



## War, Complexity, and One-dimensional Thinking: Thinking is Acting

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### Abstract

*Both democracy (nowadays known as “global democracy”) and war are examples of complexity. Simplification and closing-off (isolation) will never accomplish anything when dealing with either of these kinds of complexity. We have taken for granted that aggression, invasion and war are by definition immoral and illegal and that it is always necessary to distinguish between the “attackers” and the “attacked”, between the “oppressors” and the “oppressed”; war itself, in all of its unspeakable trauma, requires, no matter what the circumstances, a systemic approach to complexity, an analysis or explanation from a systemic perspective. Keeping in mind that there are currently a considerable number of conflicts in the world, ignored by the global media system and therefore completely forgotten, this latest war runs the tangible risk of escalating globally, with extremely heavy costs in human suffering and loss of lives, costs that will be “paid”, of course, by the civil populations, by the people of the world. The strategy of sanctioning, and even more so, of fostering hostilities towards Russian culture, systematically closing off all that comes from Russia or can be traced back to that country, risks further exacerbating the distances, reinforcing those “logics of separation” which render—and in the future, will continue to render even more impractical, not to say impossible, the (complex) path towards post-conflict reconstruction. Creating and fueling further divisions, in this moment, towards a people and a culture with—moreover—extraordinary qualities will end up radicalizing, even more deeply, dynamics that are already bellicose and highly destructive. The pathways of separation and isolation, in other words, run an all-too-real risk of permanently closing everyone off, including those who are struggling—using a range of effective instruments (not only in terms of “soft power”)—who are fighting an arduous and complex battle to construct modern democracies, to build societies that are truly open and inclusive. If we cut them off, the sole victims will be the populations, the people, the most vulnerable subjects. It has always been so. One “certitude” can indeed be taken to be certain: we must get ourselves back onto the path of diplomacy (by everyone, for everyone) and politics. These events, so dramatic for the history of humanity, have once again shown us how weak statesmanship is today, and how politics has by now become the “handmaiden” of economic powers. The very concept of an “international community” has laid bare its own incapacity to describe the current multi-polar global context. Let us start over, starting with politics, with diplomacy, “real” on-the-field diplomacy, continuous and systemic: less “theater” and more “backstage”; now is not the time for “simulated diplomacy” and/or media storytelling, which unfailingly leads us in the opposite direction from our expected and desired objectives. Let us start over,*

*beginning with politics and diplomacy, and also with the value of culture and education in mind, for the future: Ukraine's future, Russia's future, humanity's future, the future of our entire planet. Violence has never brought anything other than more violence, more division, more incurable fractures.*

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It is never easy to speak/write about these “cases”: one runs a substantial risk, amongst the many, of communicating distance or detachment from the situations being analyzed, which are experienced in a “mediated” form. In these dramatic weeks, we are once again witnessing how fragmented and polarized public debate—not to speak of media debate—has become, characterized by reductionism and determinism, incapable of promoting *genuinely critical or strategic thinking*, or carrying out an analysis free from prejudices, pre-conceived frameworks, and platitudes. The inevitable consequences of this kind of flash and often flashy analysis, whose appeal is directed at boosting audience/hits/followers, are to polarize conflict rather than to stimulate generative conflict, which could achieve a systemic vision of the “facts”. Despite constant ostentation of concepts and approaches claiming to promote and deepen understanding (which is, by definition, multi/inter/transdisciplinary understanding) its logic leads in the opposite direction. On the contrary, only a deeper understanding can lead toward the sharing of “instruments”, of critical, systemic and strategic thinking and cognition, which are needed to deconstruct hegemonic/dominating narratives, and more generally, to create an-“*other*” glance, non-conformist and non-*hetero-directed*. An-“*other*” glance which is direly and drastically needed, and whose impelling urgency—what is more impelling than war?—should be felt as an irrevocable responsibility on the part of opinion makers and decision makers alike. Failure to do so is a moral choice, and those who make it will have to answer for it to the younger (and future) generations.

Obsessive declarations reiterating praiseworthy intentions of avoiding reductionist, conformist explanations, polarizations, and classifications notwithstanding, what happens in reality is that debates and public discourse continue to fuel all of the above along the same lines as with other important issues, past and present, not only for the purpose of furthering rationales of “usefulness”, but as said before, to win greater popularity. In fact, the term “complexity” is continually used—and misused—both by “complexity” cultists and by those glorifying “simplicity”, with equally counter-productive outcomes on both sides. As usual, the hidden objective is to divide and oppose, without ever going deeper into issues or widening perspectives for thinking “*other*”-wise.

