

## FRIENDSHIP IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

GÁSPÁR BÍRÓ

### *Abstract*

Why is it that, in reflections on international affairs, the struggle for privileges and the ensuing hostility and antagonism is more prevalent than analyzing the likelihood of friendship? Is it that in real life the former overshadows the latter, which is viewed as the exception? Politics yes, but friendship among nations? The ancient Greeks loved to speculate on ideal friendship, restricted to private life and adult, free males. As to relations between political units the notion of friendship was used in a strategic sense. Who are or would be our friends when preparing for and waging war, and what will follow? Friendship in the affairs of the *polis* was not excluded, but it was mainly about companionship. They also knew that Gods do not befriend humans, tyrants do not have friends, and true friendship based on wickedness is impossible. Empires do not need friends either. You can offer them your allegiance and services but not your friendship. Then, in the Western part of Europe, it was religion and kinship between the monarchs and the aristocracy that enhanced mutual support. Of course, interest always played a role. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century the international system began absorbing at an accelerated pace the logic of the free market, and rude material interest prevailed in many areas. There is no friendship in business, as the saying goes, therefore, as some may conclude, there is no friendship in international affairs. There is a need for it, however. The extensive use of the notion, even in the disillusioned 20<sup>th</sup> century, stands as proof of this. The mere fact of seeking friends in international affairs is both a challenge, and an endeavor of interest to all. This article aims at raising questions on these issues, rather than offering solutions.

*Keywords:* antagonism, enmity, friendship, friendly relations between states, hostility, politics among nations, state loneliness, state insignificance

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Enmity between individuals, sometimes evolving into an irreducible antagonism is eventually a question of will. A number of external circumstances, as well as chance, antipathy, or other feelings could concur in such situations, but will is decisive. As organized groups are concerned, examples of hostility among them are well documented in history, although a situation when each member of group A regards all members of group B as enemies and vice-versa, is rare. The pattern whereby leaders determine who is an enemy or a friend of the group (tribe, city state, empire, nation, state), goes back also to the beginnings of documented human history. Moreover, since ancient times, there is a consolidated view that an essential and unavoidable duty of the leader is to differentiate between friends and enemies, of course, to the benefit of the community. Moral or sentimental issues, pride and honor may be involved in such cases as well. Honor and prestige shall be reasserted from time to time as a sign of strength. Failure to do that for whatever reasons may be interpreted as weakness.

One situation has been described by Thucydides in the Melian dialogue. Faced with the ultimatum of Athenian envoys delivered from a position of force and with the threat of annihilation, the Melians expressed their wish to be neutral as regards the former's war with Sparta, while aware of the little chance for it. "So you {Athenians} would not consent to our being neutral, friends instead of enemies, but allies of neither side," the Melians said. The imperial response was: "No; for your hostility cannot so much hurt as your friendship will be an argument to our subjects of our weakness, and your enmity of our power."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Landmark Thucydides. A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War.* Ed. By Robert B. Strasser, with an Introduction by Victor David Hanson. Simon and Schuster, New York 1996. 5.94-5.95.

The Greek *philos* denotes friend, acquaintance, companion, a friend in war, or a guest. Friendship, *philia*, had also a number of meanings depending on the context: love between family members, between friends, as a desire or enjoyment of an activity (the love of wisdom, philosophy), as well as the relations between lovers.

Despite the large literature developed since ancient times we are not closer to the mystery of friendship than the early classics were. Montaigne eloquently summarized what has been known long before him:

If a man should importune me to give a reason why I loved him, I find it could not otherwise be expressed, than by making answer: because it was he, because it was I. There is, beyond all that I am able to say, I know not what inexplicable and fated power that brought on this union.<sup>2</sup>

The magic of friendship is still charming us as ever.

I would not attempt here even a brief overview of the elaborate Greek and Roman thinking on friendship. One remark, though, seems in order. With all the ambiguities of various translations into modern European languages, it is safe to claim that over the centuries classics have confronted virtually everything related to the subject, and laid down a speculative framework which has not been surpassed ever since.<sup>3</sup>

The *Iliad* contains the basic patterns of personal and inter-group relations covered by the notion of companionship and friendship in war. Enmity and friendship have been of paramount concern of a hero's life, mentality and status. The story of Achilles and Patrocles continues to fascinate as an ideal relationship between friends, free men and warriors ready for the supreme sacrifice for each other. Dedicated to a long, devastating war in vain, the poem's recurrent references range from brotherhood in arms to the likelihood of friendship between groups and political units, sometimes in form of an agreement to fight a common enemy. Who is a foe, and more importantly, who is a friend, and how stable are these qualities is a permanent riddle when hierarchies fluctuate and chance might play a crucial role, as in warfare. In Book VII for example, there are two, less quoted verses open to different interpretations, as mirrored, among others, in existing differences in various translations. One of these interpretations might concern the relativity of enmity and friendship between groups of warriors. Today's enemies could be tomorrow's friends, as the opposite might be true as well. Another reading is that war is seen differently by ordinary soldiers, than by their commanders. The episode in question of Book VII is the proposal of Hector to the Achaeans when the news of a truce reaches the combatants. The first possible interpretation is reflected best by Alexander Pope's translation. Hector concludes his speech with an offer and a proposal, a wish: "But let us, on this memorable day, Exchange some gift: that Greece and Troy may say, 'Not hate, but glory, made these chiefs contend; And each brave foe was in his soul a friend.'"<sup>4</sup>

Another translation reads: „Let us, moreover, exchange presents that it may be said among the Achaeans and Trojans, 'They fought with might and main, but were reconciled and parted in friendship.'" <sup>5</sup> Glory appears here as the main motivation of the fight between Ajax and Hector, as of many wars. Once glory is assured, it may open the way for generosity, reconciliation and even friendship, as in this version: „to the end that many a one of Achaeans and Trojans alike may thus say: 'The twain verily fought in rivalry of soul-devouring strife, but thereafter made them a compact and were parted in friendship.'" <sup>6</sup> The 1974 translation published in Oxford emphasized determination: „Let us make one another memorable gifts, and afterward they'll say, among Achaeans and Trojans: 'These two fought and gave no quarter in close combat, yet they parted friends.'" <sup>7</sup> Hobbes' version is also terse: "These two men fought and sought each other's death, Yet parted friends."<sup>8</sup> The explanation might well be the remark by Douglas L. Cairns who commented on some

<sup>2</sup> Montaigne: *On friendship. Essays of Montaigne. Vol. 2.* Trans. Charles Cotton, revised by William Carew Hazlett. New York: Edwin C. Hill, 1910. "He" was Étienne de La Boétie.

