between the two aspects of power, even though they are phenomenally connected or even interdependent, becomes even more pressing in the period spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, namely with the transition "*von den 'Großen Mächten' zu den 'Weltmächten'*" (Faber, 1982, 930). Until that point, the debate on the exercise of power was focused on the domestic sphere and was "*ein unentbehrliches Requisit in den historisch-politischen Reflexionen über das Außenverhältnis der Staaten, die in der Sprache der Diplomatie traditionell als 'Puissances' ('Mächte') bezeichnet wurden*", constantly engaged in consolidating territorial control, maintaining regional influence, and managing power dynamics within their borders (Faber, 1982, 930).

In the Twentieth century, the world witnessed profound transformations that led to the emergence of the concept of World Power (Faber, 1982, 930). This change brought about the growth of global powers with a reach and impact that surpass national and regional boundaries. Indeed, the actions of World Powers can have global effects, influencing not only the power dynamics within their own territories but also international relations, the global economy, and global stability. In this new context, the distinction between *Macht* and *Gewalt* becomes particularly relevant. World Powers are capable of exercising *Macht* that extends beyond their domestic sphere, employing political, economic, and cultural tools to influence global actors and shape the international system. However, the exercise of such power can also be accompanied by manifestations of *Gewalt* that can have severe consequences for international peace and stability, leading to conflicts, instability, and global human rights violations.

In this perspective, the history of the Twentieth century (from the First World War to the Cold War, from international crises to large-scale military operations) emerges as the realization of the dystopia imagined already in Greece, of what could have happened if governments had begun to exercise *Gewalt* as a substitute concept for *Macht*. In pursuing an ideal of political stability and ideological assertion, which increasingly took the form of uncontrolled expansionism and acts of ideological and physical oppression

by the strongest state, the Twentieth century stood out as "a century of wars and revolutions, hence a century of that violence which is currently believed to be their common denominator" (Arendt, 1969, 1).

Among the various voices that have contributed to portraying an extremely negative image of the "short twentieth century" (Hobsbawm, 1994), Niall Ferguson's perspective (Ferguson, 2006a) paints a picture that leaves little room for ambiguity: "the hundred years after 1900 were without question the bloodiest century in modern history, far more violent in relative as well as absolute terms than any previous era" (Ferguson, 2006a, xxxiv). Ferguson identifies three main causes of the "extreme violence of the twentieth century" (Ferguson, 2006a, xli): i) ethnic conflicts and theories of race; ii) economic volatility throughout the entire century; iii) "the decomposition of the multi-national European empires that had dominated the world at the beginning of the century and the challenge posed to them by the emergence of new 'empire-states' in Turkey, Russia, Japan, and Germany" (Ferguson, 2006a, xli). It is precisely this last aspect that can be identified as the exacerbation of the aforementioned process that Faber sees beginning between 1800 and 1900 – namely, the transition from Great Powers to World Powers – which reached its peak in the course of the Twentieth century.

Drawing on the political geographer Friedrich Ratzel, Faber asserts that "*ein Staat naturgemäß nach Ausbreitung und, aufrichtig gesagt, Eroberung strebt*" (Faber, 1982, 933). Such a categorical assumption takes on alarming traits in a context of coexistence between old and new powers at the dawn of the "first age of globalization" (Ferguson, 2006a, 4) in the early 20th century, leading to the notion that "*der Begriff 'Großmacht' in seiner Beschränkung auf Landmächte veraltet sei. 'Weltmacht' und 'Großmacht' waren im politischen Vokabular der Vorkriegszeit identisch geworden*" (Faber, 1982, 933). The proliferation of old and new empires in the early decades of the 1900s has therefore generated an extremely confused and compromised political-terminological framework.