Nevertheless, before delving further into our (brief) reflection, I believe that a modest quantity of agreement/clarity on concepts and related working definitions is called for. To

begin with, complexity is an essential feature of life forms, in other words, of biological, social, and human systems, i.e., *complex adaptive systems* (CAS), which are very well-structured in their hierarchy and organization and are capable of co-constructing, generating and organizing the parts of which they are composed, parts that in their multi-level myriads of systemic interconnections, interdependencies and interactions condition the behavior and non-linear evolution of the systems themselves and of their surrounding ecosystems. The structural connotations of complex systems, which are marked by extreme sensitivity to environmental perturbations in which continual processes of action and adaptation give rise to unpredictability, are their *emergent properties*. These properties, which cannot be observed initially, are characterized

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by a radical interdependency of the parts, which basically consist of “relations”, through which the system is capable of self-generating and self-organizing, and can be analyzed only through their non-linear evolution and through the dynamics of their phenomena. All CAS are irrepressibly dynamic, irreversible, unpredictable, heterogeneous and *dissipative* in their chaotic, non-linear evolution along the arrow of time, yet capable of holding together tensions, processes, phenomena, conflict, ambivalence, contradictions, paradoxes and apparently irreconcilable dimensions (Poincaré J.H., 1908, 1885; Mead G.H., 1934; Weaver, 1948; Wiener N., 1948, 1950; Ashby W.R., 1956; Heisenberg, 1958, 1959; Arendt H., 1958; Simon, 1959, 1962, 1997; Feynman, 1963, 2000; Hayek von, 1964; Neumann von, 1958, 1966; Lorenz E.N., 1963; Canguilhem G., 1966; Watzlavick P. *et al.*, 1967; Bertalanffy von L., 1968; Emery, 1969; Anderson, 1972; Bateson, 1972, 1979; Morin, 1973-2004; Holland, 1975; Capra, 1975, 1996; Le Moigne, 1977; Haken, 1977; Mandelbrot, 1977; Lovelock J., 1979; Prigogine-Stengers, 1979, 1984, 1997; Maturana-Varela, 1980, 1985; Prigogine, 1980; Foerster von, 1981; Kauffman, 1971, 1993; Luhmann, 1984, 1990; Gleick J., 1987; Stewart I., 1989; Kiel L.D., 1994; Gell-Mann, 1994, 1995; Krugman, 1996; Prigogine, 1996; Laszlo, 1996; Bar-Yam, 1997; Diamond, 1997, 2005; Mathews et al., 1999; Barabási, 2002; Israel, 2005; Dominici, 2005-2021; Nicolis-Nicolis, 2007; Taleb N.N., 2012; Kuhlmann M., 2013; Montuori, 2014; McCall R.-Burge J., 2016; Gentili, 2018; Turner-Baker, 2019). Having said this, it is a common error today to think of complex systems simply as complicated. A complicated system is completely different: it is an artificial system consisting of mechanical parts that can be counted, controlled, and predicted. Nothing to do with natural, complex systems, whose *open dialectics* consist even of *existential oxymorons* and of barriers that suddenly dissolve into *hybrid zones* and into indefinite and undefinable trajectories.

As I have been repeating for over twenty-five years, it is impossible to control or manage complexity. It must be clear that this is not a question of terminology or of words, labels or catchy slogans, despite the fact that today complexity is the “talk of the town”, and that self-professed experts in complexity abound. But the dimensions of “complexity” concern/pertain to/define a way of thinking, systemic thinking, a method we could call, “epistemology of uncertainty”, (Morin, 1973 and further works), regarding systemic and systematic doubt. A similar concept is “epistemology of error” (Dominici, 1995-6 and further works), an approach

and an alternative glance at reality and what we define and recognize as real. Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that *the opposite of complexity is not simplicity*, as simplicity zealots would have us believe, but rather reductionism (Ibidem). Thus the controversy between complexity and simplicity is yet another “false dichotomy” to add to a long list of delusions that keep human thought imprisoned within arbitrary barriers. To make matters worse, an even more strangled narrative hails from the other side, from those who depict themselves as experts on complexity, when they are not even capable of distinguishing the enormous differences between complex and complicated systems.