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<sup>3</sup> To get an idea of the complexity of the subject and the open-ended character of debates around it suffice to consult David Konstan's book entitled *Friendship in the Classical World* (Cambridge-New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997).

<sup>4</sup> *The Iliad* of Homer Translated by Alexander Pope, with notes by the Rev. Theodore Alois Buckley, M.A., F.S.A. and Flaxman's Designs. 1899 (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/6130/6130-h/6130-h.html#toc42>)

<sup>5</sup> *The Iliad of Homer.* Rendered into English prose for the use of those who cannot read the original. Samuel Butler. Longmans, Green and Co. 39 Paternoster Row, London. New York and Bombay. 1898.

<sup>6</sup> Homer. *The Iliad with an English Translation* by A.T. Murray in two volumes. Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann, Ltd. 1924.

<sup>7</sup> Homer: *The Iliad.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984, 121.

<sup>8</sup> *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury. Homer: Iliad and Odyssey [1939].* First Collected and Edited by Sir William Molesworth. London, Bohn, 1839-45. 11 vols. Vol. 10.

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sources on the topic in his essay as follows: friendship, or *philotes* “can exist where there is no blood tie; in particular, the prominent members of the opposing armies at Troy are each other's philoi and this tie of philotes demands that they acknowledge each other's honour on a reciprocal basis.”<sup>9</sup>

Despite developments during the 5th and 4th century BC towards an institutional and legal framework which allowed a more sophisticated distinction than the antagonistic friend-enemy dichotomy, the ambiguities and fluid nature of friendship between organized groups remained in place. There is a school of thought claiming that in the ancient world, and particularly between Greek city-states, the main elements of what has been called later international law were extant. Representatives of this view, among other facts, point to the two main alliances of city-states (the Athenian and the Corinthian Leagues, 377 and respectively 337 BC), agreements regarding the status of aliens, of envoys and representatives and the formalities related to their activities, and the distinctions and specific terminology of treaties practiced between Greek city-states. The question whether friendship and alliance were distinct notions and they appeared in agreements with different status in the ancient Greek world probably cannot be fully answered. Indeed, it is a question which is relevant in our days too. For instance, NATO members are allies who undertook in the 1949 founding treaty that „The Parties will contribute toward the further development of peaceful and friendly international relations by strengthening their free institutions, (...)” Does it follow then that they are considering themselves as friends as well?

“The most elemental form of a Greek alliance was a *philia*, or treaty of friendship”, writes David Bederman, one student of ancient international law. He continues by stating after the presentation of such a treaty that „Friendship (*philia*) was manifestly distinct from alliance (*symmachia*). In short, two polities could be friends, and yet not be allies”, which might well have been the case. What is unclear is to what extent a treaty of alliance or a declaration of friendship leads to stronger bonds between the parties than contractual obligations. Looking at an alliance as a legal construction, a contract entails the prior acceptance of the possibility of its breach, or, more mildly, non-compliance by one of the parties, something not unusual. Non-compliance can be a result of facts or circumstances beyond the will of the parties. Friendship in the ancient world appears to be a broader concept, as seen before, both in interpersonal relations and among organized groups. Given the enhanced moral nature of friendship, its breach should not be subject only to legal considerations: failure to help each other amounts to a betrayal of the friendship and has a number of long ranging consequences. In a world where for security communities had to rely basically on themselves, fear of betrayal by friends increased enormously the value of a reliable friend. In this context, a breach of friendship was not only morally condemnable, but also an abominable crime against the community as a whole. Treason has been always a major crime when was committed by someone whose loyalty was taken for granted or expected on fair grounds.

The issue looks indeed different if a declaration of friendship is aimed at simply noting the lack of hostilities. Even in this case, however, there is a qualified status: neutrality. As Bederman notes: “Neutrality, by virtue of contrary sets of *philiai*, came with a price. A friend to all was a friend to none.”<sup>10</sup>

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The question of what is a friend was left open in Plato's dialogue, *Lysis, or on Friendship*, the earliest such treaty in Greek. Said Socrates in summarizing the discussion: “Now we ‘ve done it, Lysis and Menexenus (...) but what a friend is we have not yet been able to find it!”<sup>11</sup>

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Aristotle in both the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*NE*) and the *Eudemian Ethics* (*EE*) dedicated large, rich, and partly overlapping passages to friendship. Three aspects should be highlighted here from the elaborate discussion of the forms, content and conditions of friendship among individuals, rulers and subjects, family members, gods and humans. One is love; the other is the question of justice between friends, and then, whether gods do or can have friends among humans.

As matter of principle, Aristotle stated: “{friendship} ... is a virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living. For without friends no one chooses to live, though he had all the other goods; (...)”

Friendship appears where there is love: “loving is an activity – the activity of friendship”, he wrote in *EE* (1237a). Love can be manifested in a number of ways, and these determine the types or kinds of friendships

<sup>9</sup> Douglas L. Cairns: *Affronts and Quarrels in the Iliad* in *Oxford Readings in Homer's Iliad*. Ed. by Douglas L. Cairns. New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, 209-10.

<sup>10</sup> David J. Bederman: *International Law in Antiquity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, 159; 161.

<sup>11</sup> *Lysis in Plato. Complete Works*. Ed., with Introduction and Notes, by John M. Cooper. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/Cambridge, 1997, 707.

– three, according to him. Political communities to the benefit of its members suppose friendship among citizens, something that may sound controversial today, but it fitted into the spirit of those times:

„Friendship seems to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice; for unanimity seems to be something like friendship, and this they aim at most of all, and expel faction as their worst enemy;”

This assumption is strengthened in the widely cited second part of the sentence that reads:

„and when men are friends they have no need of justice, while when they are just they need friendship as well, and the truest form of justice is thought to be a friendly quality.” (1155 a 1)<sup>12</sup>

Friends are not supposed to commit injustice against each other; therefore corrective intervention is not necessary. As Aristotle explained in *NE* in relation to political justice, „the things which are just by virtue of convention and expediency are like measures”, and „similarly the things which are just not by nature but by human enactment are not everywhere the same, since constitutions also are not the same (...).” In this sense an act of justice „though the general term is rather 'just action', and 'act of justice'” means in fact „the correction of the act of injustice.” (1134b) In the *polis* such corrections were possible, as they are in modern states, but among political units and organized groups usually not.

