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War, Pacification and Decentralised Federalism

INTRODUCTION

In *Demon Copperhead*, Barbara Kingsolver's Pulitzer Prize winning reworking of David Copperfield, the eponymous hero sits bored in a classroom. His teacher is telling the class 'dynamite-explosion stories' about mining and announces that he is going to show a film. Demon's first thought is: 'nap time'.[1] But he is soon absorbed by the story of the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain. This was 'the largest armed insurrection since the Civil War'; 10,000 miners mobilised against the owners' better-armed militia to demand union rights and an end to the owners' arbitrary practices.[2] The owners called them 'red necks', denigrating them as un-American. The miners wore red bandanas to recoup the term and build solidarity across the multiracial workforce.[3]

A Melungeon Appalachian, Demon is used to ethnic slurs. In the story, the movie helps him neutralise one more of the many insults he has internalised.[4] But Kingsolver makes a bigger point. Demon's introduction to the history of the 'red neck' leads him to think about the outlawing of social protest, and in rebuffing a well-honed, culturally specific image of incivility, he becomes attuned to an alternative history of defiance. Demon discovers that 'red neck' means stoic resistance and taking a stand when the odds are overwhelmingly

[1] Kingsolver 2023, 279.
[2] For a discussion, see Harris 2011, 87.
[3] For a discussion, see Huber 2006, 195.
[4] Kingsolver 2023, 69.

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stacked against you[5] even while it conjures the ignorance, backwardness and hostility of the mob.[6]

As Lisa Miller argues, the conventional 'mob rule thesis' succeeds as a conjecture or supposition rather than as a behavioural theory.[7] What passes as the unconstrained violence of the rabble is usually cultivated. In the 1880s, as lynching neared its peak, Ida B. Wells-Barnett observed that the 'best white people' condemned lynch law 'as the work of the lowest and lawless class'. But all classes were complicit, 'for what one class does the other encourages, excuses and condones'.[8] Nevertheless, if polite society's racism and fear and loathing of the great unwashed is fuelled by the concealment of these connections, the reality of vigilante violence and the knavery of mobs – the mafia, the gang, the Klan – begs a question about the plans anarchists make to allay mutual mistrust and suspicion, resolve disputes and pacify violence. This chapter investigates some of those proposals.

Historically, the threat of ochlocracy (mob rule), the usual response to defences of anarchy, has prompted two distinctive constitutional strategies. One is to bring riotous mobs to reason by law. The second is to trust nonconformists to educate tyrannous majorities by example and allow social conflicts to steer legislative reform. The anarchist critique of constitutionalism militates against law and towards a defence of nonconformity modified by collective agreement. Rather than expose nonconformists to the fury of conservatives and the dubious protection of law, the anarchists sought to remove the permanent power advantages baked into constitutionalism through forceful affirmations of collective self-government and to institutionalise the result through reciprocity, solidarity and federalism.

The chapter falls into two parts. The first part (War and the Problem of Violence) clarifies the problem that the anarchist constitution is designed to address: violence. Adopting a realist perspective, we analyse it as war. We find this framing in the work of Tolstoy, Proudhon and Kropotkin.[9] Contrary to

[5] In Iris Marion Young's terms, the Battle of Blair Mountain was a labour struggle, but it was also cultural 'through and through'. For the miners, the owners' aggressive response to the strike, all too familiar in US labour history, demonstrated that decency was just another measure of economic oppression. In the minds of their detractors, the insurrection confirmed that breeding and respectability explained the poverty and the unreasoning aggression of the uncouth mob (Young 1997, 154).

[6] As Loukides argues, the red neck is antithesis of the cowboy hero of the American Dream. In the film *Deliverance*, another of Demon's negative references, the rednecks are 'appallingly ignorant and uncivil'; they 'seem to belong to an earlier, more primitive and savage time' (Loukides 1990, 91–92). The stereotype piggybacks on nineteenth-century images of the Appalachian Badlands. According to Walle, Social Darwinists invoked Appalachia, along with 'dusky aborigines, physiological and/or psychological throwbacks' to show how America had 'transcended the primitiveness of the wilds' (Walle 1986, 58).

[7] Miller 2016, 2. Cf., Havercroft 2021.

[8] Wells-Barnett 1899, 7.

[9] The experience of the American and French revolutions and, more pointedly, that of the Paris Commune, helps explain why war loomed so large in the anarchist imagination and why these writers attempted to formulate constitutional responses.

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claims of modern realist critics, who think of anarchism as utopian idealism and atavism, we demythologise the conception of anarchism as transcendent peace.[10] Tolstoy, Proudhon and Kropotkin identified capitalism, constituted through the state's monopoly of violence, as the primary determinant of war, and they rejected *militarisme* and *gouvernementalisme* as instruments of pacification, ossification and sublimation. None argued that capitalism per se was the primary cause of war. Rather, they theorised war as an expression of the structural iniquities or contradictions that flowed from arbitrary domination of all kinds. We survey their accounts of war and discuss the remedies each proposed to manage the violence of politics.

The second part (Federalism) explores decentralised federation, the organisational architecture of the anarchist constitution. We begin with Proudhon's conception. We present decentralised federation as a system of shared and self-rule which uses pacts or agreements, including the right of withdrawal, to pacify post-imperial European society, and safeguard individual sovereignty and the relative autonomy of all natural groups. The equilibrium of shifting social forces is maintained by continuously *dividing* power, rather than *separating* powers, as is usual in liberal constitutionalism, and then using treaties, pacts and constitutions to hold them in dynamic equilibrium.

We then examine the micro and macropolitics of decentralised federation. Showing how Proudhon's template was modified after the Paris Commune, we examine two distinctive modes of commune organisation, one syndicalist and the other municipal, models replicated and discussed in detail in Chapters 5 and 6. Finally we outline two strategies for change, one evolutionary and the other revolutionary. The first derives from Proudhon's idea of *jus gentium* and the second from Bakunin's internationalism. For both, federalism promotes constitutionalising 'from the bottom up', in local, regional and potentially global settings. Our argument is that the anarchist critique of violence exposes mob rule as endemic to statist politics, as common to elites and capitalists, as to 'foreign powers', and nationalist violence. This realism underpinned the anarchist demand for federalism and constitutional experimentation.

WAR AND THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE

Tolstoy and Proudhon produced the two outstanding accounts of war in the history of anarchist thought, both entitled *War and Peace*.[11] Each sheds a

[10] Cf. Carr 1950; Carr 1937.

[11] Proudhon [1861], *OC*, vol. XIII, XIV; Tolstoy 2016. In blurring the boundaries between Tolstoy's fictional and non-fictional writing, we follow Brückner, who argued: 'without a free press, without the liberty of assembly, without the right to free expression of opinion, literature became the last refuse of [Russian] freedom of thought, the only means of propagating higher ideas' (Brückner 1908, 2).