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At this point, before going more deeply into why the battle between complexity vs. simplicity enthusiasts is misleading and deceptive, we should mention the recent criticism of one polarized faction coming from the opposite polarized faction, regarding the ongoing war in the Ukrainian territory. Those who have described the events characterizing and leading up to this conflict as “complex” have been accused of unacceptable justification; even of taking sides (the wrong side) in the catastrophic phenomena that is currently unfolding. Yet war is indeed complex, just as its causes and consequences are undeniably and tragically complex, as are all human endeavors, struggles and underlying motivations.

In fact, both democracy (nowadays known as “global democracy”) and war are examples of complexity. Simplification and closing-off (isolation) will never accomplish anything when dealing with either of these kinds of complexity.

Taking for granted that aggression, invasion and war are by definition immoral and illegal and that it is always necessary to distinguish between the “attackers” and the “attacked”, between the “oppressors” and the “oppressed”, war itself, in all of its unspeakable trauma, requires, no matter what the circumstances, a systemic approach to complexity, an analysis or explanation from a systemic perspective.

This being an argument I had already taken up during the pandemic, several comparisons can be drawn between these two events. In fact, after these trying pandemic years (yet another global and systemic emergency which had—once again—caught us unprepared for the unexpected...quite the contrary to the proverbial “black swan”), and which we chose to face, as usual, by falling back on the rationales of simplification and on reductionist, deterministic explanations, what should blow in this time but the umpteenth war. Keeping in mind that there are currently a considerable number of conflicts in the world, ignored by the global media system and therefore completely forgotten, this latest war runs the tangible risk

of escalating globally, with extremely heavy costs in human suffering and loss of lives, costs that will be “paid”, of course, by the civil populations, by the people of the world.

## 1. Simulation of Debate

Unfortunately, situations of this kind trigger standard polarizations, which are, ironically, produced by the very voices who shout them down the loudest. Today we are being presented with the latest, apparently irremediable diatribe, one we simply could not have done without, between “complexity enthusiasts” (consisting *not* of experts on complexity but of numerous intellectuals and scholars who have never even approached the subject and who have unfailingly demonstrated in their publications to be incapable of recognizing, much less adopting, a systemic approach to complexity) and “simplicity warriors” both of whom, beyond their mutually opposing positions and traditionalist frontline logics, continue to reproduce and foster reductionist, deterministic and rigidly schematic explanations and beyond that, to propose distorted and misleading analyses of complexity theory/-ies, of complexity science, of the very concept of “complexity”, and of the kinds of thinking and epistemologies that these implicate and promote.

The repercussions are evident, as the topics and arguments generally come down to an ideological clash, brimming with clichés and stereotypes, often related to themes and approaches of which the duelists know very little (as I always say, one cannot be an expert on everything); reductionist, deterministic explanations that have been efficiently pasted together and narrated in simplistic terms guaranteed to produce a sterile and aporetic dispute that, unfortunately—or fortunately as it may be—works very well in gathering consent and popularity. A dispute with no possibility of mediation that legitimizes the analyses, or better, the simple “solutions” and obvious *shortcuts* that have been proposed.

The result is that studies and research on complex systems are disregarded, while complexity itself, with the approaches, thinking and epistemologies that promote and characterize it, is still being used instrumentally as a slogan, more often than not distorted and discredited, despite the Nobel Prize awarded to the brilliant physicist Giorgio Parisi. Whereas on the contrary, a deeper understanding of complexity could truly provide a plurality of diversified perspectives for comprehending and analyzing the calamitous situation in Ukraine, and more generally, for interpreting so many of our unexpected, systemic and global emergencies. And yet, in trivializing, and even ridiculing entire traditions of study and research, which are undeniably supported by a vast quantity of scientific and multidisciplinary literature, there are those who—on both fronts—utilize the concept as a buzz-word, either a solution-word or a problem-word (thus echoing the categories proposed in the past by Edgar Morin—who has recently taken it upon himself, by the way, to speak out about the dramatic war in Ukraine), in one or the other sense, to magnify or demolish hypotheses, discussions, people. There are those who have taken on the title of “complexity professionals” without taking the trouble to do any research whatsoever on the topic, and those taking the opposite position, under the same conditions of ignorance, who rant against these so-called complexity professionals. Self-appointed experts claiming knowledge and skills on the topic without having carried out the necessary years of studies, activities or

research feel entitled to sling platitudes and labels in all directions in an effort to belittle genuine scientific researchers in the field. Once again, the factions clash without knowledge or consideration of the concepts, definitions, approaches, epistemologies, methods, and thoughts that characterize complexity. Significantly, it has become all too common these days to present oneself as an expert on subjects without having ever studied them, which inevitably leads to sketchiness at best, and most likely to harmful polarization when done without considering the damage that can be wreaked.