> "*war noch zu Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts mit dem Begriff der 'Großen Macht' die Vorstellung eines Stabilitätsfaktors innerhalb eines als relativ konstant angesehenen Staatensystems verbunden gewesen, so umfaßte er nun denknotwendig den Willen zu größerer Macht. Denn: Großmächte sind Expansionsstaaten*". (Faber, 1982, 933)

Referring to Weber (1976), we can assert that while the old empires had been present on the world stage for some time and could find their principle of legitimacy in the exercise of Macht, which was a combination of political and military power, guaranteed by both legal-rational means through established institutions and centralized govern-

ments, as well as traditional means derived from centuries of dominion and control, the emerging powers could not rely on the same support. It is worth noting that leaders like Lenin, Stalin, or Hitler based much of their rise to power on the charismatic element linked to the legitimacy of power. The states they led challenged the old-world order by proposing their own vision of power and the state, openly breaking with tradition and the reality known until then (see also Marzo, 2019).

The combination of these elements has generated a situation of ideological and armed conflict, undoubtedly because, as Faber argues, World Powers inherited from Great Powers the impulse for expansion. Moreover, this expansionist tension is the political translation of the primordial impulse towards recognition that Hegel identifies as the foundation of human nature. According to Fukuyama (2006), this impulse has always involved "a battle to the death for pure prestige". When humans act in accordance with the thymotic impulse – that is, connected to the idea of the 'emotional soul', a concept used by Fukuyama (2006), which he himself borrowed from Socrates and Plato – towards recognition, *Macht* wavers, and the horizontal dimension of power gives way to the purely vertical dimension of *Gewalt*. In this perspective, the twentieth century is well suited to the definition of the "struggle for recognition" (Fukuyama, 2006) as a defining characteristic of the era. During this century, violence (as seen in the two world wars) or the threat of its use (throughout the Cold War) constituted, on one hand, the primary tool in the attempt to establish and assert power by new and different entities. On the other hand, the work of Faber, Meier, and Ilting allows us to interpret the twentieth century as a historical period in which the principles of legitimation and recognition became the new terminological framework for previously known concepts such as 'expansion', 'domination', and 'supremacy'.

The World of War

After the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, a widespread narrative emerged, exalting the end of the age of conflicts and the dawn of a new era. During those years, Fukuyama (2006) proclaimed the end of ideological and political evolution of humanity and the advent of a democratic-liberal form of governance that would gradually become the ultimate destination for every nation in the world. This narrative was fuelled by the enthusiasm over the fall of the Berlin Wall and the political changes taking place in various parts of the globe, leading many to believe that the world was now leaving behind the dimension of conflict in favour

of a peaceful global coexistence (Hadas & Holland, 2022). In the same vein, Ferguson (2006a), who unequivocally labelled the 20th century as the "war of the world" century (overtly inspired by H. G. Wells' novel 'The War of the Worlds' from 1898), displays a more optimistic inclination towards the future in the new millennium ("as I write, there are some grounds for cautious optimism"; Ferguson, 2006, 633). However, he goes on to add that the era we are currently experiencing is a second phase of globalization that bears a striking resemblance to the first one, which occurred between the late 1800s and the early 1900s and created conditions for war and the age of hatred (Ferguson, 2006, 643-ff).

First and foremost, the emergence of international organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union has contributed to fuelling the discourse about the end of conflicts. These institutions were created with the objective of promoting peace, security, and cooperation among member States, providing a space for dialogue and diplomacy. However, it is important to acknowledge that certain characteristics of these organizations, such as the right to veto or strategic abstention, are mechanisms that, albeit non-violent, are permeated by a supremacist intent and historically represent a constraint on their effective functioning (Conforti & Focarelli, 2020). Nevertheless, the very presence of these institutions has given the impression that conflicts were now a thing of the past and that the world was mature enough to embrace a culture of peace.

Secondly, globalization itself has played a significant role in promoting this narrative: "after 1945, 'embedded liberalism' (Ruggie, 1982) and thus the promotion of a multilateral order of the world trading system became the dominant ideology in the Western world" (Barbieri & Schneider, 1999, 389). In curious contrast to Ferguson's position, the economic and cultural interconnection between countries, which has resulted in greater mutual dependence, has ultimately made conflict less appealing to many governments. Indeed, the increasing economic interdependence has created shared interests among nations, such as trade and financial stability, thereby incentivizing cooperation and peaceful resolution of disputes (Barbieri & Schneider, 1999, 389).

