Foucault and Hobbes on Politics, Security, and War

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Abstract
This article engages and seeks to develop Michel Foucault’s account of the nexus between modern politics, security, and war. Focusing on his 1976 lecture series Society Must Be Defended, the article considers Foucault’s tentative hypothesis about how the logic of war becomes inscribed into modern politics through the principle of security. Contra Foucault, it is suggested that this nexus can already be found in the proto-liberal political philosophy of Thomas Hobbes. In order to make this argument, the article focuses on the ontological dimension of Hobbes’ thought. It suggests that the relationship between the state of war and political order in Hobbes is more complex and more ambiguous than Foucault thought. Rather than being transcended, the Hobbesian state of war is appropriated by the state, and converted into the fundamental antagonism between reason and passion. The latter gives rise to a regime of security through which a relationship of war is inscribed into the Hobbesian commonwealth.

Keywords
Foucault, Hobbes, liberalism, security, war

Introduction
Among Michel Foucault’s most provocative and productive contributions to contemporary political thought is the idea that the relationship between war and politics is more complex and more ambiguous than is recognized in the paradigmatic liberal narrative of political modernity. In his 1976 lecture course “Society Must Be Defended,” he shows how war came to function as a schema for social and political order/ordering. His genealogy of modern political discourse accounts for the emergence and development of a conception of politics and society that identifies war as “the ineradicable basis of all relations and institutions of power.” Foucault thus shows that war is neither a prepolitical condition nor simply a political instrument but the very “grid of intelligibility” for modern politics. In other words, rather than being restricted to the realm of the military and the space of the battlefield, war runs through and structures social and political relations. Crucially, Foucault also gestures toward the idea that the generativity of war can be understood in relation to the principle of security: It is when security comes to serve as a constitutive principle for political order/ordering that the logic of war becomes inscribed into modern politics. What Foucault thus called into question is...

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the assumption that politics and war are in principle separate and different. This problematization of the liberal idea of civic order as a zone of peace is widely regarded as one of his most provocative and productive contributions to contemporary political thought.

Recent scholarship has used Foucault’s insights regarding the relationship between modern politics, security, and war to develop critical accounts of contemporary liberalism. However, scant attention has so far been paid to the line of argumentation through which Foucault developed these insights. While several commentators have raised various questions regarding the content and the structure of Foucault’s genealogy, there has been little in terms of sustained critical reflection on certain key aspects of his overall argument. In this article, I will consider one such aspect, namely Foucault’s interpretation of Hobbes. As will be shown in more detail below, Hobbes plays a central role in Foucault’s genealogy of modern political discourse. According to Foucault, Hobbes is a theorist of peace whose conception of politics represents the antithesis of that which renders politics an extension of war. In this article, I will rethink Foucault’s reading of Hobbes as well as his understanding of Hobbes’ place in the genealogy of modern political discourse. The main argument to be put forward can be summarized as follows: Foucault’s account of Hobbes’ theory of sovereignty is misleading because it fails to appreciate the way in which the principle of security and the logic of war figure therein. Contra Foucault, I contend that Hobbes’ liberal conception of politics rests on a fundamental relationship of war, which manifests itself as a regime of security within political order.

The argument is structured as follows. In the first part, I will briefly reconstruct what I understand to be the main line of argumentation that Foucault pursued in “Society Must Be Defended.” I will emphasize that the notion of security is crucial to this line of argumentation, even if it is not the declared focus of the lectures. Foucault hypothesizes that it is through the imperative of security that politics becomes inscribed with a relationship of struggle or war. In the second part, I will reflect on Foucault’s interpretation of Hobbes’ political theory. How does Foucault arrive at the conclusion that Hobbes’ conception of politics is diametrically opposed to that which is based on the schema of war? As will become apparent, he arrived at this conclusion by reading Hobbes’ theory of sovereignty through the prism of the metaphor of the contract. I will set out to move beyond this arguably rather limited approach to Hobbes in the third part of this article. What I will propose is that the Hobbesian state of war can be read in ontological terms, and that this reading yields a very different conception of politics than that implied in the model of the contract: Incapable of being transcended, the state of war is in fact appropriated by sovereignty, and converted into the fundamental antagonism between reason and passion. In the final part of this article, I will show how this antagonism gives rise to a regime of security that is inscribed into and sustains the order of the commonwealth.