When these polarized positions culminate in senseless measures, driving more and more radical divisions and separations between peoples, volatile situations can easily blow up out of all proportion, leading to (what should be) unthinkable consequences, and the direct responsibility lies with those who have fostered these divisions.

Returning to the specific case at hand, the strategy of sanctioning, and even more so, of fostering hostilities towards Russian culture, systematically closing off all that comes from Russia or can be traced back to that country, risks further exacerbating the distances, reinforcing those “logics of separation” which render—and in the future, will continue to render even more impractical, not to say impossible, the (complex) path towards post-conflict reconstruction. Creating and fueling further divisions, in this moment, towards a people and a culture with—moreover—extraordinary qualities, will end up radicalizing, even more deeply, dynamics that are already bellicose and highly destructive.

Quite the contrary, now is the moment, by following the postulates of complexity and systems theory and sciences, to try to “open” (complex) systems, building precisely on a tangible and continuous dialogue, which cannot/must not be activated exclusively in retrospect—and on the strategic value of culture, on the rich uniqueness and diversity of cultures, complex devices capable of undermining even the most anti-democratic elites, who have always feared culture and free thinking in all forms, more than any weapon or military invasion.

Yet another semantic dimension/label that is erroneously attributed to complexity, and to the approach, thought or epistemology/-gies that it demands, is one that draws an association, not only with the inherent difficulties of facing so many variables of such enormous magnitude, but also with a supposed “lack of responsibility or accountability” in making choices or decisions. Saying, for example, that a certain phenomenon or problem is “complex”, *therefore there is nothing we can do about it*, is one of the points on which simplicity crusaders attack real or presumed complexity theorists, as though the concept of complexity were merely an attempt to elude a *relational corral of responsibility*. Quite the contrary, a complexity “culture” is a *culture of responsibility* (Dominici, 1996) and of prevention, for which a *long-term systemic vision* is indispensable. The problem is that this kind of temporal duration does not sit well with the timing and objectives that are generally set in politics and international relations.

In the meantime, there continues to be great confusion, even among so-called experts (“experts on everything”) and even, at times, amongst scholars regarding the meaning of the word “complex”, which is used, as in everyday speech, to signify “(very) difficult or

complicated”. As I said before, the same confusion reigns regarding the distinction between complex and complicated, and at times is even taken to simply describe something that has “bigger” dimensions or extensions. In the same way, complexity continues to be associated with *genericity of arguments* and with *lack of precision and/or methodological rigor and analysis*. As far as the aforementioned confusion between complex and complicated systems is concerned, I have in the past described this as the most fatal of all errors. Another far from irrelevant issue previously described is the mediocre habit of considering simplification to be the opposite of (and the solution to) complexity. We have already seen that it is reductionism which is in direct opposition to complexity; in any case, it is certainly futile to look for “simple solutions to complex problems” (Dominici, 1995-1996, 2005).

On the subjects of both complexity and responsibility, I would like to underline that in complex systems, it is impossible to be an external and/or neutral observer. The observer is inevitably an integral, interacting part of what is being observed, and the *very act of observing* will have an impact on the system observed, changing it in some way, while the observer (who is known in sociology as the observer/participant), will also be changed by what they are observing. This feature of complex systems is well-known to physicists, but is perhaps even more crucial to comprehend on a human scale when considering the complexity of social systems. We should keep in mind that any human conflict, above all/any war, will affect and will be affected by the observers. The responsibility we share is, therefore, twofold, and cannot be dismissed.

## 2. The Deepest Deviation

In these situations, the deepest and most worrying deviation consists of the fact that, beyond the positions taken (which are, as always, polarized and extreme) what emerges are public debates and “climates of opinion” (a concept that was coined by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann), wherein, almost inevitably, no chance for in-depth reflection or for an alternative point of view is permitted. It is all too obvious that public opinion(s), the (global) ecosystem of information and communication and, more generally, political and social cultures carry out the functions of *powerful agents of social control and conformism*, within apparently open, democratic societies as well. Any positive form of confrontation, meaning a *generative*, even if harsh conflict, has fallen by the wayside. The only conflict that remains is an ideological skirmish, a one-dimensional debate, in which all voices (including those who have always warned against polarization) fall back on hegemonic *narratives* and oppositions, on diatribes and rigid schemes, on “false dichotomies” (Dominici, 1995), which have nothing to do with complex thought.