In this context, the philosophical discourse on power has often been flattened to focus solely on the horizontal dimension of *Macht*, reducing the violence of *Gewalt* to its purely psycho-coercive aspect, and considering open conflict as a relic of past geopolitical struggles. This perspective reflects a downsizing of the philosophical understanding of power and its manifestations and is supported by a range of theories, including the Foucauldian philosophy and, more recently, the works of the South Korean (naturalized German) philosopher Byung-Chul Han.

The philosophy of Michel Foucault has had a significant influence in the postmodern context, introducing the concept of 'biopolitics' to describe how power manifests itself in the control of human lives and bodies. Foucault argued that power permeates every aspect of society, from institutions to discourse and power-knowledge relationships. However, the Foucauldian interpretation of power has led to an emphasis on viewing power as a mere dynamic of non-violent domination and control, while excluding or minimizing the aspect of *Gewalt*. From this perspective, power is understood as a set of disciplinary and social control practices operating within institutions such as schools, prisons, or hospitals. It is considered a diffuse power that operates through normalization, regulation, and the production of homogenized subjects (Foucault, 2004).

Similarly, Han has also analysed power in contemporary society in terms of the 'society of control' and the 'society of performance'. According to Han, this society is based on self-control and self-regulation of individuals who voluntarily submit to mechanisms of surveillance and discipline. In this view, power no longer manifests as external repression but as a form of internal domination that expresses itself through the production of compliant subjectivities, driven by anxiety for success and self-expression (Han, 2005; 2014).

The readings proposed by Foucault and Han, which have gained extensive consensus, hold significant epistemological value within the field of 'philosophy of power'. However, they offer only a partial understanding of the phenomenon, as they lack the dimension of conflict that is inherently present in human history. In this regard, the considerations of Preterossi (2022) are interesting, as he argues that Foucault has developed "*una teoria del potere che vedendolo ovunque non lo determina, facendone qualcosa di inafferrabile. [...]la nuova ipostasi è la governamentalità. Da cui deduce, facendo finta di non farlo, di "indurre" delle pratiche. Una sorta di marxismo senza Marx, post-marxista e a-dialettico*" (Preterossi, 2022, 212).

Today more than ever, it is necessary to recognize that the persistence of an inclination towards *Gewalt* by states has never ceased to be a reality, despite any confident post-1989 narratives. The mere fact that the Cold War did not lead to a Third World War "did not mean that the age of wars was at an end" (Hobsbawm, 1994, 560). Hobsbawm's statement is particularly well-considered when we take into account events such as the war between Great Britain and Argentina and the Iran-Iraq conflict in the 1980s, as well as the numerous military operations in Europe, Africa, and Asia during the 1990s (*ibid*.). It even appears prophetic in light of the economic crisis of 2008, the crisis of the European integration process, the rise of new global economic powers, and finally, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

Indeed, the aggression against Ukraine by Russia transforms Ferguson's words (2006b) – "the old zones of conflict are unlikely to be the new ones" (Ferguson, 2006b, 69) – into a stark warning. Moreover, this aggression, along with the international reaction (from European sanctions against Russia to the arms race of many states, from nuclear threats to Ukraine's request for rapid accession to NATO and the EU), demonstrates that the discourse surrounding power cannot yet do without considering the intricate, profound, and essential relationship between *Macht* and *Gewalt*.

In the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, clear dynamics of violence, armed conflict, and geopolitical plots have emerged that go far beyond the mere exercise of power as discipline and social control. The Russian intervention in Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea have demonstrated that power continues to manifest itself today through the use of military force and territorial aggression. This dimension of *Gewalt* cannot simply be relegated to the past or considered as an internal matter of a nation (the detention of coercive forces by individual governments to maintain internal public order - Calise, Lowi & Musella, 2021). The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has had significant regional and global repercussions, involving international relations, international law, and geopolitical dynamics (Karabag & Imre, 2022), much in the same way that the *Weltmächten* identified by Faber produced the kind of global-scale violence that characterized the twentieth century. In fact, "*nei 77 anni che ci separano da Hiroshima e Nagasaki, il pericolo di un conflitto nucleare non è mai stato così grave e incombente come quello corso durante la guerra criminale scatenata dalla Russia contro l'Ucraina*" (Ferrajoli, 2022).