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harsh light on the martial conceits and values of modern politics. Kropotkin's reflections piggyback on these accounts. Rather than investigate the nature and causes of war, Kropotkin deconstructs the civilisation thesis to reveal the racist assumptions of liberal peace and outline the ethics of nonconformity or transgression.

Each account makes the case that politics and conflict are inseparable, that violence is always possible and that modern war is the unavoidable expression of violence institutionalised in systems of domination. Indeed, Tolstoy's advocacy of non-violence, Proudhon's promotion of evolutionary change in preference to Jacobin terror and Kropotkin's defence of spirited revolt follow from a shared view that state sovereignty and capitalist competition steer ordinary politics towards military combat. As we show, Tolstoy was not persuaded that decentralised federation offered a response to institutionalised violence. In contrast, Proudhon and Kropotkin, respectively, embraced the right of force and the 'warrior spirit' to channel aggression productively in federal associations.

We present their accounts as three antiwar projects. Tolstoy resisted war by revealing its mainsprings and appealing to conscience. Proudhon used truce, pact and treaty to dismantle monopoly and bring war to a halt. Kropotkin used mutual aid as a transgressive force to resist threats to collective well-being and promote solidaristic responses to institutionalised aggression and domination or war. The differences, we argue, underline the consistency of the anarchist conception of the continuity of politics and violence.[12]

War and Resistance

Kropotkin described *War and Peace* as 'a source of indescribable aesthetic pleasure'. He also recognised that the novel advanced a 'philosophy of war'. He considered this as compelling as the historical narrative.[13] Aside from plotting the trajectories of his characters, one of the persistent questions it asks is: why do men fight? As Inessa Medzhibovskaya shows, the answer is not straightforward. Tolstoy distinguished 'political' and 'zoological' violence from 'primordial force' and 'the simulation of this force by the state'.[14] The first pairing set conscious, deliberate decision against unreflective 'force of habit',[15] and the second pitted spiritedness and readiness to fight against orchestration.[16]

[12] For a contemporary discussion, see Baron et al. 2019.

[13] Kropotkin 1916, 123–125.

[14] Medzhibovskaya 2008, 508.

[15] Tolstoy famously compares the Muscovites residing in the city on Napoleon's arrival in 1812 to bees in a decayed hive (Tolstoy 2016, 971). Likewise, he describes 'several battalions of soldiers […] swarming like white ants all over the trench works', making themselves ready to resist French attack in 1805 (Tolstoy 2016, 182).

[16] Tolstoy argues: 'In warfare the strength of an army is the product of its mass multiplied by something else, an *x* factor […] This x factor is army morale, a greater or lesser willingness

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However, the general conclusion he drew was that men fight because it appears rational to do so, because refusal does not cross men's minds or because they are impassioned or incentivised to kill their fellow beings. These motives are not mutually exclusive or always well-understood.[17]

The philosophical underpinning of Tolstoy's analysis can be traced to Kant's idea of necessity. Designating free will as a cognitive device to conceal or compensate for human incapacity,[18] Tolstoy argued that individuals acted as if they were free and that, on a conscious level, man 'feels beyond doubt that he is free to do whatever he wants'.[19] But this freedom was misleading, and it wrongly directed attention from the ordinary to the exceptional, emphasising the role of will over the relationship between will and necessity.[20] Free will, Tolstoy remarked, 'is what is examined; necessity does the examining'.[21]

In an abstract sense, the 'ordinary' was the 'infinitesimal minimum'.[22] Adding more substance to the concept, he described war as an 'irrevocable action' explained by 'millions of actions performed by other people to create historical significance'.[23] Tolstoy described the technique he used to comprehend these actions as 'the art of integration'.[24] It meant examining individual circumstances and the social phenomena motivating action. This was the relationship between will and necessity. *War and Peace* achieves this feat by following the fortunes of over 100 characters who wrestle with the same dilemmas

to fight and face danger' (Tolstoy 2016, 1149). Prince Andrei expresses the same view in his remarks to Pierre about the spiritedness of the Russian army on the eve of the battle of Borodino (Tolstoy 2016, 859). The account bears comparison to Clausewitz's trinity of passion, chance and reason (Waldman 2013).

[17] For example, Rostov, prone to confuse war with the excitement of the hunt, joins the army in 1805, unable to reflect on the morality of either. His exaggerated professions of loyalty serve as a cover for his confusion. In a drunken outburst, he declares: 'we're soldiers […] If they tell us to die, we die […] Ours is not to judge […] We've got to do our duty, kill the enemy and stop thinking' (Tolstoy 2016, 451–452).

[18] Barnhart 1995, 36. See also Leech 2021. See also the discussion of Proudhon's ideo-realism in Chapter 3, 'Anarchy, Force and Division'.

[19] Tolstoy 2016, 1343. Tolstoy suggests that actors cannot remove themselves from power structures, not even in resistance. Tolstoy's view contrasts with David Graeber's oft-quoted definition of direct action as 'the defiant insistence on acting as if one is already free' (Graeber 2014a, 233). Gandhi's Salt March, modelled on Tolstoyan principles of non-violence, is the example Graeber uses to reinforce the idea that we can act 'as one would if the existing structure of power did not exist' (Graeber 2014a).

[20] Schönle 2013, 43.

[21] Tolstoy 2016, Epilogue 2, 1353. Tolstoy's analysis was central to his critique of the 'great man' theory of history which explained the cause and conduct of events as the will of supposedly unique individuals such as Napoleon. While Tolstoy admitted that the thesis prompted important questions about the morality, ethics and justification of violence, he disputed its assumptions about power and freedom and argued that the focus on will wrongly ignored the 'elemental' forces acting upon decisions (Tolstoy 2016, 669; Epilogue 1344).

[22] Tolstoy 2016, Epilogue 2, 1355.

[23] Tolstoy 2016, 670.

[24] Tolstoy 2016, 912.