**Foucault on Politics, Security, and War**

In “Society Must Be Defended,” Foucault provides a suggestive and highly provocative analysis of the problem of war in political modernity. Concretely, he accounts for the emergence and development of a discourse which, in an inversion of Clausewitz’s famous dictum, conceptualizes politics as a continuation of war. Foucault had already referred to a reversal of Clausewitz’s famous dictum—that war is the continuation of politics by other means—in the context of his theory of disciplinary power developed in *Discipline and Punish*. In his analysis of the development of disciplinary techniques and mechanisms, Foucault emphasized the role of the military–scientific thought of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Referring, in particular, to the work of the French military theorist Comte de Guibert, Foucault shows that military organization was among the original sources of disciplinary power. According to Foucault, certain disciplinary techniques, which originated in the military domain, would gradually become applied to societies as a whole. What Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* is that military organization came to serve as a model for social organization, or that modern politics has its origins in the organization for war. While war as
strategy may be a continuation of politics, he observes, “politics has been conceived as a continuation, if not exactly and directly of war, at least of the military model as a fundamental means of preventing civil disorder.” As a technique of internal peace and order, politics sought to organize the social body in accordance with what is essentially a military schema of discipline.

The thesis that Foucault sets out to analyze in “Society Must Be Defended” takes the form of a more direct inversion of Clausewitz’s principle: “Politics is the continuation of war by other means.” For Foucault, the question is not who inverted Clausewitz’s principle as it is the question of the principle Clausewitz inverted, when he said that war is a continuation of politics. What he aims to show, then, is that the thesis that politics is a continuation of war predates Clausewitz’s inversion thereof. It is worth mentioning that Foucault is not the only thinker to have considered the modern conjunction of politics and war in terms of a reversal of Clausewitz’s famous dictum. In one form or another, this notion of politics as a continuation of war has been deployed by several political thinkers. But Foucault’s treatment of this thesis is particularly appealing because it takes the form of a question: How, when, and why did the thesis that politics is a continuation of war by other means emerge? Thus, rather than presenting this thesis in the form of an ontological claim, as many other theorists have done, Foucault presents it in terms of a (genealogical) “problematization.”

Foucault’s genealogy begins with an account of the emergence of the first “historicopolitical discourse” on society in seventeenth-century England. Essentially, this discourse is one in which war is understood as “the ineradicable basis of all relations and institutions of power.” The political and intellectual roots of this discourse can be traced back to figures such as Sir Edward Coke and John Lilburne. In the 1630s, the historicopolitical discourse of war was developed by such representatives of English popular movements and deployed in their struggles against the monarchy. Coke and Lilburne challenged the legal and political status quo by positing a fundamental struggle in society between two groups or races. According to this discourse, which was initially deployed as an instrument of political opposition against sovereign authority, political order is nothing more than the conquest and subjugation of one race by another. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, this discourse reappeared in the opposition of the French nobility to the absolutist monarchy. Here, Foucault focuses on the figure of Comte Henri de Boulainvilliers who, like Coke and Lilburne, deployed what was essentially a discourse of race war against the state. Through its “binary conception of society,” the historicopolitical discourse of war posed a direct challenge to the philosophicojuridical discourse of the state, which conceived of society in terms of an organic homogeneity. Foucault develops his account of political modernity and the problem of war through a distinction between the philosophico–juridical discourse of peace on the one hand, and the historical–political discourse of war on the other hand. Importantly, Foucault establishes this distinction through an interpretation and historical contextualization of Hobbes’ theory of sovereignty, as will be shown in more detail below.

The crucial moment in Foucault’s lecture series is located in his examination of the political and philosophical developments associated with the French Revolution. What emerges from these developments is the synthesis between the discourse of war and the discourse of peace, which arguably constitutes the critical climax of the lectures as a whole. According to Foucault, it was at the time of the French Revolution that the historicopolitical discourse of war—which had originally served as an instrument for various counter-state struggles—became colonized and reconfigured by the state. The crucial transformation of the role of war in political discourse is related to the political reworking of the idea of the nation in the nineteenth century. Foucault takes the figure of Sieyes and his text on the Third Estate as an example of this transformation in which the French bourgeoisie appropriated the discourse of war and transformed it. What is important for the present purpose is that, from henceforth, the discourse of war comes to function “as a principle of exclusion and segregation and, ultimately, as a way of normalizing society.” It is at this point also that the assertion that “we have to defend ourselves against society” will be displaced in favor of the inverted claim, which
provides the title of the lecture series: “Society Must Be Defended.” From henceforth, the role of war “is no longer to constitute history but to protect and preserve society; war is no longer a condition of existence for society and its political relations, but the precondition for its survival in its political relations.”