There are special forms of friendship based on superiority. Aristotle makes in such cases concessions to the idea that true friendship requires full equality. As he wrote in *EE*:

But another variety of these kinds is friendship on a basis of superiority, as in that of a god for a man, for that is a different kind of friendship, and generally of a ruler and subject; just as the principle of justice between them is also different, being one of equality proportionally but not of equality numerically;

Relations among organized groups and political units are mostly structured around imbalances and inequalities. If true friendship and love can exist in such context they should be universal and symmetric, as the following centuries found. The love of the weak can be expected, and sometimes gotten. The many can love one, but the one cannot show his love to everyone individually. Aristotle admitted:

For it would be ludicrous if one were to accuse God because he does not return love in the same way as he is loved, or for a subject to make this accusation against a ruler; for it is the part of a ruler to be loved, not to love, or else to love in another way. (*EE*, 1238b)<sup>13</sup>

In other words, you can be a friend of the multitude, or even mankind, but hardly vice-versa.

There is some discussion on Aristotle's views on the possibility of friendship between gods and humans. According to one author, the philosopher made it „quite clear that between men and gods true friendship is impossible” in certain passages of both *Ethics*.<sup>14</sup> This might be the case, and this sentence from the *EE* may support it: „for the fact that God is not of such a nature as to need a friend postulates that man, who is like God, also does not need one.” (*EE* 1245b) Gods, however, were not insensitive to the human world. As we know, gods long before Aristotle's time used to interfere in human matters, including friendships, and have not done it always in a fair way or with friendly intentions. For example, according to Herodotus, gods advised for a strategically important „friendship” between Croesus and the Greeks, with far ranging consequences. The former's envoys were quoted as saying: „Men of Lacedaemon, I the King have been advised by the oracle to make the Greek my friend, and because I am told that you are the most eminent of the Greeks, I am obeying the oracle in asking for your help. I wish to be your friend and ally, without deceit or underhand dealing.”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>12</sup> The quotes are from *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. by Richard McKeon. New York, The Modern Library, 2001 {1941}

<sup>13</sup> The quotes are from: Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics*. In *Aristotle. Aristotle in 23 Volumes*, Vol. 20. Translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, Harvard University Press; London, William Heinemann Ltd. 1981. (available at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0050>)

<sup>14</sup> Lorraine Smith Pangle: *Aristotle and the Philosophy of Friendship*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, 81. See also the comment in footnote 5 of this section: “For a full examination of passages in both the *NE* and the *EE* that might seem to leave open the possibility of friendship between men and gods, see Dirlmeier, *Aristoteles*, 521.” (Franz Dirlmeier: *Aristoteles Nikomachische Ethik, Übersetzt und Kommentiert*. Berlin, Akademie-Verlag, 1967.)

<sup>15</sup> Herodotus: *The Histories*. Book I, 69. (Penguin Classics, London, revised edition of 2003, p. 31.)

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Cicero has made it explicit that „in all history there are scarcely three or four pairs of friends on record; and it is classed with them that I cherish a hope of the friendship of Scipio and Laelius being known to posterity.”

The magic of friendship for Cicero consisted in the fact that he understood it as a gift of gods to humans. He wrote in this sense that

For friendship is nothing else than an accord in all things, human and divine, conjoined with mutual goodwill and affection, and I am inclined to think that, with the exception of wisdom, no better thing has been given to man by the immortal gods. Wherefore it seems to me that friendship springs rather from nature than from need, and from an inclination of the soul joined with a feeling of love rather than from calculation of how much profit the friendship is likely to afford.<sup>16</sup>

Cicero's *De amicitia* is one of the most emphatic texts on the subject, yet with strong political connotations, but in a different sense than in Aristotle's perception. One of the basic tenets of friendship between good men (and for him, as for virtually all classics, only good men can come close to a perfect friendship) is to not expect or allow to do what is wrong. Moreover, the deepest sense of friendship cannot be an excuse for disloyalty to the republic: „And dishonourable it certainly is, and not to be allowed, for anyone to plead in defence of sins in general and especially of those against the State, that he committed them for the sake of a friend.”<sup>17</sup>

A different, but no less complex sense and meaning of friendship is given in the works of ancient historians. From the rich literature on relations between individuals, few analogies stand regarding the approach according to which friendships between groups or political units, represented by their leaders, are mostly strategically defined and transitory options, or positions.

It was the hegemony driven Romans who started talking about friendship among politically organized groups as something more than mutual (military) support, or, as the mere lack of hostilities. Flexible and refined considerations of friendship in this context became important ordering principles of stable and long lasting domination. Rome has become gradually great not least due to a constant search for stability in relations with the environment. *Pacta sunt servanda* was one of the bedrocks of this world view and practice, the other being overwhelming, brutal military superiority, which only in extreme cases was used as a punishment aimed at completely destroying an enemy (*debellatio*). In her fragments on politics, Hannah Arendt noted, among others, that

The idea that there could be some other absolutely different entity equal to Rome in greatness and thus worthy of being remembered in history – an idea with which Herodotus begins his history of the Persian Wars – was utterly alien to the Romans.

Whatever Rome's limitations in this respect, there is no doubt that the concept of foreign policy – of *politics* in foreign relations – and consequently of the idea of a political order beyond the borders of one's own nation or city, is solely of Roman origin. The Roman politicization of the space between peoples marks the beginning of the Western World – indeed, it first created the Western world as *world*. (Italics in the original.)<sup>18</sup>

Appian might have been correct in his assessment of the way the city has grown into an empire, when he wrote:

Possessing the best part of the earth and sea they have, on the whole, aimed to preserve their empire by the exercise of prudence, rather than to extend their sway indefinitely over poverty-stricken and profitless tribes of barbarians, some of whom I have seen at Rome offering themselves, by their ambassadors, as its subjects, but the chief of the state would not accept them because they would be of no use to it.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Cicero: *De Senectute De Amicitia De Divinatione*. With An English Translation. William Armistead Falconer. Cambridge. Harvard University Press; Cambridge, Mass., London, England. 1923. 6 [27]

<sup>17</sup> *De Amicitia*, op.cit.