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in different ways. Each of his characters' actions is undertaken freely, but in Tolstoy's terminology, they are all driven by necessity.[25]

Kropotkin suggested that Tolstoy used the character Platon Karatayev, a gentle sage who enchants the hero Pierre after his capture by French forces, to present the thesis. Contesting the view that 'Tolstóy was preaching in Karatáeff a sort of Oriental fatalism', Kropotkin argued:

> Karatáeff […] simply knows that there are natural calamities, which is it impossible to resist; and he knows that the miseries which befall him […] are the unavoidable consequence of a much greater event: the armed conflict between nations, which, once it has begun, must unroll itself with all its revolting but absolutely ungovernable consequences. Karatáeff acts as one of those cows on the slope of an Alpine mountain, mentioned by the philosopher Guyau, which, when it feels that it begins to slip […] makes at first desperate efforts to hold its ground, but when it sees that no effort can arrest its fatal gliding, lets itself quietly be dragged down to the abyss. If he had felt that his efforts could prevent war, he would have exerted them.[26]

While Kropotkin steered necessity from the cognisance of reality towards the determination to change, he captured Tolstoy's scepticism about choice. Necessity referred to the tangible and unknown forces that conditioned action. In society, necessity was shaped by the intricate social webs that gave life meaning while also clouding deeper, universal moral imperatives. As Barnhart argues, the 'deep texture' of necessity was inversely related to the 'depth and richness' of social relationships:[27] the richer our interdependence, the less able we are to comprehend our reliance on the unseen forces that govern our existence. To further complicate the picture, Tolstoy argued that social relationships were always mediated by power and hierarchy: our judgments about our obligations were thus fatally distorted by our sense of social obligation and subject to the deceptions of the elites who, detached from ordinary folk, behaved as gods.

The trajectory of Prince Andrei's life captures the nature of the human predicament. The epitome of the Homeric hero, Andrei enlists in 1805 in a quest for 'glory', equating 'glory' with the 'love for other people' a desire to 'do something for them', and to garner praise.[28] To his horror, he finds out that war is a 'nice hobby for idle people and butterfly minds' and 'the vilest thing in human life'. Its aim 'is murder' and its weapons 'are spying, treachery and the fostering of further treachery, the destruction of people, looting their property

[25] For example, Pierre challenges his wife's lover to a duel and, against the advice of his second, refuses to apologise even though he has no interest in defending her honour and is frightened about the risks. The challenge, Tolstoy remarks, gained its own momentum and the violence that ensued had 'nothing to do with anyone's will' (Tolstoy 2016, 338).

[26] Kropotkin 1916, 124.

[27] Barnhart 1995, 35.

[28] Tolstoy 2016, 414. On heroism in *War and Peace*, see Jepsen 1969; Griffiths and Rabinowitz 1983.

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and stealing from them to keep the army on the road'.[29] Andrei's tragedy, not untypical in Tolstoy's fiction, is that he discovers life's greater purpose only at the point of his own death. A near-fatal injury triggers his first epiphany. The revelation of fundamental necessity comes only at his passing. As his life ebbs away, he feels a sense of 'becoming' and a strange 'lightness of being'.[30]

Tolstoy identified the state as the most perverse and destructive manipulator of necessity. In an open letter decrying Tsarist repression of the Dukhobors, a non-conformist pacifist Christian sect,[31] he set out his thesis by exposing the logics of militarism:

> You, who are governed by us, are all in danger of being conquered by other nations; we are watching over your welfare and safety, and consequently we demand of you annually some millions of roubles […] to be used by us in the acquisition of arms, canon, powder, and ships for your defence; we also demand that you yourselves shall enter institutions, organised by us, where you will become senseless particles of a huge machine – the army – which will be under our absolute control. On entering the army […] you will do what we require of you. But what we wish, above all else, is to exercise domination; the means by which we dominate is killing, therefore we will instruct you to kill.[32]

The idea of peace in the world of militarised states was, he argued, a fantasy. In 1899, responding to the first meeting of the Hague International Peace Conference, he contemplated three questions: (i) Is war among civilised nations still required by history, law and progress? (ii) What are the intellectual, moral, physical, economical and political effects of militarism? And (iii) In the interests of the world's future civilisation, what are the solutions which should be given to the grave problems of the war and militarism? (Tolstoy 1900a).[33] In answering the first two, he summarised the thesis outlined in *War and Peace*, namely, war was required by those occupying the seats of power to advance

[29] Tolstoy 2016, 861.

[30] Tolstoy 2016, 1090.

[31] On Tolstoy and the Dukhobors, Alexeeva 1995; Avrich 1962. On the coalition formed to assist their resettlement in Canada, the unhappy results and George Woodcock's changing assessment of the colony, see Foster 1935; Alston 2014; Adams and Kelly 2018.

[32] Tolstoy 1900b, 10–11.

[33] Tolstoy's view is put by both leading characters in *War and Peace*. On his first appearance, Pierre expresses his interest in the idea of perpetual peace but declares it infeasible (Tolstoy 2016, 12). Andrei agrees with Pierre that the absence of war would 'probably' be a good thing, but remarks that 'it won't ever happen' (Tolstoy 2016, 27). Isaiah Berlin attributed these views to the influence of the conservative Joseph de Maistre (Berlin 2013). Yet these sentiments chimed more closely with the argument Proudhon developed in *War and Peace*, and there is good evidence to suggest this was a more significant political influence, even if both also likely learnt from de Maistre. Tolstoy and Proudhon spent a few days together in early April, 1861, just as Proudhon was finalising *War and Peace*, and while records of their conversations are scant, the symmetry between their thinking on the place of war in history is striking, as is the uncanny correspondence between the character of Pierre, in Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and his anarchist namesake. For a discussion, see Prichard 2022, 27–30, and Eikhenbaum 1982.

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their interests, and carelessness and irresponsibility were the deadening effects of hierarchy: elites, insulated from the suffering of ordinary folk, denied their responsibility for the actions of the populations they mobilised in war.

> The great majority of people – all working people […] – who carry out the plunders and murders, and on whom all the burden falls – neither devise nor prepare nor desire these things, but take part in them […] merely because they are placed in such a position and are so instigated that it appears to them, to each individual, that they would suffer more were they to refuse. Whereas those who devise and prepare for these plunders and murders, and who compel the working people to carry them out […] live in luxury and idleness, upon the labour of the workers.[34]

Tolstoy acknowledged that states were unable to stem entirely resistance to war and militarism.[35] Judgment, sharpened by faith, enabled groups like the Dukhobors, still immersed in what he called primitive religion, to reject the state's appeal to necessity and bring their connection to God to bear on militarism. Yet for Tolstoy, these instances of non-resistance to violence did not point to a constitutional politics: the appeal to the idea of free will and the misconception of necessity ruled this out. Indeed, his ordering of faith over politics indicated that war and militarism could only ultimately be defeated by love, God, conscience and reason. Even if anarchists were able to undo the institutions of state, they could not – and would not – unpick the strong social ties that impelled all calls to arms. Non-resistance to violence was at best a holding position against inevitable cultural corruption. As Michael Denner argues, Tolstoy adopted a 'strategic position' against autocracy and the 'dominant value systems' of 'specifically Western institutions'. By universalising faith and bringing Christianity into relation with Daoism, Hinduism and Islam, he threw his weight behind peoples willing to defy government, especially to defend 'the superiority of rural life' and tradition, against westernisation.[36] This was a profoundly anarchic antipolitics.[37] But it did not point to the eradication of war. Kropotkin, an ardent admirer, pursued these themes to bring anticolonial, antiwar resistance into Proudhon's federalist model.