In this new grid of intelligibility, politics is still conceived of as a continuation of war in the sense that the fundamental relationship that underpins political order is still one of antagonism, confrontation, or struggle. But the nature of this relationship has changed insofar as the struggle that is at stake in politics is no longer one between two groups, nations, races, or societies within the state. In the new formulation of the discourse of war, the relationship of war is no longer invoked in opposition to sovereign power but in its defense. The logic of war now functions to produce and reproduce rather than to contest state sovereignty: “The State, and the universality of the State, become both what is at stake in the struggle, and the battlefield.” In other words, what is at stake is no longer domination but preservation, survival, or security. The institutions of the state are no longer conceived as sources of domination and subjugation but in terms of “terrains of a struggle for universality.” In this conception of politics, the horizontal relationship with other nations is replaced with the vertical relationship between nation and state or, more generally, between the state and whatever it is that defines the society whose security the sovereign state is concerned with. According to Foucault, this discourse of power is associated with the idea of an “internal war” waged in defense against the enemy within. Crucially, this discourse speaks in defense of sovereign power: it deploys the logic of struggle/war in order to produce/reproduce political sovereignty.

What is important to emphasize at this stage is that Foucault’s problematization of this discourse revolves, to some extent, around the notion of security. When Foucault asserts that, within the discourse in question, the role of war is “to protect and preserve society” and that war has come to be seen as “a precondition for its [society’s] survival,” he obviously speaks about a discourse of security. To be sure, his treatment of security in Society Must Be Defended, as elsewhere, is somewhat erratic and more implicit than explicit. Security never becomes a sustained focus of analysis in Foucault’s work, and various aspects and facets of this problematic are neglected in his reflections. Nevertheless, Society Must Be Defended certainly provides an engagement with one particular problematization of security—that which has developed in relation to the idea of the nation-state. Moreover, and on that basis, Foucault offers a number of important leads with regard to the idea of a distinctively biopolitical problematization of security. Crucially, and more generally, Foucault points at the correlation between security, war, and peace in suggesting that peace becomes inscribed with a relationship of war through the principle of security. Or to put this differently, in modern politics “… the logos of peace is systematically inscribed with the logos of war through discourses of security.” What Foucault identifies in his lectures is a type of discourse which conceives of politics in terms of a struggle for the security of state and society.

**Foucault’s Hobbes**

From the beginning, Foucault rationalized his pursuit of the question of power in opposition to a particular image of political order. This image dates back to the seventeenth century and is thought to have been created by the Bohemian artist Wenceslaus Hollar. It was probably revised, under Hobbes’ supervision, by the Parisian engraver Abraham Bosse, and eventually became the frontispiece to Leviathan, when it was first published in 1651. The iconography of the engraved frontispiece to Hobbes’ Leviathan serves as a powerful visual representation of his theory of sovereignty. The image depicts the sovereign as a kinglike figure wielding a sword in his right hand and a crosier in his left. Leviathan’s body is comprised of the individual bodies of her subjects who are engaged in peaceful relations with one another. This image conveys a powerful representation of the body politic as an organic homogeneity. As a follower of humanist literary practices, Hobbes
believed in the potency of visual imagery; and that this belief was by no means misplaced is confirmed by the fact that, today, the most famous portion of Leviathan is not the writing but the image.\textsuperscript{17} Foucault defined his political–theoretical efforts in opposition to this image of power and politics, and he has largely succeeded in his endeavor to escape from the presuppositions and problems associated with it.\textsuperscript{15} What I want to address in this article are the consequences of reducing Hobbes’ political theory to this image.

That Foucault takes Hobbes as his conceptual and political opponent throughout his enquiries into the nature of power in modern societies becomes apparent in many of his writings. In \textit{Discipline and Punish}, Foucault already used Hobbes’ Leviathan “as a background against which he outlined his alternative anatomy of the body politic.”\textsuperscript{19} While not referring to Hobbes directly, Foucault mentions the theory of the contract and its model of society on several occasions in order to set it against his own theory of the disciplinary society. He sees himself as revealing that which is concealed by the theory of the contract and “the fiction of the juridical subject”: “The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an ‘ideological’ representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called ‘discipline.’”\textsuperscript{20} In the first volume of \textit{The History of Sexuality}, Foucault suggests that the juridical conception of power is best understood as “the code according to which power presents itself and prescribes that we conceive of it.”\textsuperscript{21} Ever since the Middle Ages and despite efforts “to free the political from the juridical,” the Western representation of power “has remained under the spell of monarchy.”\textsuperscript{22} Thus emerges Foucault’s famous invocation that “[i]n political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king.”\textsuperscript{23} The overall project of “cutting off the king’s head” is about contesting the juridical model of power, whose main representative Foucault consistently identifies in the figure of Hobbes.