<sup>18</sup> Hannah Arendt: *Introduction into Politics in The Promise of Politics*. Schocken Books, New York, 189.

<sup>19</sup> Appian: *History of Rome: Preface Part 2*. (Based on the translation by Horace White. New York-London, Macmillan, 1899. [http://www.livius.org/ap-ark/appian/appian\\_preface\\_2.html](http://www.livius.org/ap-ark/appian/appian_preface_2.html))

According to the legend, as recounted among others by Titus Livius, when the Trojans, led by Aeneas, reached the shores of today's Italy and, they were received by the locals with "with admiration of the noble origin of the nation and of the hero, and their spirit, alike prepared for peace or war." The Latins' leader, according to the story,

confirmed the assurance of future friendship by giving his right hand: that upon this a compact was struck between the chiefs, and mutual greetings passed between the armies: that Æneas was hospitably entertained by Latinus: that Latinus, in the presence of his household gods, added a family league to the public one, by giving Æneas his daughter in marriage.<sup>20</sup>

According to another translation "A league was then struck between the leaders, and mutual salutations passed between the armies."<sup>21</sup>

That one of the leader's main obligations was to know "the difference between a friend and an enemy", for the Romans sounded trivial. (Livius: *Book II*, 6 - 83) In line with tribal traditions, the above mentioned rituals of "making friendship", based on the chiefs' mutual engagement, were aimed at obliging all members of the concerned groups. Over time the imposition of such obligations has become difficult or even impossible, but the endeavour to impose them collectively – and symmetrically applied to enmity – keeps coming back in various historical periods with greatly varying ways of justification.

At the end of the First Punic war the Romans, although victorious but weakened and exhausted, decided to call for peace. The terms were harsh for the Carthaginians, and the people of Rome had to approve the treaty which began by the formula: "There shall be friendship between the Carthaginians and Romans on the following terms if approved by the Roman people."<sup>22</sup> Taking into account the conditions attached, in fact dictated by the victors (the evacuation of Sicily, unconditional release of Roman prisoners, pay of significant indemnities) friendship clearly meant here the abstention from hostilities in the future, and the affirmation of domination.

In Book II 11, Polybios described one of the cases when the Romans accepting unconditional surrender "admitted a tribe to their friendship." In such cases, however, the concerned tribes or peoples had two obligations: not to rebel and pay the tribute, taxes and other expenses of the protection. On a more substantive issue, in Book II 47 the historian addresses the role of the kings regarding enmity and friendship: "kings do not regard anyone as their natural foe or friend, but measure friendship and enmity by the sole standard of expediency."<sup>23</sup>

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Even this short and arbitrarily selected quotations and references are, in my view, apt to reveal one of the most important and apparently widely shared convictions of ancient authors, that friendships, both between individuals and politically organized groups that satisfy at least some of the criteria of the ideal have been extremely rare. Aristotle, Cicero, and later Montaigne, are explicit that it was a privilege of the few to enjoy and share the mystic of friendship. Homer, as the historians of the following era, gave usually preeminence to the leaders' personality. Even though hegemony renders friendship elusive, its terminology survived in ingenious legal fictions. Such is the power of these ideas and examples that we continue to quote, analyze and wonder about, treating them as models despite the suspicion, in certain cases, that things have been later presented brighter as they were in reality.

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<sup>20</sup> Titus Livius: *The History of Rome*. The First Eight Books. Book I, Chap. I. Trans. with notes and illustrations by D. Spillan. London, MDCCCLIII. (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/19725/19725-h/19725-h.htm>)

<sup>21</sup> *The History of Rome by Titus Livius. Translated from the Original with Notes and Illustrations by George Baker, A.M.* New York: Peter A. Mesier et al., 1823. Vol. 1. ([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1754&layout=html#chapter\\_9\\_2568](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1754&layout=html#chapter_9_2568))

<sup>22</sup> Polybios: *Histories*. Book I. 62:8. ([http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/1\\*.html](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/1*.html))

<sup>23</sup> Of course, in practice there were a great complexity of situations and solutions. Roman practice and law developed over centuries is very rich and still open to different interpretations when it comes to details. A concise summary in: David J. Bederman: *International Law in Antiquity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001. Chapter 4: *Making friends: diplomats and foreign visitors in ancient times*; and Chapter 5: *Making faith: treaty practices amongst ancient peoples*.

Political expediency dominates Machiavelli's remarks on friendship between rulers and *Stati*, faithful to his general approach on what shall be done to take, and especially to preserve power. The showdown of all illusions and desires attached to it over the centuries takes place in a few dry sentences. However, for those who see the famous Italian as an amoral, coldly calculating, cruel and chameleonic character, may be puzzling that Machiavelli amalgamated on this issue principles of accepted social behavior with power considerations.

Chapter XXI of the Prince, about the conduct of political leaders „to acquire reputation” (*stimato*, that is esteem), highlights credibility. Credibility is a trait atemporal in all walks of life: „A prince, Machiavelli wrote, becomes esteemed when he shows himself either a true friend or a real enemy.”<sup>24</sup> In a conflictual situation that may degenerate in war it is desirable that the prince „declares himself openly for or against another, which will be more creditable to him than to remain neutral.” All this is aimed at the strong; the question is whether the weak should display a similar behavior when it comes to a conflict needing a political solution, including the possibility of the use of armed force. From a historical perspective the answer seems to be in the affirmative, provided that one accepts a fundamental principle of what we call today international politics (and valid also retroactively): the positions of the strong and the weak are relative, they always change in time, and this is what gives hope to the weak.

Therefore, according to Machiavelli, history and the laws of autonomous politics requires the weak also to show consistency of behavior. He wrote for example, that „irresolute princes, for the sake of avoiding immediate danger, adopt most frequently the course of neutrality, and are generally ruined in consequence.” The examples in this chapter converge to the same conclusion: prudence and coherence in choosing your friends, which affects who will be your enemies: „And here it should be noted, that a prince ought carefully to avoid making common cause with any one more powerful than himself, for the purpose of attacking another power, unless he should be compelled to do so by necessity.”

With all the prudence and careful calculation there are situations in which one shall act according to the circumstances and not his will:

Nor is it to be supposed that a state can ever adopt a course that is entirely safe; on the contrary, a prince must make up his mind to take the chance of all the doubts and uncertainties; for such is the order of things that one inconvenience cannot be avoided except at the risk of being exposed to another. And it is the province of prudence to discriminate amongst these inconveniences, and to accept the least evil for good.