I have always been struck by a similar lack of coherence, methodological rigor, and even, at times, intellectual integrity among experts, scholars and intellectuals, in particular by the fact that complexity and the approach it implicates have so often been used in these circles to criticize certain positions, only to subsequently execute an about-face and use them in the opposite manner according to whom they wished to attack. We saw this during the years in which terrorism was the main concern of governments and media. Those who claimed at the time that the only correct strategy was direct suppression and/or physical elimination of

the terrorists, without attempting to address the latent causes or to take into account that in certain areas terrorism had been deliberately triggered and fostered for strategic purposes, were always quick to call those who wanted to explore the *complex* roots and causes of the phenomenon as “sympathizers”.

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Likewise, in more recent times, the “complexity paradigm” has often been used to criticize populist movements or to condemn those portions of society who take the most extreme positions on bioethics, dismissing them as ignorant or religious fanatics incapable of overcoming a *simplistic* approach to reality. As always, these paradigms and approaches are applied according to what is momentarily convenient, to demonstrate that one’s own ideas are the only ones acceptable. And how often have we witnessed these same thinkers and crusaders, including the *crème de la crème* of our intellectual ranks, alternate in either embracing or abandoning a “complex” approach according to circumstances. Hence it is particularly ironic but far from surprising to hear those who have always abhorred the ignorance of a simplistic approach on the part of populists, now calling populist or disloyal those who favor a more nuanced and complex approach to the current Ukrainian impasse.

It must be clear, however, in recalling the words spoken by the Italian thinker/intellectual Antonio Gramsci: “I hate the indifferent” (Gramsci, 1917), that the urgency of taking a position on injustice, crises, social and ethical issues is of the utmost importance. Our understanding of the complexity of life and our analyses of the complexity of conflict and war should not suffocate our choice to take a moral stand on human rights and human suffering. Too often, though, this position is not based on what is believed to be morally right, but is tempered by considerations of profit, prestige, and promotion on the part of those who seek fame and visibility.

In this manner, public discourse and debate completely overlook the contribution that a systemic approach to complexity could provide in analyzing, and in searching for a potential—and vitally important—way out of such a devastating event as war. Thus, today we find ourselves once more obliged to talk about war, while millions of human beings are obliged to endure it. These are, as I have been saying for years, very dark times indeed.

Let me repeat this: the pathways of separation and isolation run an all-too-real risk of permanently closing everyone off, including those who are struggling—using a range of effective instruments (not only in terms of “soft power”)—who are fighting an arduous and



complex battle to construct modern democracies, to build societies that are truly open and inclusive. If we cut them off, the sole victims will be the populations, the people, the most vulnerable subjects. It has always been so.

Ever since I was a child, I have heard history teachers, politicians, journalists and so many others repeat this cliché over and over again: “we must learn from history”: but this latest dramatic conflict is yet another demonstration that this formula is nothing more than an empty slogan, one we use to try to make sense of dramatic events that make no sense, to try to explain something that has no explanation, at any rate no “rational” one.

We are living, as I have said above, in very dark times, in times of one-dimensional thinking, or rather, of non-thinking. Thought is a complex dimension, which we persist in considering so marginal and irrelevant as to have decided to delegate it to so-called “intelligent” machines. Our hypertechnological and hyperconnected civilization—as I have been saying from the ‘90s on—is marked by a thinking crisis, by a distressfully inadequate thought process that is totally unprepared for facing the ongoing phase of radical change and complexity, a phase that is historically unprecedented in the evolution of human society. The lack of thinking generates—and will continue to generate—not only closed, asymmetrical and increasingly exclusive societies; it generates—and will continue to generate and escalate—tyranny and unspeakable monstrosities like war and the oppression of the “Other from ourselves”.

As Bertrand Russell once wrote: “Men fear thought as they fear nothing else on earth—more than ruin, more even than death. Thought is subversive and revolutionary, destructive and terrible; thought is merciless to privilege, established institutions, and comfortable habits; thought is anarchic and lawless, indifferent to authority, careless of the well-tryed wisdom of the ages” (Russell B., 1916).