In \textit{Society Must Be Defended}, Foucault makes the following observation: as soon as we start thinking about power/war, the name of Hobbes springs to mind. At first glance, Foucault notes, Hobbes appears to be the man who locates war at the basis of power relations and who regards war as the principle that explains them.\textsuperscript{24} That this appearance is deceptive and that Hobbes is, in fact, not at all the thinker who conceptualizes politics as war is what Foucault seeks to show. In order to do so he first examines the nature of the Hobbesian “war of all against all,” arguing that this war is not really a war in the sense that what is at stake in this war is not a relationship of force but a relationship of fear. What the “war of all against all” describes is a scenario of a multitude of individuals whose mode of interaction is defined, above all, by the fact that they are essentially equal in terms of strength. This situation of minor differences does not produce a war in the sense of a direct clash of forces but what Hobbes himself calls a “state of war” which, in Foucault’s view, is best understood as “a sort of unending diplomacy between rivals who are naturally equal” (p. 92). More precisely, what is at stake in the Hobbesian state of war is a relationship that consists in “calculated presentations of strength,” “emphatic and pronounced expressions of will,” and “the use of mutually intimidatory tactics” (p. 92). “For Hobbes,” Foucault argues, “it does not all begin with war” since what is at stake in the “war of all against all” is not really war but the representation and the threat of war (p. 93).

Foucault then asks how this state of war gives birth to sovereignty. In addressing this question, he refers to Hobbes’ distinction between sovereignty by institution and sovereignty by acquisition. In the case of the former, sovereignty is instituted through the covenant by means of which individuals grant a person or an assembly the right to represent them. In the case of the latter, Foucault notes, it seems that what we are dealing with is a commonwealth that is founded on a relationship of force. But, Foucault asserts, this is not what Hobbes intends to say. Rather, what Hobbes is saying is that, in the case of sovereignty by acquisition, we are still in a relationship of sovereignty, rather than in a relationship of domination, for it is not defeat in war that leads to the establishment of the commonwealth but fear. In Hobbes, it is ultimately “the will to prefer life to death” that founds sovereignty, and this is why sovereignty by acquisition is just as legitimate as the sovereignty that was instituted
by mutual agreement. Sovereignty, Foucault notes, is, in the Hobbesian model, always based on a will that is bound up with fear; sovereignty is therefore always shaped from below and it does not matter whether there is a covenant or a real battle (p. 96). Foucault concludes that “far from being the theorist of the relationship between war and political power, Hobbes wanted to eliminate the historical reality of war” (p. 97).

The third part of Foucault’s interpretation of Hobbes consists of a historical contextualization of this discourse of peace. Foucault asks: “To whom, to what, is this elimination of war addressed, given that no previous theory of power had given war the role that Hobbes so stubbornly denies it?” He addresses this question by referring to Hobbes’ “strategic opposite number”—that is, “a certain theoretical and political strategy that Hobbes specifically wanted to eliminate and render impossible” (p. 98). More precisely, what Hobbes sought to eliminate was the problem of Conquest and the use that was being made of this problem in seventeenth-century historical discourse and political practice. Foucault refers to the fact that the problem of Conquest—that is, the problem of William’s Norman Conquest—was central to all the political discourses and programs that circulated in England in the first half of the seventeenth century. According to Foucault, the strategic adversary that Hobbes’ Leviathan was designed to address was the problem of Conquest: the discourse of contract and sovereignty is deployed by Hobbes in order to defend state power against the discourses of struggle and civil war that flourished in seventeenth-century English society. Hobbes’ “great adversary” was what Foucault calls “political historicism,” a type of discourse that emphasizes the fact of domination (p. 111).

Rather than being the “motor behind institutions and order,” war, in Hobbes, is essentially irrelevant to the constitution of political order; Hobbes is a theorist of “nonwar.” The logic underlying Foucault’s argument is compelling if not particularly original: if Hobbes was to say that the state of war and real war are, in general, the same thing, he would be saying precisely what he wants to avoid saying: that sovereignty is preceded by, and founded upon, war. Thus, the state of nature cannot be war because sovereignty must be shown to follow a contractual agreement based on consent; and without the assumption of equality there can be no consent. While comparing the state of nature with civil war, the two cannot, in Hobbes’ logic, be understood beyond what is merely a descriptive relationship. The state of nature must be like war, for otherwise there would be no good reason to leave it, but it cannot be war, for then the sovereign would be based on victory in war rather than on equal consent of individuals. The point is that war makes intelligible the sovereign’s history, and to escape this coercive history Hobbes suspends all temporality and calls upon the ahistorical spatiality of the state of nature, the place where sovereign power conceals the violence of its origin.