War and Treaty

Whereas Tolstoy linked war to social entanglements, Proudhon conceptualised war as an expression of the right of force. War, he argued, was an inescapable feature of politics: 'in fact or in right, the social state is always a state of

[34] Tolstoy n.d., 18–19. In *War and Peace*, he argues: '[p]ower is the relation of a given person to other individuals, in which the more this person expresses opinions, predictions, and justifications of the collective action that is performed, the less is his participation in that action' (Tolstoy 2016, Epilogue II, 1341).

[35] Tolstoy 2016, Epilogue II, 1338.

[36] Denner 2015, 54.

[37] Moulin 2017.

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war'.[38] Their descriptions of the informal truces that punctuated the Crimean War capture their differences.

In his memoir of the Siege of Sebastopol, Tolstoy recalls the camaraderie between the French and Russian troops and emphasises their common subjection to military hierarchy. Left to their own devices, they shared tobacco and teased each other about their language capabilities. On hearing them 'shake with laughter', Tolstoy writes, the commanding officer yells: 'Don't leave your lines; back to your places, sacré nom! […] and the soldiers disperse with evident reluctance'.[39] Proudhon, in contrast, used the exchange to personify the right of war between nations. '[T]he most beautiful commentary I could offer on my thinking and on […] the right of force', he remarked, is the informal truce '[d]uring lulls in the bitterest of fighting of the Crimean war'. Here, 'the French and Russians mingled as friends, as hosts, swapping a pipeful of tobacco, a swig of brandy'.[40] They were not 'enemies',[41] but morally equal combatants struggling for their right to exist, and when the war was over, this struggle would continue.

Like Tolstoy, Proudhon thought the study of war should combine the analysis of the movements of armies, battles, tactics and strategy, with the study of war's 'moral phenomenology'.[42] But in Proudhon's work, the moral aspect of the exercise of collective force and reason makes war right-making. Tolstoy argued that the centrality of war to the conduct of the state corrupted all secular institutions. Proudhon argued that the social element makes war fundamentally and inescapably normative. Soldiers fight for ideals as well as for each other. Societies justify mass murder using the same and similarly vaunted values, and ground post-conflict political orders on the heroic sacrifices of dead warriors.

Proudhon's reading of the Melian Dialogue in Thucydides *History of the Peloponnesian War* illustrates his conception of morality and the use of force. At the height of the wars, in 416 BC, Athens 'laid siege to the island of Mela' and presented the Melians with a choice: surrender or die. Realising that they were weaker and outnumbered, the Melians appealed to the gods to 'watch over them' as they faced the 'unjust'. Might was not on their side, but right was: no peoples should submit to the will of another simply because they are the stronger. The Athenians advanced a contrary interpretation of the will of the gods. The gods were preponderant over men, they argued, because of their might. The same rule applied to peoples: 'wherever force lies, there too command resides'.[43] Proudhon concluded: 'It is this invincible sense of

[38] Proudhon [1861 vol. i], *OC*, XIII, 46. Similarly: 'politics is warfare in its essence, in its institutions, and in law'. Proudhon [1861], 237.

[39] Tolstoï 1888, 115–119. The memoirs were only published in French in 1902, perhaps suggesting that Proudhon heard the story directly from Tolstoy.

[40] Tolstoï 1888, p. 62.

[41] Tolstoï 1888.

[42] Tolstoï 1888, Book II.

[43] Tolstoï 1888, 179. Trans. Sharkey, Proudhon 2022, 178–179.

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a righteousness implicit in war that at first swathed it in robes of formality, which conditioned it and governed its consequences, as if it were a sort of court proceedings'.[44]

Proudhon compared his reading of the dialogue to Hobbes' interpretation to cement the argument about war and right. Hobbes's reading was metaphysical rather than theological, but no less contingent. In his account, 'right reason' ought to have prevailed, and the Melians should have surrendered. Proudhon concludes *War and Peace* with reference to Hobbes: 'Hobbes's theory is wrong: our over-riding motive is not selfishness; it is not the preservation of our body and limbs, it is not our interest, be it well or wrongly construed'; it is not 'interest' but 'justice', conceived of in concert with others, that drives us.[45] To attempt to settle matters of right with 'right reason', and deny the salience of violence and morality, is to deny both the right of force *and the* 'collective conscience' that sovereignty is built upon. But crucially, if might is a legitimate exercise of right, it is so for all.

Using war as a salient metaphor for the empirical reality of politics, Proudhon turned his attention to the latent violence of social 'pacification'.[46] Distinguishing direct violence or physical force from indirect or structural violence – for example, the effects of inequality on the lifespans of the poorest – he defined pacification as an implicit truce between and within the groups that make up a given society. Its character depended on the balance of military, ideational and productive powers. But the implied threat of violence, or of the exercise of force deleterious to one group by another, was central to the system of right in any society.

To illustrate, the pacification of post-Revolutionary France was characterised by '*gouvernementalisme*'. Proudhon tracked the evolution of the idea to the encyclopaedists and followed it through Saint-Simonian technocracy to the mollification of revolutionary values and the adoption of governmental norms in 1848. In *War and Peace*, he adopted the term '*militarisme*' to examine governmentalism and show how war both structures society and pacifies it:

> [w]ar has a tendency to swerve the LIBERALISM that pursues it by seeking refuge in governmentalism [*gouvernementalisme*], in other words a system of exploitation, administration, trade, manufacturing, education, etc., by the State. So, no more plunder, as that lacks nobility; cease the imposition of war taxes, no more property confiscations, no more piracy, each city is to be left with its own monuments and masterpieces, and there will even be help available in the form of capital, and subsidies will be afforded the annexed provinces. But we will govern, exploit and administer, etc., militarily – that's the secret.[47]

[44] Proudhon 2022, 181. Trans. Sharkey, Proudhon 2022, 177.
[45] Proudhon [1861 vi.ii], *OC*, vol. XIV, 305. Trans. Sharkey, Proudhon 2022, 495.
[46] Proudhon [1861], *OC*, vol XIII–XIV, *passim*.
[47] Proudhon [1861], *OC*, vol XIV, 223.

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For Edward Castleton, one of Proudhon's most diligent readers, this is evidence of Proudhon's anthropology of the state. The consolidation of the state through social pacification is a sign of its maturity. By illustrating the marital underpinnings of society and order, Castleton argues, Proudhon attempted to use positive social science to liberate us from the grip of history, or its seeming necessity.[48] The analysis of war, then, revealed how society could constitutionalise and dispense with militarism and governmentalism in turn.