Machiavelli's pragmatism extended also to the drama of „a people that has not been accustomed to self-government; for, ignorant of all public affairs, of all means of defense or offence, neither knowing the princes nor being known by them” that „*per alcuno accidente*”, be it favorable concurrence of circumstances, or simple hazard, accident, recovers its liberty following the disappearance of a heavy handed ruler, „makes enemies, and no friends.”<sup>25</sup> He explicitly claims that ancient history has produced such instances; we can only speculate to what extent he foresaw the future, since we talk here about a recurring pattern. Revolutionary France for a number of years, and even more, the related tragic modern history of Haiti - to mention only two characteristic cases when a number of previously unforeseen but not completely unexpected circumstances led a people into a fight for liberty just to find itself surrounded by enemies.

In general it can be stated that the modern ideas of peoples' and nation's self-determination, while becoming slowly morally and even politically acceptable by the mid-20th century, particular cases of their assertion were and are still regarded with suspicion, fear and reacted to in a number of cases with armed force. In his time, Machiavelli was probably among a few individuals who were thinking in a systematic way of long term projects and strategies of ruling organized political communities for a higher goal. In this context, prudence and calculated political expediency play a central role, as well as a degree of fairness applied on the background of the former. Related to our subject, some of the maxims attributed to him might be relevant to mention; for example: „it is never wise to drive an enemy to desperation”, or „the beginning of enmity is injury, and benefits are the beginning of friendship; and he makes a great mistake who, wishing to

<sup>24</sup> The following quotes are from this edition: Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Historical, Political, and Diplomatic Writings*, vol. 2. *The Prince, Discourses on the First Ten Books of Titus Livius, Thoughts of a Statesman*. [1513]. Boston, J. R. Osgood and company, 1882.

([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=775&layout=html#chapter\\_75867](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=775&layout=html#chapter_75867))

<sup>25</sup> Discourses on the first ten books of Titus Livius. Chapter XVI. A people that has been accustomed to live under a prince preserves its liberties with difficulty, if by accident it has become free.

([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=775&layout=html#chapter\\_75913](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=775&layout=html#chapter_75913))

make another his friend, begins by injuring him.” Let us not forget also the important remark in the comments on Titus Livius:

I hold it to be a proof of great prudence for men to abstain from threats and insulting words towards any one, for neither the one nor the other in any way diminishes the strength of the enemy; but the one makes him more cautious, and the other increases his hatred of you, and makes him more persevering in his efforts to injure you.<sup>26</sup>

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Almost a century and a half after Machiavelli, the Treaties of Westphalia (1648) have laid the foundations of what was later called the system of sovereign nation-states. In most part similar dispositive Articles 1 of the Treaties of Münster and Osnabrück decreed a „Christian, universal and perpetual Peace, and a true and sincere Friendship and Amity” between the signatory parties, with the explicit aim of this state of things in being instrumental in the nurturing and „reciprocal maintaining of a good and faithful Neighborhood” amongst them.<sup>27</sup> Since then one of the most important meanings of friendship among nations – beyond the mere lack of hostilities – is the guarantor role of good neighborly relations of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of states. It can be assumed that this is the minimalist Western interpretation of friendship between nation-states. After 1945 it has been asserted by the victors in WWII as one of the fundamental political and legal principles of the new international order inaugurated in 1945 by the creation of the United Nations.

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There is a perception persisting over the centuries according to which the word “politics” designates in fact specific acts of a person or a selected circle of individuals that can be performed only by them, and no-one else. It is also a largely shared view that before the 19<sup>th</sup> century politics in Europe was foreign politics, an intercourse between the rulers, and following Westphalia, of the nation-states they represented. Nation-states have from the beginning appropriated a number of action prerogatives, amongst them the right to wage war at discretion. Some principles became operational and a normative framework developed regarding “politics among nations.” It is worth quoting at length Jean Jacques Burlamaqui, the Swiss lawyer, who summarized the dominant philosophical views of his era referring explicitly to this “politics”. He stated, among other things, that “the general principle of the law of nations is nothing more than the general law of sociability, which obliges all nations that have any intercourse with one another, to practice those duties to which individuals are naturally subject.” It follows, according to him, that

these remarks may serve to give us a just idea of that art, so necessary to the directors of states, and distinguished commonly by the name of *Polity*. Polity considered with regard to foreign states, is that ability and address by which a sovereign provides for the preservation, safety, prosperity and glory of the nation he governs, by respecting the laws of justice and humanity; that is, without doing any injury to other states, but rather by procuring their advantage, so much as in reason can be expected.

I shall not discuss here whether the word “polity” is the appropriate term in this context, but just point out that the French original is this:

Ces remarques peuvent servir a nous donne une juste idée de cet art, si nécessaire aux conducteurs des États, qu’on appelle Politique. La POLITIQUE, considérée a l’égard des États étrangères, est cette habilité par laquelle un souverain pourvoit a la conservation, a la sûreté, a la prospérité et a la gloire de la nation qu’il gouverne (...). {*Capital letters in the original*}

The analogy with the proper behavior of individuals in society comes again to the forefront, with prudence emphasized: “Thus the polity of sovereigns is the same as prudence among private people.” What is morally unacceptable between individuals must be also avoided between sovereigns: “as we condemn (...) any art or cunning, that makes them pursue their own advantage to the prejudice of others, so the like art would be censurable in princes, were they bent upon procuring the advantage of their own people by injuring other nations.” A special consideration is given to the reason of state

<sup>26</sup> Book II. Chapter XXVI. *Contempt and insults engender hatred against those who indulge in them, without being of any advantage to them.*

<sup>27</sup> See the text of the treaties in original latin and several translations at: <http://www.pax-westphalica.de/ipmipo/index.html>.



so often alleged to justify the proceedings or enterprises of princes, cannot really be admitted for this end, but inasmuch as it is reconcilable with the common interest of nations, or, which amounts to the same thing, with the unalterable rules of sincerity, justice, and humanity.<sup>28</sup>