Among the various engagements with Foucault’s Society Must Be Defended that have appeared both before and after its publication, there are few which focus on his interpretation of Hobbes. Insofar as Foucault’s reading of Hobbes has attracted attention, its reception has been mixed: some regard it as sophisticated and insightful; others consider it somewhat misleading and even sloppy. Beatrice Hanssen, for example, has duly pointed out that Foucault reads Hobbes in complete neglect of interpretative tradition. Indeed, at no point does Foucault attempt to situate his reading of Hobbes in relation to existing interpretations thereof. He rationalizes his approach to Hobbes in opposition to the idea that he is a theorist of power/war; and on that basis he sets out to establish the supposedly counternontechnique contention that he is not. The claim that Hobbes is a “false paternity,” when it comes to the relationship between power and war is derived self-referentially from Foucault’s own observation that Hobbes appears, at first sight, to be a theorist of power/war. Foucault’s reading of Hobbes begins and ends with this self-referential gesture. We could also point out that Foucault’s interpretation is entirely dependent on the logic of the metaphor of the contract. This is problematic because there is more to Hobbes than the story of the contract and the question of legitimacy (or the “why” of power); and the task of the remainder of this article is to show that Hobbes also presents us with an account of the “how” of political sovereignty.
Hobbes and the State of War

The alternative interpretation of Hobbes I sketch out in this article consists of two parts: the first part is concerned with the problem that his political philosophy is designed to solve, and the second part deals with the solution Hobbes proposed to the problem he identified. Hobbes’ political philosophy revolves around what we could call the problem of order or the problem of producing order in a world that is fundamentally disordered. This problem is captured in the concept of the state of nature. The idea that the state of nature is best understood as a philosophical account of the human condition provides the point of departure for my reading of Hobbes. It is well known that Hobbes was a philosophical skeptic and that the contours of his political theory are shaped by this attitude. He denied the existence of a humanly knowable divine, natural, or rational order, and he repeatedly drew attention to the defects and liabilities of perception, language, reason, and other sources of order.27

The concept of the state of nature captures the radical uncertainty and indeterminacy that Hobbes’ skepticism would have implied. Lacking in intrinsic order and purpose, the human estate is radically subjective: Human beings impose form and order on themselves and the world; and their efforts to impart a degree of intelligibility and stability on things are always artificial and essentially arbitrary. Artificial constructs, such as language, reason, science, morality, and political order do not correspond to a natural order of things. Understood in this ontological sense, the Hobbesian state of nature refers to a human condition without epistemological or political foundations.

The state of nature is a state of war, then, in the sense that it continually gives rise to different and competing attempts to make sense of and order life. In this sense, the Hobbesian state of nature can be understood as a “field of forces,” the constituent elements of which are different and competing wills to truth/knowledge, which, in turn, drive different and competing wills to power/authority.28 It is the multiplicity of wills to knowledge and power and the multiple and mutually exclusive pursuits of security emanating from the immanent condition of mankind that produce the state of war. What we find in Hobbes, then, is something akin to a Nietzschean (and Foucauldian) understanding of the political in terms of a complex “field of force relations.”29 While the latter remains one of Foucault’s most elusive concepts, it seems reasonable to suggest that it refers, broadly speaking, to a multiplicity of power/knowledge configurations and constellations. It appears that the concept is very similar to that of the state of nature, which can also be understood to refer to a condition of radical contingency and indeterminacy, which is characterized by the interplay of multiple wills to truth and power. Thus, while in terms of their political projects, Foucault and Hobbes may be understood as diametrically opposed, there seems to be some common philosophical ground between them.

In the absence of definitive standards of truth and morality, the Hobbesian state of nature constantly generates different and competing political movements. There are, at least potentially, as many political bodies as there are individuals since every individual is capable of constructing her own understanding of the world. What is important to realize at this juncture is that the state of nature is ontological and, hence, incapable of being transcended. This idea runs directly counter to one of the main assumptions misleadingly conveyed in the model of the contract—that sovereignty is an achieved condition or the relatively stable outcome of a transition from one state of existence to another. For Hobbes, sovereignty is a dynamic rather than a static condition, and the state of nature is neither temporally anterior nor spatially exterior to political order. Crucially, while the Hobbesian state of nature cannot be transcended, it can be superimposed with, and encoded by, a regime of truth and power. Any regime of truth/power that emerges from the state of nature is essentially arbitrary and necessarily artificial, and in order to obfuscate its own arbitrariness and artificiality a regime of order must appropriate the constitutive state of war. Sovereignty must encode the state of nature as a realm of otherness and enmity, for it is only through this conversion of difference into otherness that a regime of order can assert its claim to universality. With the constitution of political order, the war of all against all is thus converted into a permanent struggle for security.
As this antagonism is superimposed on the state of war, the latter is converted into the perennial struggle of reason against passion or madness, which is inscribed into, and sustains, the order of the commonwealth. For Hobbes, security is defined on the basis of the distinction. Interestingly, there seems to be a connection between this distinction and the mechanical–physiological account of life that we find in Hobbes’ natural philosophy. While a comprehensive consideration of the latter is beyond the scope of this article, it is worth noting that there is in Hobbes a conception of life, which rests on the scientific insights of Galileo and Harvey. As is well known, for Hobbes, life is a system composed of vital and voluntary motions whose overall function is to preserve itself. What is important for the present discussion is that Hobbes explains the distinction between reason and passion (and madness) in terms of this conception of life. For Hobbes, the forces of reason and passion are directly related to the physiological constitution of the human body. I mention this because it may be of some significance for our understanding of the genealogy of biopolitics. This, after all, is what Foucault himself seems to have recognized, when he wondered how the problem of the self-preservation/preservation of life came to shape the political theory of the seventeenth century.