Following Kant, Proudhon argued that perpetual peace was the means, not the end, of constitutional change.[49] The abolition of war, he argued, 'is a utopia that every civilization, and every period in history has passed down to the next, in the same way as they pass down dreams of brotherhood and equality'.[50] International treaty law was the crucible, ontologically prior to 'domestic' law.[51] Indeed, he recommended extending the proto-federal constitutional moment of the Congress of Vienna into the mutual recognition of the dignity of all peoples.[52] This conception of politics made the difference between a constitution and treaty law wafer thin: both used treaties, pacts and agreements to pacify social relations, codify the terms of the truce between society's competing forces, and commit to non-violent means to achieve future goals, *as long as* the terms of the truce are respected by all. However, Proudhon also argued that peace had to have its own positive connotations.

Rather than try to hold all forces in transcendent balance and make conflict a thing of the past, the peace must be dynamic, harness all the powers of society and justify their division such that the conflict between them drives the process forward, holds them together, while none dominates arbitrarily. In other words, society must come to collective agreements about how it justifies its own pacification and must resist the monopoly of force for the sake of its own material and intellectual force, and the possibility of change.

Proudhon turned to political economy to find a focus for the constitution. As William George remarks, his view was that the laws of political economy did 'not depend upon the arbitrary will of man […] labor could then be organised for the wellbeing of all'.[53] In *War and Peace*, Proudhon developed the argument. By the 1860s, the emerging power of the French and European industrial proletariat was coming into view. This new collective force, he contended, could accommodate and transform the destructive martial spirit that lingered in the post-Napoleonic era. Understanding the economic causes of war

[48] For a discussion, see Castleton 2017a.

[49] Kant takes the view that one indication of the possibility of containing the passions lies in pitting them against one another, not in '*moral reform*'. The constitution is necessary only when people are taken as they are, that is, 'crooked'. For a discussion, see Proudhon [1861 v.i], *OC*, vol. 13, 128–130.

[50] Proudhon [1861v.ii], *OC*, XIV, 277. Trans. Sharkey. Proudhon 2022, 476.

[51] For a fuller discussion, see Prichard 2010a.

[52] For more, see Proudhon [1864], *OC*, vol. VIII.

[53] George 1922, 532.

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through history and social science made it possible to neutralise them through the exercise of collective reason and collective force. However, the industrial proletariat had to flex its collective muscle.[54] Only 'agricultural-industrial federalism', he argued in *The Principle of Federation*, could counter the 'financial feudalism' that was emerging.[55]

Proudhon's divergence from Tolstoy was marked but not absolute. Whereas Proudhon referred to Comte's law of stages to rank positive science over theology, Tolstoy outlined a sociology of religion to chart shifts from animal to the social to the divine, and so raised the possibility of peace as an end, however remote.[56] Proudhon argued that no such transcendence was possible. But the ethics of Tolstoy's strategic resistance were compatible with Proudhon's proposal to promote peace as the means of constitutional politics.

War and Mutual Aid

After Proudhon's death in 1865, anarchist theory developed in the shadow of the accelerating development of industrial capitalism and the fracturing of the socialist movement. When the IWMA split, the antiauthoritarians who followed Bakunin and opposed Marx investigated concepts of class conflict and social war in the light of the development of scientific socialism. In the late nineteenth century, Kropotkin redeveloped Proudhon's constitutional project to elaborate anti-Marxist anarchist communism and in criticism of *laissez-faire* liberalism.

Kropotkin's analysis of war and politics is overshadowed by his controversial decision in 1914 to support the Entente against the Central powers.[57] For Emma Goldman and others, his stance was explicable only as an infatuation with the 'glamor of political liberalism as represented by Republican France, Constitutional England and Democratic America' and his inability to 'realize that the line of demarcation between liberalism and autocracy is purely imaginary'.[58]

Kropotkin's defence is indeed baffling. Only one year earlier, warning of the likelihood of global conflict, he had argued that war was the result of competition structured into the modern state by capitalism.[59] Yet contrary to

[54] For a full exposition of this theory in a Proudhonist vein, see Proudhon [1865], *OP*, *De la Capacité*.

[55] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, 80.

[56] Tolstoy 1936, ch. IV. Tolstoy defines the 'essence of religion' as 'man's faculty in foreseeing prophetically, and pointing out, the path of life along which humanity must progress, and in a new definition of the meaning of life – differing from its previous one – from which the whole future activity of humanity will result' (Tolstoy 1936, 104).

[57] For a discussion of the fallout of Kropotkin's stance, see the essays by Levy, Ryley and Turcato in Kinna and Adams 2017.

[58] Goldman 1918, 11.

[59] Kropotkin 1914a, 1.

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Goldman's assertion, Kropotkin's endorsement of the Entente's fight was an expression of a consistent antiwar stance.

Kropotkin's account of war was rooted in his critique of Social Darwinism and centred on the idea of the warrior spirit. His starting point, outlined in *Mutual Aid*, was that the Social Darwinist account of nature as an individual fight for survival in which only the fittest prevailed was deeply flawed.[60] In *Ethics*, his posthumously published book, he applied the theory to attack the competitive logics of Herbert Spencer's *laissez-faire* liberalism and the theory of social progression, arguably among the most influential accounts of his age.[61]

Kropotkin's assessment of Spencer was not entirely negative. He celebrated Spencer's evolutionary approach, his embrace of the principle of equality, and his acknowledgement that moral judgements were context dependent.[62] He agreed with Spencer that war created the state and shared Spencer's view that progress could be measured by war's containment.[63] Like Spencer, he also characterised social progress as a shift from homogeneity to heterogeneity, mirroring Proudhon's development of Smith's theory of the development of the complex division of labour.

The problem was that Spencer was a socially conservative, sometimes 'reactionary', natural rights utilitarian, who collapsed equality into equal happiness and defined this as equal liberty.[64] Wrongly describing social evolution as a move from the 'warlike, militant state' to the pluralist 'peaceful, industrial community',[65] he also mistakenly linked heterogeneity to the state's creation and the expansion of free trade. To compound the error, Spencer described this movement as one from the 'savagery' of 'primitive' peoples to the refinement of European manners.[66] This account of 'primitive' society was 'wrong […] even fantastic',[67] as unreliable as Rousseau's earlier idealisation of the state of nature, and based on vulgar assumptions about man's 'animal' origins.[68]

Kropotkin presented a parallel historical sociology to correct Spencer's account. Liberalism, he admitted, had expanded individual rights. But it had relied on state regulation and thus tended towards homogeneity and compliance. Indeed, industrialism, the term Spencer used to describe liberal 'civilisation', had only boosted militarism. According to Kropotkin's history, the consolidation of state power in Europe between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries had launched

[60] Kropotkin 1972a, 72.
[61] Kropotkin 1968a, 316.
[62] Kropotkin 1968a, 315. In *Mutual Aid*, Kropotkin explained parricide and infanticide in tribal communities without judgment and distanced himself from other moralising 'European men of science' (Kropotkin 1972b, 104).
[63] Kropotkin 1968a, 316–317.
[64] Kropotkin 1968a, 313–314, 317.
[65] Kropotkin 1968a, 301.
[66] Kropotkin 1968a, 316.
[67] Kropotkin 1968a, 309.
[68] Kropotkin 1972, 109.