### 3. The Logic of Linear Thinking

The logic of linear and causal thinking can lead nowhere but to strife and discord, to an absolute incapacity for understanding complexity (which is not a synonym for difficulty) or for recognizing the coexistence of contradictions, dichotomies and open dialects (without a conclusive synthesis). The catchwords are the same as ever: all voices are raised unanimously against disinformation, against “fake news”, “bubbles,” and so-called “echo chambers”. All unanimously in favor of “critical thinking”, of “long-term” policies, but somehow, at the same time unanimously eager to label, simplify, reduce and trivialize the issues, *discrediting whoever does not think like “us”*. Once again seeking those “simple solutions for complex problems” (Ibidem). The bottom line is that these polarizations and one-sided rationales are very convenient, not only for enhancing the illusion of reducing or simplifying complexity, rendering it decodable and universally accessible, but also for fostering “cultural industries” and strengthening positions of high visibility and social prestige.

It is high time (and has been so for some time) to rediscover politics (i.e., politics unchained from economics) and diplomacy, which are always called for and/or applied with hindsight, after the dynamics and conflicts have played out—either with extreme or mild consequences—by framing them from a long-term, permanent, systemic and systematic

perspective. Otherwise, once war has “broken out”, and the fuses have been lit, merely mentioning the idea of a “peace culture”, or a “complexity culture” begins to look like close to useless rhetoric.

Apart from the dispute between those who calibrate their binoculars on complexity and those who choose to regulate their settings on simplicity, both of whose readings, at the end of the day, have little impact on real outcomes, the representations of the drama and the complexity of war itself, in many cases, tend to dwindle into simplified, self-redeeming narratives, as well as into mere *simulation of debate*, communication, and imagination, whilst criticism or praise of complexity is expressed without rigor, in an awkward and confusing manner, even by those who should feel it their duty to offer lucid interpretations and effective instruments for opening positive prospects and unexplored scenarios for peace.

As the recent global and systemic emergency has shown us, everything is related, everything is interdependent and *inter-independent* (a concept introduced by Panikkar). No planes of thought, analysis, or action can be kept separate. Furthermore, there is no dimension of phenomena or reality, no dimension of our lives and existence that is not complex. Complexity is not an indication of any kind of “higher level”; a cell, an insect, a leaf, a flower, a plant and a brain—the latter is perhaps the most complex system of all—an organization, a social system, all are complex organisms, all are interconnected, and “everything depends on everything else”, to borrow a concept from the Haida people of the Canadian territory.

Complexity, in other words, is a structural, connotative dimension of what is real, of what is social, of what is alive, even (or perhaps especially) in those dimensions, impossible to observe, that are emergent and unmeasurable. “Objects” should be seen as they really are: as *systems*, relations, and systems of relations, in which the smallest imaginable change can have an enormous effect on the entire system and on its environment, as illustrated by the famous metaphor known as the “butterfly effect.” And having said this, taking once more into consideration the recent pandemic, it becomes evident that not everything can be broken down or simplified into more basic elements. Risk, emergency, conflict, education, communication, politics, democracy and life itself: none of these can be simplified or reduced to mathematical formulas or sequences of data, although the aspiration of human beings to do so, and to try to achieve total control over every single aspect of life becomes paradoxically more and more obsessive as time goes by.

Furthermore, going back to the systemic “approach” I have been speaking of, it is a characteristic of complex social systems to adapt constantly to changes, even those that are dramatic and traumatic, so it is impossible to make any kind of prediction regarding dynamics that turn out to be increasingly chaotic, and at times/often, indecipherable.

One “certitude” can indeed be taken to be certain: we must get ourselves back onto the path of diplomacy (by everyone, for everyone) and politics. These events, so dramatic for the history of humanity, have once again shown us how weak statesmanship is today, and how politics has by now become the “handmaiden” of economic powers. The very concept of an “international community” has laid bare its own incapacity to describe the current multi-polar global context.

Let us start over, starting with politics, with diplomacy, “real” on-the-field diplomacy, continuous and systemic: less “theater” and more “backstage”; now is not the time for “simulated diplomacy” and/or media storytelling, which unfailingly leads us in the opposite direction from our expected and desired objectives. Let us start over, beginning with politics and diplomacy, but also with the value of culture and education in mind, for the future: Ukraine’s future, Russia’s future, humanity’s future, the future of our entire planet. Violence has never brought anything other than more violence, more division, more incurable fractures. *Let us stay human!*

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