One way to extend this line of research beyond Foucault’s own cursory remarks would be to recognize that Hobbes drew upon the scientific insights of the time in order to develop an account of life that informs his theory of political order. Further research is needed to clarify how this bears on the ongoing debate as to when, how, and to what effect life entered the realm of politics.

What is important at this stage is that the antagonism between reason and passion is essentially a continuation of the war of all against all, and that this antagonism is constitutive of political order and subjectivity in Hobbes. It has been suggested that the state of nature can be understood as an ontology of becoming or generativity, which emphasizes the restless movement of forces characteristic of social and political life. What follows from this is that the state of war cannot be overcome but must, instead, be appropriated by and incorporated into political order. In order to capture this manoeuvre and its ambiguity, I have found it useful to speak of an imperfect conversion of the state of war into the State of War (with capital letters). The latter is the strategy of power that creates and sustains political order; and the former is the ontologically prior substratum of war that engenders and constantly threatens to subvert this strategy of power. In Hobbes, political order works by converting and striating the state of war into a specific antagonism, viz., that between reason and passion. In other words, the war of all against all is appropriated by sovereignty and inscribed into the commonwealth as a regime of security—in this sense, the Hobbesian commonwealth is the continuation of the war of all against all. In the next section, I will show how precisely the antagonism between reason and passion is inscribed into the order of the commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Must be Defended

In Hobbes, the struggle between reason and passion does not end with the establishment of political order—in fact, this struggle is constitutive of the order of the commonwealth. War becomes inscribed into the body politic in the form of a fundamental antagonism between the form of life that needs to be secured and those forms of life the former needs to be secured from. This antagonism does not end in victory; it is a struggle that can never be won, a struggle in which victory is always preliminary and never self-sustaining. The project of security is, as Hobbes reminds us, not temporary but perpetual, for it constitutes the very principle of stability, which sustains the body politic. The Hobbesian distinction between reason and passion is not simply describing a reality; it is a mechanism for producing the reality of a form of life deemed suitable for inclusion into civil society. It is worth reemphasizing that this schema is in many ways consistent with what Foucault problematized in “Society Must Be Defended.” As was already mentioned earlier, Foucault spoke of a binary schema that features a kind of struggle which is, for the most part, a silent or “a civil struggle.” In this schema, the “bloody struggle” (the power to kill) is nothing more than an exceptional moment.
within an overall struggle that takes place in and around institutions, language, and the bodies of individuals. To put this differently, the relationship of struggle/war manifests itself as a basic mechanism of normalization and exclusion before it reveals itself as the power to kill in the exception. It is this schema of war that is reflected in Hobbes’ political theory.

What remains to be shown is that Hobbesian politics is in fact a continuation of war in the sense that the fundamental antagonism between reason and passion is inscribed into the order of the commonwealth. In what follows, I shall argue that the order of the commonwealth is sustained by a regime of security, which rests upon the antagonism between reason and passion. Concretely, this regime of security manifests itself in three ways—disciplinary normalization, discursive regulation, and the state of exception. The first front on which the Hobbesian struggle between reason and passion is waged is the individual body. William Connolly has argued that the main problem of Hobbesian political rule is to convert a being that is initially dominated by his passions into a calculating, prudent, and self-interested subject. Importantly, Connolly rejects the widely accepted view that Hobbes’ political theory rests on the assumption of self-interested individuals. This line of interpretation, he argues, “misleads by pretending that the self-interested individual is the problem when it comes closer to being the solution Hobbes offers for the problem he identifies.”

Referring to Hobbes’ fundamental conviction that “man is made fit for society not by nature but by education,” he suggests that the self-interested individual is not so much the starting assumption as the end-product of Hobbesian politics. The prudent, calculable, and self-interested subject is the product of a regime of discipline and normalization: The Hobbesian self “is first and foremost a self shaped into form suitable to civil society, a self whose guided passions protect civil society from the destructive effects of anarchic behaviour.” What is important to note for the present purpose is that this project of disciplinary normalization operates through the fundamental antagonism between reason and passion.