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a war for domination that elites had been waging both within and without their jurisdictions with varying ferocity ever since.[69] Rejecting Spencer's claim that the formation of the modern state represented a move from war to peace, he argued that the 'rapacious instincts' that Spencer erroneously tied to 'primitive' society were 'not only preserved' but 'strongly developed' by the 'new methods of acquiring wealth' sponsored by industrial capitalism.[70]

Like Tolstoy and Proudhon, Kropotkin acknowledged that violence and conflict were not the state's preserve. For example, he noted the 'weird rites' practiced by 'sorcerers, shamans, and soothsayers', later institutionalised in religion for '*intimidation*, especially of women and children'.[71] The twin charges he laid at Spencer's door were first, that he had ignored the ritualised practices, systems of justice and compensation that warrior states perfected to resolve conflicts and build trust and solidarity within and between communities,[72] and second, that he had glossed the institutionalised violence endemic in the so-called peaceful industrial community. The civilising force of law was the beam in Spencer's eye. As if to show how badly it had distorted his vision, Kropotkin cited the findings of the Whig historian Henry Maine, who traced origins of international law to supposed tribal practices.[73]

Kropotkin highlighted the rank stupidity of industrial peace by again quoting Maine: 'Man has never been so ferocious or so stupid as to submit to such an evil as war without some kind of effort to prevent it'.[74] Industrial peace had done just that. Kropotkin pointed to the violence arising from 'greed, vanity, and the thirst for power'[75] and made manifest in labour relations.[76] Free trade drove conquest or 'plunder' fought at the cost of those designated 'backward tribes and peoples'.[77] Speculative investments in technology produced

[69] Kropotkin 1897.
[70] Kropotkin 1968, 312.
[71] Kropotkin 1968, 335.
[72] Kropotkin argued that the 'warrior' states that Spencer had denigrated, had attempted to institutionalise mutual aid. War was not unknown, but it was usually a last resort. Élie Reclus complicated Kropotkin's account. His study of the Apache focused on their cruelty, violence, lack of moral thought and presumed lack of intelligence. However, this analysis bolstered Kropotkin's view that aggressive violence was self-destructive. Between 1820 and 1890, he noted, the adult male population had declined from 20,000 to 5,000. Without allies, the Apache 'wolves' had been 'eaten up' by the same 'sheep' who had driven thousands of English, Irish and Scots to settle their lands: 'noble lords and large proprietors' (Reclus 1891, 141–142).
[73] Kropotkin 1902b, 129. In a similar vein, John Napoleon Brinton Hewitt argued that the sixteenth-century Gayanashagowa, or the Iroquois Great Law of Peace, was of 'more than passing interest' to anyone sincerely interested in setting the post-war order on new foundations in the aftermath of the First World War (Hewitt 1920). On the Gayanashagowa and international relations, and its purported influence on Benjamin Franklin and the US Constitution, see Crawford 1994; Payne 1996; Lutz 1998.
[74] Kropotkin 1972b, 129.
[75] Kropotkin 1968a, 336.
[76] Kropotkin 1968a, 319.
[77] Kropotkin 1968a, 318.

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'poisonous gases, submarines' and Zeppelins to attack 'sleeping cities'.[78] Describing the horrors of the 1904–05 siege of Port Arthur, Kropotkin argued that the peaceful industrial community operated on a permanent war footing.[79] The First World War, he later remarked, was only 'the latest act' of this industrial 'process'.[80] The irony was that 'military predatoriness' had 'never ceased to be extolled as the highest virtue'.[81]

Kropotkin argued that the abolition of inequality, what Proudhon called the 'extinction of pauperism', would remove the most immediate, primary causes of war without eradicating the phenomenon. However, abandoning Proudhon's political economy, he also modified the idea of pacification. The solution to war, he argued, was the eradication of competition and the channelling of the warrior spirit to the preservation of mutual aid.

Kropotkin's history of ethics provided the scaffolding. Turning once more to Spencer, he rejected his theorisation of moral progress and used naturalism to posit a '*universal law of organic evolution*'. This related the changes in social norms and practices to the release of a latent 'vital force' for self-sacrificing action,[82] where vital force corresponded to the third component of a progressive series leading from mutual aid, to justice and morality.[83] Borrowing Spencer's terminology, he presented the first two as 'unconscious tendencies, instincts and habits' which sparked reflections or 'thoughts that are not quite clear' about the best ways of preserving social life.[84] In contrast, morality, an 'unstable feeling' and the least 'imperative' ethical drive, was consciously disruptive. It animated challenges to accepted norms and standards, forcing breaks with convention.

Evoking Henri Bergson's philosophy of life, vital force chimed with what Patricia Leighten calls the 'political refusal of the status quo' circulating in

[78] Kropotkin 1968a, 336. He-Yin Zhen discussed rape as another method of war. He-Yin 1907.

[79] The Russo-Japanese war is now sometimes described as World War Zero but was widely seen as an unexceptional regional conflict at the time. As Steinberg argues, the battle for Port Arthur was a characteristically modern war: 'both sides had to mobilize large parts of their military, which in turn required extensive economic support, from the production of equipment to the transportation of everything from soldiers to arms, munitions, and supplies they needed to prevail on the battlefield. Neither side could sustain this military effort without domestic support and foreign financing' (Steinberg 2008, 7).

[80] Kropotkin 1968a, 312.

[81] Kropotkin 1968a, 310.

[82] London 1904, chapter 3.

[83] Kropotkin 1968a, 31.

[84] Kropotkin 1968a, 326. The language was problematic. As Kate Gordon argued in critique of Spencer, it was hard to see how *ethical* action could be directed unconsciously (Gordon 1902, 604). As if to clarify, Kropotkin characterised mutual aid and justice as expressions of wilful action strongly conditioned by established norms. *In Russian and French Prisons* Kropotkin similarly distinguished wilful action from obedience or unthinking action (Kropotkin 1887b, 352). Will correlated with the 'best passions' in society – love, compassion, empathy, solidarity (Kropotkin 1887b). Obedience promoted the loathing, fear, antipathy and mistrust (Kropotkin 1887b, 323).