While “the preservation, safety, prosperity and glory of the nation” as the goals of politics, have basically not changed ever since, it should not be forgotten that monarchs of the time had frequently regarded their own or dynastic interests as being of their countries’ too, especially when it came to prosperity and glory. Sociability implied, among others, that the sovereign must mean what he said. Only on this basis politics as a process between equals in rank and empowerment could have taken place. What Hans Morgenthau called the “personal ethics of the aristocratic international” was not a “fiction”, as he put it, but “reality.”<sup>29</sup> Today one can just hope that heads of state do not lie too often to each other, as they may to their constituencies. As John Mearsheimer wrote recently, “leaders appear to be more likely to lie to their own people about foreign policy issues than to other countries.”<sup>30</sup>

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Returning to the issue of friendship in international politics against this background, it must be noted that one of the most coherent set of ideas on why nations shall be friends, based on absolute obligations deriving from the law of nature, was provided by Emer de Vattel in his *Law of Nations*, published first in 1758.<sup>31</sup> It is generally considered the most important and widely read treaty on the subject in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was thoroughly studied and used by some of the American Founding Fathers. In particular the chapter dedicated specifically to this issue resonates well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and some of its arguments resurface from time to time in the debates of our days. When this book was written, it was an agreement among Europeans that duties, obligations precede rights, both in the case of individuals and nations.

A nation<sup>32</sup>, according to Vattel, has imperative duties towards itself: “If the rights of a nation spring from its obligations, it is principally from those that relate to itself. It will further appear that its duties towards others depend very much on its duties towards itself, as the former are to be regulated and measured by the latter.”<sup>33</sup> Nations under the law of nature are obliged to “cultivate human society”, and this “offices of humanity” are the duties, which “men owe to each other, as men, that is, as social beings formed to live in society.” The laws of nature oblige nations as they determine the duties of individuals, thus “whatever duties each man owes to other men, the same does each nation, in its way, owe to other nations.” This is the foundation of all “common duties, of those offices of humanity, to which nations are reciprocally bound towards each other.” The most important aspect is that “They consist, generally, in doing every thing in our power for the preservation and happiness of others, as far as such conduct is reconcilable with our duties towards ourselves.” The obligation of entertaining friendly relations among nations flows directly from this principle, perceived as a paramount obligation of the law of nature.

The logic followed in these precepts is straight and easy to comprehend, but much more difficult to apply in the real life. If “of all the duties of a nation towards itself the chief object is its preservation and perfection, together with that of its state”, due to the symmetry of obligations under the law of nature, all nations necessarily are bound to contribute to the preservation and well being of others, “as far as it can do this, without exposing itself too much”, or without using force. Trade was deemed the most important mean, and Vattel combines in a fine way abstract universal obligations with pragmatic adaptation to realities:

<sup>28</sup> Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui, *The Principles of Natural and Politic Law* [1747]. Edition used: *The Principles of Natural and Politic Law*. Trans. Thomas Nugent, ed. and with an Introduction by Peter Korkman. Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2006. ([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1717&layout=html](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1717&layout=html)) The French version quoted: *Principes du Droit Naturel* par J.J. Burlamaqui. Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée. Geneve-Copenhagen, MDCCLVI, p. 174 Parte seconde, Chap. VI. §. VII page 199.

<sup>29</sup> Hans J. Morgenthau: *Politics among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*. Brief Edition revised by Kenneth W. Thompson. Boston, McGraw-Hill 1993 [1948]. 235-39.

<sup>30</sup> John J. Mearsheimer: *Why Leaders Lie? The Truth about Lying in International Politics*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, 6.

<sup>31</sup> The edition quoted here is: Emer de Vattel: *The Law of Nations, Or, Principles of the Law of Nature, Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns, with Three Early Essays on the Origin and Nature of Natural Law and on Luxury*. Edited and with an Introduction by Béla Kapossy and Richard Whitmore. Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, 2008. ([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2246&layout=html](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2246&layout=html))

<sup>32</sup> The first lines of the *Law of Nations* read: “Nations or states are bodies politic, societies of men united together for the purpose of promoting their mutual safety and advantage by the joint efforts of their combined strength.”

<sup>33</sup> Vattel op. cit.: Chapter II. *General Principles of the Duties of a Nation towards itself*.

Thus, when a neighbouring nation is unjustly attacked by a powerful enemy who threatens to oppress it,—if you can defend it without exposing yourself to great danger, unquestionably it is your duty to do so. Let it not be said, in objection to this, that a sovereign is not to expose the lives of his soldiers, for the safety of a foreign nation with which he has not contracted a defensive alliance.

The reconciliation of absolute state sovereignty with the similar absolute character of the law of nature could be attempted in words, as Vattel has tried, leading to an astonishing mix of geopolitics and normative assertions suitable to transformation into positive legal precepts. However, the thinking in this chapter of the book goes much further than a reciprocal obligation of nations to preservation and assistance. Nations shall love each other, because only in this way they will be able – and obliged, of course – to establish friendly relations:

It is impossible that nations should mutually discharge all these several duties if they do not love each other. (...) Each nation ought to cultivate the friendship of others. A real friendship will be seen to reign among them; and this happy state consists in a mutual affection. Every nation is obliged to cultivate the friendship of other nations, and carefully to avoid whatever might kindle their enmity against her. Wise and prudent nations often pursue this line of conduct from views of direct and present interest: a more noble, more general, and less direct interest, is too rarely the motive of politicians.

The justification for these long quotes is that we have a summary of a set of dilemma still with us: in an anarchic international system the only reasonable alternative to ever looming war is the duty of nation-states to seek and maintain the friendship of other nations, refraining from anything threatening it. On the positive side this requires intensive cooperation in a number of fields, with its special, and now and then considered most important application: trade. History teaches that trade can be done in several ways, from mutually guaranteed benefits up to creating – directly or indirectly – huge imbalances between the parties and spreading the seeds of conflict. An attempt to explain the contradiction was made in 1848 by British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston with a reference to duties in a different context: „We have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow.”<sup>34</sup> A century earlier duties, as Vattel wrote, extended also to feelings. Nations must love each other, as humans shall do:

If it be incontestable that men must love each other in order to answer the views of nature and discharge the duties which she prescribes them, as well as for their own private advantage,—can it be doubted that nations are under the like reciprocal obligation? Is it in the power of men, on dividing themselves into different political bodies, to break the ties of that universal society which nature has established amongst them?<sup>35</sup>

The presentation of the problem in these terms becomes more than an ethical question, is one of creed. It was Immanuel Kant who developed the idea of friendship as a duty much further. Enouncing that „friendship, regarded in its perfection, is the union of two persons by mutual equal love and reverence”, he sets the distinction between being a friend of man and a philanthropist, the former having a more narrow sense than the latter: „A friend of man is he who takes an æsthetic participation in the welfare of his race, and who never will disturb it but with inward regret. (...)” Then he elaborated that

For the relation of protector, as benefactor, relatively to the protected, is no doubt one of love, but not of friendship, the reverence due from each to other not being alike. The duty to cherish goodwill to mankind as their friend (a necessary condescension), and the laying to heart of this duty, serves as a guard against pride, which is too apt to invade the prosperous, who possess the resources of good deeds.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Speech to the House of Commons*. Hansard, 1 March 1848 (Treaty of Adrianopole –Charges against Viscount Palmerston. HC Deb 01 March 1848 vol 97 cc66-123.