For Hobbes, the problem is not only that all men are “born unapt for society” but also that “[m]any also, perhaps most men, either through defect of mind or want of education, remain unfit during the whole course of their lives.” Rejecting the Aristotelian assumption that the human capacity for civic sociability is natural and innate, Hobbes invoked the necessity of discipline for the purpose of forming political subjects. It is important to note that when Hobbes speaks of “discipline,” which is often translated as “education,” he refers not merely to the idea of pedagogical instruction but to the much wider range of disciplines through which individuals are made fit for society, by society. For Hobbes, society is endangered by those individuals who fail to contain their passions. “Madness” and “indocibility” are the categories of otherness invoked by Hobbes in order to refer to these improperly domesticated subjects who are deemed to fall below the prevailing threshold of rationality. These and other “defects of the mind” potentially haunt the interior life of every individual and must continuously be countered with “the antidote of reason,” that is, with a regime of self-discipline/discipline. The model of the domesticated, self-interested, and depoliticized individual, which Hobbes was the first to invoke as the most conducive to a well-ordered society, is in need of permanent reproduction.

One of the key disciplinary mechanisms that Hobbes invokes for this purpose is fear. The role of fear in Hobbes’ political philosophy has received attention by a number of scholars. While his interpreters disagree over the type of fear that is most important in Hobbes (the fear of violent death, the fear of other men, the fear of god, or the fear of the unknown), there is a clear consensus that fear is one of the central means for the preservation of civil society. There can be little doubt that the fear of violent death and anarchy serves to make individuals more docile and more receptive to the constraints and regulations associated with civil society. In Hobbes, sovereign power institutionalizes the fear of violent death in order to produce and maintain the liberal individual. In this sense, the state of nature can also be read as a discourse of danger. When Hobbes says that, without government, we are at risk of from the hostility and avariciousness of other men, he speaks to imperfectly
domesticated subjects. In Hobbes, “it is the fear of slipping back into the state of nature . . . rather than an argument that men should proceed from the state of nature to the state that is the force behind Hobbes’s reasoning.” So understood, the state of nature “helps subjects to get their priorities straight by teaching them what life would be like without sovereignty”; it “domesticates by eliciting the vicarious fear of violent death.” For Hobbes, fear and danger play an important role in the constitution of political order and subjectivity.

The Hobbesian project of discipline can be seen as a means for preventing what he considered to constitute the greatest threat to order: the formation of factions and the problem of sedition. As regards the origin of this problem Hobbes speaks of “the doctrines and the passions contrary to peace, wherewith the minds of men are fitted and disposed.” Factions are subversive political movements, which spring from “certain perverse doctrines,” the emergence of which must be countered by introducing a “sound civil doctrine.” What we have here is another dimension through which the war between reason and passion is continued: the regulation of public discourse. Political action proceeds from political opinion and, being aware of this, Hobbes considered it necessary that sovereign power regulate the circulation of ideas and opinions. For Hobbes, political and religious doctrines and opinions constitute the greatest danger to civil society: “There is scarce any principle, neither in the worship of God nor human sciences, from whence there may not spring dissensions, discords, reproaches, and by degrees war itself” (pp. 179–80). The disruptive power of political doctrines such as constitutionalism, mixed government, and popular self-rule is as much a concern for Hobbes as are the theologies promoted by different religious sects.

These and other doctrines and opinions may inflame the passions of individuals and represent “the greatest, and most present danger” to the commonwealth (p. 228). Hence, they must be controlled and regulated by the sovereign. According to Hobbes, it is necessary to maintain a form of public discourse that counters the disruptive pull of the passions and the seditious potentialities dwelling within the self. Hence, the sovereign is “Judge of what Opinions and Doctrines are averse, and what conducing to Peace; and consequently, on what occasions, how farre, and what, men are to be trusted withall, in speaking to Multitudes of people” (p. 124). Moreover, the Hobbesian sovereign will decide “who shall examine the Doctrines of all booke before they be published” (Ibid.). As regards the question of the “means” and “conduits” by which people normally receive their ideas and opinions, Hobbes mentions the significance of educational institutions. In the context of his discussion of “the office of the sovereign,” he notes that dangerous knowledge is usually derived “from the Universities, and from the Schooles of Law, or from the Bookes, which by men eminent in those Schooles, and Universities have been published” (p. 237). What Hobbes seems to suggest here is that the sovereign must ensure that educational institutions deliver “the right teaching” (the story of the contract can be understood as part of this effort). The silent war against passion must be waged in those institutional locations, which regulate the flow of doctrines and opinions—schools and universities. In Hobbes, the fundamental struggle between reason and passion continues through the government of knowledge and public discourse.