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early twentieth-century modernist and avant-garde art movements.[85] However, Kropotkin used Jean-Marie Guyau's *A Sketch of Morality Independent of Obligation or Sanction*[86] to theorise morality as a 'striving toward a more intensive, and varied life' or a 'spiritual activity rich in impressions, feelings, and manifestations of will'.[87] It was 'acquired through struggle', prompted by danger and inclined towards risk.[88] It included the creativity that animated all 'great discoveries and explorations', 'all the attempts to rebuild society on new bases, made at the risk of life, all the new departures in the realm of art'.[89] As the driver for a multitude of disruptive, challenging micropolitical actions, morality underpinned what Kropotkin called the 'heroic act' in battle or struggle, 'flights of daring thought', the willingness to confront 'hazards […] even serious ones'.[90]

The judgments that motivated morality, Kropotkin argued, were environmentally conditioned. A critique of Nietzsche revealed the mutability. Perhaps in some sympathy with Nietzsche, he argued that the 'want of development of the personality (leading to herd-psychology) and the lack of individual creative power and initiative' were the 'the chief defects of our time'.[91] However, in critique of Nietzsche, he argued that Nietzscheanism warped morality: it was an aggressive response to herd-psychology that indulged the aristocratic conceits of egoists and advanced the will to power 'against the interests of society'. The anarchist response, rooted in mutual aid, expressed morality's creative force, namely, the 'striving for *sociality*'.[92]

Kropotkin's appeal to the vital force of morality was, then, tied to the institutionalisation of mutual aid. As a creative transgressive force, morality tended towards equality but disrupted social conventions for the sake of the group's long-term well-being. It acted as a brake on established practice, custom and habit and motivated solidarity against domination. Kropotkin's favourite exemplars of morality were Sofia Perovskaya, executed for her part in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and Louise Michel, the veteran of the Paris Commune.

Confusingly, Kropotkin's support for the Entente in 1914 sprang from his conception of a martial morality. Ignoring the social pressures exerted on volunteers to enlist, and receptive to the atrocity stories coming out of Belgium, he argued that it was legitimate to repel the aggression of the Prussianised German state. Referring to the pact of friendship agreed in 1872 at the St.

[85] Leighten 2020, 70. The relationship between Guyau and Bergson is discussed by Jankelevitch 1924 and Ansell-Pearson 2014.
[86] Guyau 1898.
[87] Kropotkin 1968a, 326.
[88] Kropotkin 1968a, 328.
[89] Kropotkin 1968a, 325.
[90] Kropotkin 1968a.
[91] Kropotkin 1968a, 28.
[92] Kropotkin 1968a, 326.

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Imier Conference, he told one of his angry, bewildered comrades that it was clear 'who the aggressor' was: 'Popular sentiment is never mistaken on this point'.[93] The war was a struggle between life-affirming and life-sapping regimes, comparable to the Napoleonic Wars, which tapped the spirit of mutual aid:

> owing to the fact that [...] the civilized world does not currently appear as a single state oppressing all others but as a confluence of many states which follow the path of progress each at its own pace and contribute, each of them, something peculiar to universal development, even during such periods of global reaction, progressive life runs its course somewhere, and in a few decades the delayed development reappears in new, more perfect forms.[94]

Kropotkin's account of war and morality seemed to open a gulf with Tolstoy as wide as the rift that his defence of the war opened in anarchism. Attempting to minimise the difference, he observed that Tolstoy refused to condemn transgressors who acted in conscience and good faith against injustice.[95] If this purported alignment on ethics was unlikely to convince Tolstoyans and papered over the significance of the political scission, it was not a complete break with anarchist tradition. Tolstoy's analysis of war suggested that resistance was the last line of defence against the political degradation of morality. For Proudhon, war was a social force that 'animates society',[96] moralised by those who waged it and amenable to pacification. Kropotkin's argument was that war was a transmutable social force, aggravated by competition and moralised by mutual aid. All three linked the incidence of war to government, exploitation and hierarchy, and each articulated an antiwar strategy. Proudhon and Kropotkin also proposed constitutional solutions.

FEDERALISM

Decentralised federation is the organisational form of the anarchist social constitution. In what follows, we outline three key features of Proudhon's 'principle of federation': pact, division and secession. The following two subsections (Decentralised Federation: Proudhon's Template, and Variations in Decentralised Federation) examine Proudhon's philosophical model and two distinctive modes of communal organisation articulated after the Paris Commune. The final sub-section (Evolution, Revolution and Decentralised Federation) discusses complementary approaches to the reconfiguration of the political order. Both give expression to distinctively anarchist ideas of social transformation.

[93] Kropotkin 1914b, fol. 14, 15.
[94] Kropotkin forthcoming.
[95] In his discussion of *War and Peace*, Kropotkin noted that Pierre is reassured that Karatayev would have approved of his plan to join the Decembrist uprising against the Tsar in 1825, and probably would have participated himself (Kropotkin 1916, 125).
[96] Proudhon [1861 v.i], *OC*, vol. XIII, 243.

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Decentralised Federation: Proudhon's Template

Proudhon was the outstanding theorist of federalism in the anarchist tradition. Although his vision of anarchist federation is idiosyncratic, his concept quickly became a staple of anarchist thought. We start, then, with Proudhon and show how the ideas evolved after his death in 1865.

For Proudhon, federalism was the natural corollary of his theory of association. As he put it: 'If I began with anarchy, the conclusion of my critique of the governmental idea, I had to finish with federation, the necessary base of the rights of European peoples, and, later, the organisation of all states'.[97] He fleshed out this ambitious constitutional agenda in his writings on the 1815 Treaty of Vienna, Italian and Polish unification, and his unfinished work on constitutional history. However, his 1863 book, *The Principle of Federation*, was his most important statement.[98]

Proudhon's ideas were influenced by Louis-Henri Delarageaz, a liberal Swiss nobleman, and passionate defender of the autonomy of the canton of Vaud, and Giuseppe Ferrari, an Italian liberal republican and federalist.[99] When he looked for a model, he proposed that individuals and collectives arrange their affairs as the Swiss had done. However, the Swiss republic was an imperfect example of what he called a 'progressive constitution'.[100] Habsburg imperialism prompted the federation of twenty-five sovereign Swiss cantons in the Confederation of 1831. When Catholic and monarchist cantons threatened to leave in 1848, preferring an alliance with the Habsburgs, a civil war was fought to preserve the confederation (*Sonderbund*). This replicated the effect of the American Civil War in the United States: the 1848 constitution set Switzerland on a path from confederation to a federal state. The right to secession was rescinded, and the federation became a state.