([http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1848/mar/01/treaty-of-adrianople-charges-against#S3V0097P0\\_18480301\\_HOC\\_8](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1848/mar/01/treaty-of-adrianople-charges-against#S3V0097P0_18480301_HOC_8))

<sup>35</sup> Vattel, *op. cit.* *Book II: Of a Nation considered in its Relations to others. Chapter I: Of the Common Duties of a Nation towards others, or of the Offices of Humanity between Nations.*

<sup>36</sup> Immanuel Kant: *The Metaphysics of Ethics*. 3rd edition. Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1886. *Of Friendship. Sec. 46 - Of the intimate Blending of Love with Reverence in Friendship.*

([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1443&layout=html](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=1443&layout=html))

Are a nation and its state moral persons who can be made to behave in certain determined and concerted ways? In the 18th century this was a largely accepted conviction and enlightened absolutisms of the time were supposed to bring the theoretical model closer to reality. Indeed a reasonable monarch, who had full control of the state and also fully indentified with it could be persuaded to follow certain patterns of behavior. It depended on his or her personality. The assumption can be transferred on the elected leaders of 20th century democratic nation-states. They are assumed to express the unity of their nation, and as such are well situated to establish friendships, first amongst themselves, and then, by the authority of their office, between their state and others. Just reading the daily press on high level summits and bilateral meetings one cannot but recall the heroes' codes of honor, or the rituals performed historically by leaders of homogenous groups and entities that bind into friendship all their constituent members.

Who shall we believe? The forefathers of modern optimists, like Vattel or Burlamaqui, who were convinced that mankind can do better than crude politics, or their disappointed contemporary, Rousseau? Is the latter's dark assessment made in a particularly frustrated period of his life, of any relevance? It is not the truth of it, but the fact that the ever growing mass of frustrated men and women may still view the world this way, especially the world of politics, local or global. In his tense way of argumentation, Rousseau wrote in this text, which even himself considered later on of less significance, that

Sincere friendship, real esteem, and perfect confidence are banished from among men. Jealousy, suspicion, fear, coldness, reserve, hate and fraud lie constantly concealed under that uniform and deceitful veil of politeness; that boasted candour and urbanity, for which we are indebted to the light and leading of this age.<sup>37</sup>

As emphasized many times in this short writing, beliefs, feelings, perceptions, momentary impulses, and other elements deemed subjective, shall be taken into account when discussing the subject of friendship in international affairs, as much as facts and external constrains upon actors. This is valid also with regard to those who think on such matters. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *oeuvre* and its impacts convincingly prove this assumption.

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I cannot list and analyze here all the emphatic statements on friendship and friendly relations between peoples, nations and nation-states, formulated by authors belonging to very different schools of thought and revolutionaries, self-appointed leaders, or officials, diplomats, leaders of states and government. After Westphalia there is an abundance of such manifestations, made by individuals of sometimes opposed world views. Some might have been sincere, some pure hypocrisy, others made with second thoughts or simply out of naiveté. It is almost impossible to draw any generally valid conclusions based on the comparison between texts and realities of the time. Perceptions, sentiments, the levels of fear, audacity, trust or distrust projected on a given context are not measurable, perhaps only comparable. Even this avenue is very relative, since much depends on who speaks, to whom, when, why, how, and so on – as in politics.

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It is evident that there is a marked difference between friendship, as a personal matter, and friendship, or just friendly relations between organized groups acting coherently for specified goals, as preservation, material interests, dominance or symbols, glory, self-respect, honor, etc. In post WWII international politics marked by the Cold War the discourse on friendly relations among states, nations and peoples was quickly acquiring the role of a mantra. Given the mystic, long surrounding the notion of friendship, it was believed that repeating it in every possible occasion when appropriate, as a perceived reality or a normative goal, one day it will materialize.

A 1970 United Nations (UN) document on the “Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States” re-affirmed the fundamental purposes of the organization: “the maintenance of international peace and security and the development of friendly relations and co-operation

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<sup>37</sup> A Discourse on the Moral Effects of the Arts and Sciences in Jean-Jacques Rousseau: *The Social Contract and Discourses* [1761]. Translated with an Introduction by G.D. H. Cole, London-Toronto, J.M. Dent and Sons, 1923. ([http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=638&layout=html#c\\_if0132\\_footnote\\_nt051](http://oll.libertyfund.org/index.php?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=638&layout=html#c_if0132_footnote_nt051))

between nations.”<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, the UN Charter speaks in its Preamble about practicing “tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors.” On the other hand, in its much quoted Article 2 defines one of the purposes of the UN as follows: „To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.” The use of the verb „develop” in this phrase was in conformity with the political realities of 1945: friendly relations among nations (or states, it is equivalent in this case) had yet to be created. The traditional meaning of the term “friendly relations”, the lack of enmity, is reaffirmed here in an activist, positive mode, and in addition as a source of obligations. In the 1970 Declaration the first three principles, out of seven, deal with the refraining from the use of force or threat with force, peaceful settlement of disputes, and non-interference in states’ internal affairs. As a matter of principle, “States shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations.” States „shall settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered”, and they have a duty of „not to intervene in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, in accordance with the Charter.” These statements reflect mistrust among those states which negotiated the declaration rather than the exercise of the „offices of humanity”, in Emer de Vattel’s sense. The general climate of the Cold War did not allow for too many compromises, yet the main protagonists concluded the Declaration on „friendly relations” being fully aware of the fact that these did not exist between them.