Finally, the antagonism between reason and passion can manifest itself as pure violence in the state of exception. When the passions of men can no longer be contained through discipline and regulation, and when they find expression in political thought and action, then the commonwealth deploys “the Soveraign Power of life, and death.” The Hobbesian sovereign is “judge of both the meanes of Peace and Defence; and also of hindrances, and disturbances of the same”; and he will “do whatever he shall think necessary to be done, both before hand, for preserving Peace and Security, by prevention of Discord at home . . . and, when Peace and Security are lost, for the recovery of the same” (p. 124). If a subject deliberately denies the authority of the sovereign “by fact, or word,” he will suffer as an enemy of the commonwealth (that is, not as a juridical subject): “against Enemies, whom the Common-wealth judgeth capable to do them hurt, it is lawful by the originall Right of Nature to make warre” (p. 216). When the forces of passion cannot be contained by the
Hobbesian regime of discipline and regulation, then the silent continuation of war is replaced by open war. Thus, the continuation of war within the commonwealth is not restricted to its silent manifestation but can also appear nonsilently, involving the real possibility of lethal violence. It is only upon successful self-conversion/conversion from a passionate and unruly being to a self-interested, reliable, and stable subject that the individual will be given juridical status.

Conclusion

That Hobbes can be read as an intellectual precursor to a distinctly liberal political modernity has been argued convincingly by a number of scholars and in a number of different ways. In this article, I have read Hobbes through the prism of Foucault's critique of liberal modernity. What the foregoing discussion has shown is that Hobbes is an ambiguous figure as far as the relationship between politics and war is concerned. It has been suggested that Hobbes' proto-liberal political theory is broadly consistent with Foucault's hypothesis about the correlation of modern politics, security, and war. Focusing on the ontological dimension of Hobbes' thought, I have argued that his concept of the state of war is twofold: it refers both to the constitutive field of forces that is prior to, and independent of, the power of the state, as well as to the latter's appropriation and codification of it. For Hobbes, political order does not put an end to the state of war; rather it converts the latter into a regime of security. Contrary to Foucault's own interpretation of Hobbes, the above discussion suggests that the latter conceived of political order in terms of a fundamental antagonism, an antagonism that manifests itself in what I have referred to here as a regime of security.

There are two main conclusions to be drawn from this analysis. The first of these concerns the relationship between Foucault and Hobbes. From what has been argued above it appears that Foucault's reading of the relationship between politics and war in Hobbes is misleading in that it focuses solely on the metaphor of the contract. While the latter does indeed suggest that politics and war are in principle separate and different, it does so because this is what Hobbes wanted people to believe and not because this is how his political order works. Foucault's account of the relationship between politics and war in Hobbes is misleading, then, because it fails to appreciate how this relationship is conceptualized within the larger set of ideas of which the metaphor of the contract is part. What Hobbes offers is an account of state power as conditioned by its appropriation of war and its institutionalization of war in the form of a regime of internal security.

The second conclusion I would like to draw concerns the Foucauldian critique of liberalism. As regards liberalism and its political project, Foucault's "Society Must Be Defended" has raised a number of questions: Is the political project of liberalism implicated in the violent logic Foucault saw at work in modern politics? Does the political project which strives more than any other toward a horizon of peace actually rest on the logic of war? How does the modern security imperative shape liberalism's modus operandi? Is the liberal peace always already conditioned by a distinction between forms of life that need to be secured and forms of life that need to be secured against? While Foucault can be said to have raised these questions, he did not address them explicitly. Several Foucauldians have attempted to develop and to substantiate what presents itself, in Foucault, as a nonclaim—that liberal politics is a continuation of war. For the most part, these efforts have concentrated on contemporary liberal theory and practice. In this article, I have considered how war and security figure in Hobbes' early-modern, proto-liberal project of peace. What the insights obtained in the above discussion suggest is that the liberal project of peace was already permeated by the logic of war at its inception in Hobbes.

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Notes
4. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, Note 1, 168.
5. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, Note 1, 48.
8. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, Note 1, 49.
10. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, Note 3, 60.
11. Ibid., 216.
12. Ibid., 225.
20. Foucault, Discipline and Punish, Note 2, 194.
22. Ibid., 88–9.
23. Ibid.
24. Foucault, Society Must Be Defended, Note 3, 89. Hereafter, page numbers of references to Society Must Be Defended are given in the text.
25. See, for example, Mark Kelly, The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault (London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 51.
29. See Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, Note 19, 101–02.
36. Ibid., 26–7.
37. Ibid., 28.
44. Hobbes, *De Cive*, Note 36, 244.

**Bio**

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