The dichotomy between *Macht* and *Gewalt* allows for the analysis of various aspects of the ongoing conflict and an attempt to understand its complexities. In terms of *Macht*, we can observe at least two levels of legitimacy. On one hand, the Russian government claims legitimate action to protect the interests of the ethnic Russian populations in eastern Ukraine, arguing the necessity of defending the rights and ensuring the security of local Russians (Fortuin, 2022). On the other hand, the Ukrainian government appeals to its legitimate power as the representative of the Ukrainian state and advocates for territorial sovereignty and integrity. In this struggle between states and different claims of legitimate power, reminiscent of the "struggle for recognition" mentioned earlier, forms of *Gewalt* have clearly emerged: the armed nature of the conflict and the devastating consequences for the civilian population in terms of human suffering and territorial destruction; violence and coercion through strategies of misinformation (Khaldarova & Pantti, 2016) that make the ongoing war an innovative model of "information warfare" (*ivi*, 1), wherein the digital realm plays a crucial role as a "technological force multiplier" (Kilkenny, 2021); the reflections of the conflict on international relations at the global

level and the shaping of a multipolar world geopolitical order in which the threat of nuclear recourse becomes an almost daily reality. "As it is known, ever since the first days of war, talks on the use of strategic nuclear weapons have dominated the international media environment" (Quarta, 2022, 344), contributing to the destabilization of the international order as it raised serious concerns regarding global security. This has led to pushes towards new alliances and forms of regional coalition: in response to the Russian threat, Ukraine has sought to strengthen its relations with the West, seeking political and military support from EU and NATO countries ("in recent years, the US have consistently armed and supported Ukraine in different ways"; Baccelli, 2022, 324). At the same time, Russia has attempted to consolidate its ties with other countries that share a similar political and strategic vision, such as Belarus and other members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). According to Ferrajoli, these divisions and alliances will have long-lasting effects on international relations and the global geopolitical framework, leading to cold wars that can trigger potential armed conflicts "*tra democrazie e autocrazie, tra Occidente ed Oriente, tra Paesi ricchi e paesi poveri*" (Profumi, 2022), "*tutto questo in un mondo sempre più armato, diviso e incattivito*" (*ibid.*).

Conclusion

Considering the analysis conducted, the concept of 'power' according to the dual aspect of *Macht*/*Gewalt* proposed in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* assumes crucial importance for a profound understanding of power dynamics both in the twentieth-century context and in the contemporary one. This analysis allows us to move beyond the post-Cold War rhetoric of the end of the era of conflicts and challenges philosophical views that solely focus on the horizontal dimension of power, neglecting its vertical dimension of conflict. In this contribution, the importance of examining the concept of power through the historical-conceptual approach of Koselleck has been highlighted, demonstrating how it can offer a richer and multilevel perspective on both 'power' and 'conflict'.

The term 'power' itself is inherently complex and multifaceted, becoming an object of study, debate, and analysis since ancient times. In contemporary studies, the reflection on power requires an evolution that integrates every aspect of the theme, from theories of power as a form of social control to approaches more inherent to conflict theories, aiming to approach the phenomenon as pluralistic and phenomenological as possible. In this context, the distinction between *Macht* and *Gewalt* formulated by Faber, Ilting, and Meier proves to be extremely valuable.

In light of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the analysis of the *Macht/Gewalt* dichotomy reveals the importance of considering both aspects of power to achieve a profound understanding of the contemporary reality. Despite the post-twentieth-century rhetoric of the end of the era of conflicts and philosophical views that tend to emphasize power in its horizontal dimension, the Russo-Ukrainian conflict clearly demonstrates that violence and armed confrontation persist as tools of dominance and struggle for power.

Furthermore, the critical analysis of power according to the *Macht/Gewalt* dichotomy underscores the interconnectedness between these two dimensions. In actual dynamics, legitimate and institutionalized power (*Macht*) can be supported or threatened by the possibility or effective use of its violent counterpart (*Gewalt*). This provides a conceptual basis for understanding the complex power and conflict relationships in contemporary reality. This critical approach challenges theoretical simplifications that reduce power to a singular dimension and suggests that a comprehensive analysis requires a careful exploration of both aspects of power.

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