The situation was different inside the blocks. On every possible occasion, the Socialist world was proud to emphasize the friendly relations between its states. There was also talk about the brotherhood of people, and even love towards the Soviet Union, its leaders and symbols.<sup>39</sup> Not only observers, but also many of those living under Socialist regimes knew that all this was empty talk, propaganda aimed at distraction, deception, manipulation. But, again, as a mantra, it was practiced with utmost seriousness and enthusiasm as an obligatory requisite of political ceremonies at all levels.

In the free world, to the extent that geopolitical realities permitted, America followed the tradition settled by the Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776), which stated, among others, that the people of the new independent state „will hold them (, *the British brethren*”) as we hold the rest of mankind, enemies in war, in peace friends.” George Washington’s advice in his farewell address could not be heeded after WWI anymore. He said in general that „The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending our commercial relations, to have with them as little political connection as possible.” As regards Europe, he was more specific: „it must be unwise in us to implicate ourselves by artificial ties in the ordinary vicissitudes of her politics, or the ordinary combinations and collisions of her friendships or enmities.”<sup>40</sup> Since then the United States was compelled by national interests or other considerations to get involved in the affairs of the world, often by military force. The official language for decades employed the terms „friends and allies” together. It was and is always clear who are the allies of America, as it is implied that her allies are also friends, but the wording indicates also that there could be friends without a formal act of alliance, a treaty or an agreement, regardless of what it is called. American diplomatic history and the evolution of her foreign relations convincingly prove that when the US government uses these notions, it does mean what it says.

A significant problem with the use of the notions friend, friendship, and even that of friendly relations in international politics, that is the politics among nation-states, consists in the fact that it creates expectations which cannot always be fulfilled. Sometimes these expectations are mutual and very high. However, even in

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<sup>38</sup> *Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations*. 24 October 1970. Resolution 2625 (XXV) Adopted by the General Assembly during its Twenty-fifth Session.

(<http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/348/90/IMG/NR034890.pdf?OpenElement>)

<sup>39</sup> One extreme case is the declaration by former Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha, who told a meeting in Moscow in 1960 that “The Albanian people will throw themselves in to the flames for their true friends, and the Soviet Union is such a friend of the Albanian people. And these are not empty words. I am expressing here the sentiments of our people and of our Party, and let no one ever think that we love the Soviet Union and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the sake of some one’s beautiful eyes or to please some individual, but because without the Soviet Union there would be no free life in the world today, fascism and capitalist terror would reign supreme. This is why we love and will always be loyal to the Soviet Union and to the Party of the great Lenin.” (Enver Hoxha: Speech before the Meeting of 81 Communist and Workers Parties. Moscow, 16 November, 1960.

(<http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hoxha/works/nov1960.htm>)

<sup>40</sup> George Washington’s *Farewell Address*. 1796. ([http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp))

the case of empty rhetoric there will be some embarrassing explanations due once the terminology is not used anymore between the parties. Bitterness, frustration, and even open hostilities result with great certainty.

Therefore, to define inter-state relations in terms of good faith and friendship, including the weaker notion of “friendly relations”, entails certain risks, arising from the fact that the speaker confines himself to a situation from which deviation carries a high moral price. It is understood commonly that friends do trust each other, behave in a sincere way, and they do not necessarily “need resorting to justice” to resolve any problems, misunderstandings etc., that may occur between them. The principle of *pacta sunt servanda*, perceived as the basis of international social contract, does not carry too much significance between real friends, because the minimum they expect is the fulfillment of all moral and other obligations inherent in the notion of friendship. Self-help appears to be secondary, because helping the other in need is also just natural, whatever the effort or the price. Friends do not have second thoughts, hidden agenda; they do not lie to each other, spy on, or manipulate each other. Most importantly, friends do not betray each other.

It happens, however. When something occurs in such a relationship that is interpreted by one party and the environment as a betrayal of friendship it can have long range consequences, not only in bilateral contacts but also on the level of the system of nation-states. Lord Palmerstone’s statement reflects a clear concern towards any emphatic commitment in this regard, but as I implied before, the replacement of the idea of friendship in general with pure (passionless) interests of commercial-financial nature, is not convincing either. In the past two decades there has been an attempt to replace the notion with the business inspired wording “strategic partnership”, used indiscriminately by all states, small and great powers as well. With an unclear meaning, this terminology does not bring anything new, as far as our subject is concerned.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, a few words on “state loneliness” in international affairs. It is not easy for a state, especially a new one, to make friends among other states. A new state may feel solitary from the beginning, or worse, it has to face enemies everywhere. One of the best known cases of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the Soviet Union. The circumstances surrounding its creation amplified among its leaders the traditional feelings of insecurity characteristic to the Russian empire. Even nowadays the saying attributed to Alexander III continues to be quoted by politicians and analysts in the Russian Federation: “Russia had only two true friends in the world, its army and its navy.” George Kennan rightly identified in 1946 as the main source of Soviet conduct one of the main topics of the „official propaganda machine”: „{The} USSR still lives in antagonistic ‘capitalist encirclement’ with which in the long run there can be no permanent peaceful coexistence.” And further in his famous telegram also correctly stated that those states and non-state actors which according to the official position have been regarded as friends and supporters of the Soviet state were but “agencies utilized for promulgation of policies” on the “unofficial, or subterranean plane.”<sup>42</sup>

No question, it is a dramatic moment when the leaders of a state together with the public opinion have to recognize that their country has no friends in the community of states, in general, or on a regional level, including its neighbors. To know that one has no friends does not mean necessarily that it is surrounded by enemies. It may just signal, and this might well be unbearable, that the state as an international actor is not worthy of notice.

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www.southeast-europe.org  
dke@southeast-europe.org

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<sup>41</sup> On the ambiguities of the notion of „strategic partnership” used by the European Union see Rosa Balfour: *EU Strategic Partnerships: are they worth the name?* European Policy Centre. 15 September 2010. ([http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub\\_1145\\_eu\\_strategic\\_partnerships\\_-\\_are\\_they\\_worth\\_the\\_name.pdf](http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/pub_1145_eu_strategic_partnerships_-_are_they_worth_the_name.pdf)).

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([http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/FG%201%20discussion%20paper\\_Anne%20Schmidt.pdf](http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/arbeitspapiere/FG%201%20discussion%20paper_Anne%20Schmidt.pdf))

<sup>42</sup> *Telegram.* The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. Secret. Moscow, February 22, 1946. (<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm>)