Proudhon was not uncritical of the Swiss model. He was keen for the Swiss to establish a federal university, to advance common understanding and critical thinking, and, against a 'federal court', he argued in favour of a court of arbitration and a central authority that could fix 'weights and measures'. But likewise, he argued that a federal standing army would be antithetical to the freedom of the parts. Proudhon cites his friend Gustave Chaudey, who, writing in *La Républicain Neuchâtelois* in 1852, argued that Swiss cantonal military independence is crucial to the freedom of the whole, since it would then be impossible for the parts to become 'weapons of a conspiracy of the centre'.[101]

[97] Cited Tobugi 2010, 76.
[98] For a full account, see Prichard 2013b.
[99] On Proudhon and Delaragaez, see Tobugi 2010. For more on Ferrari, Italian federalism, and anarchism, see Ferretti 2022.
[100] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, 55. n.
[101] Chaudey cited in Proudhon ibid 75.

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He found a more inspiring model in the associations of Swiss watchmakers in the Jura, to east of Besançon, his birthplace.[102] The defence of specialism, of artisan production and the location of the workshop in the community, were central to this. The correspondence and mutualisation of the interests of the workers with those of the commune was born of necessity, but also worked to sustain their communal and cantonal independence. The defence of the artisan also contrasted starkly with the new authoritarian manufactories of Manchester, and what Proudhon called the 'industrial and financial feudalism' of France, and its emerging Saint-Simonian 'bankocracy'.[103]

The concept Proudhon articulated demonstrated the possibility of developing a form of radically pluralist association in which the contracting parties surrender only what is strictly necessary to make the agreement mutually worthwhile, and never so much as to make them subservient. To clarify, Proudhon argued: 'Any obligation, even a bilateral and commutative one, which requires those whom it binds to contribute all their efforts, to give up their independence, and to devote themselves totally to an association is an excessive obligation unworthy of man or citizen'.[104] The resulting compact would be prone to collapse under the weight of its own contradictions.

Proudhon's federation was a 'combination of shared and self-rule' which detached conflict regulation from top-down '*étatiste*' systems designed to maintain the integrity of the sovereign state by commanding loyalty to it.[105] Using Rousseau's social contract as a foil, Proudhon defined federation as a 'pact', a real contract, a treaty or an alliance, that is commutative, synallagmatic, mutualist, or reciprocal.[106] His view was that contract and treaty equalise parties in principle, or in status, and federation becomes an attempt

[102] Bakunin also moved between Berne, Geneva and Locarno Switzerland from 1868 to his death in 1876, agitating and propagandising incessantly, drawing the opprobrium of the Swiss authorities and Marx. Kropotkin visited the Jura in 1872 and there became an anarchist (Kropotkin 1899a, 287). He described the Swiss workers' organisations as 'federalist in principle' and compared them to the 'centralized, pyramidal secret organizations' of 'middle-class revolutionaries' (Kropotkin 1899a, 281). The major anarchist congresses at this time were held in Switzerland and the 'Jura Federation' became a synonym for the anarchist sections of the IWMA.

[103] Even if the watchmakers of Neuchâtel also had a factory in Manchester. Note also that the concept of a 'bankocracy' was also a common antisemitic slur, aimed at the Saint-Simonians, many of whom were Jewish, whose entrepreneurialism linked French industry, finance and government, central to the rise of Proudhon's hated étatisme, gouvenementalisme, and militarisme. He also associated the Saint-Simonians with 'male dalliance' and 'concubinage', and the search for the sexual and political liberation of women. For a discussion, see Copley 1989.

[104] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, 47. Trans. Vernon. Proudhon 1979, 39.

[105] For a discussion, see Føllesdal 2010.

[106] Proudhon's three-pronged attack was that Rousseau's notion of consent was hypothetical, aleatory (triggered only in extraordinary circumstances) and imaginary, or no more real than the thought experiment of the state of nature that it was supposed to supplant. It presupposed the alienation of individual sovereignty and the philosophical erasure of society's plural constituent groups. See Proudhon [1863], *OC*, vol. VIII, 47, n.

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to mutualise those relations in practice. Unlike the sovereign state, which invokes law to regulate distributive systems of justice, the federal constitution presupposes the real social and material inequality of the participants, their complex grouping and economic division, but also their mutual sovereignty and dignity.[107] The mutual dignity of the contracting parties is presupposed by the construction of the federal pact as a treaty, and it remodels law from 'a statute of arbitration willed by man', into a rule or agreement produced by contractual relations. And finally, it is through the conclusion of mutual agreements, Proudhon argued, that we come to understand the nature of right for ourselves.[108] Federation, Proudhon argued, demands and furthers education by enabling contracting parties to assess the terms of their agreements critically and review them as society changed. His expectation was that it would extend learning beyond the confines of the federation, once the process started to gain traction.

Proudhon's federative process had three clear phases. In the first, groups realise collective and individual goals and visions of the good. Bringing all the prejudices and commitments they have to groups, individuals unite for mutual security, benefit or growth. As they grow, and their internal division of labour becomes more complex, they enter the second phase: they separate, either ideologically, conceptually or materially. Proudhon's contention was that the process should be pressed to its logical and material conclusion. His call to 'leave nothing undivided',[109] which, as well as mimicking anarchy, was an appeal to dissolve social entities into their smallest administrative and collective units. The law of progress, as he put it elsewhere, was defined by 'complexification and differentiation'.[110] Similarly, anticipating Kropotkin, he argued progress is impeded when this diversity is curtailed.

The third phase starts when this process of division establishes the sociological basis for the federal constitution, an 'ought' that is simultaneously, or already, an empirical 'is': anarchy. In this anarchist constitution, the centre becomes nothing but an administrative hub. The principle of subsidiarity decentralises administration and the right to secession is guaranteed.[111] Proudhon argued 'The authority responsible for its execution can never overwhelm the constituent members; that is, the federal powers can never exceed

[107] For a good discussion, see Simon 1987.
[108] For more details, see Rolland 1995, 63.
[109] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, p. 58.
[110] Rolland 1995, 60. Jorge Caigao y Conde reminds us, following Kelsen, that the empirical relations of contracting parties bear little relation to their normative relation. If empirically it is impossible for two parties to be sovereign at once, normatively, it is not. Ideas and norms are not true or false, only sustained by their wider habitus, and this can change or be revised through practice. In practice, secession doesn't contradict a norm of federation (Cagiao y Conde 2021).
[111] See also Endo 1994, who links Proudhon to the Euro-federalist project.

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in number and significance those of local or provincial authorities, just as the latter can never outweigh the rights and prerogatives of man and citizen'.[112]

Because the central authority of the federation is bound by a commutative contract, it cannot exceed the powers of the parts without violating the sovereignty of those parts. Proudhon notes:

> If it were otherwise, the community would become communistic; the federation would revert to centralized monarchy; the federal authority, instead of being a mere delegate and subordinate function as it should be, will be seen as dominant [...] Thus transformed, the body politic may be termed republican, democratic, or what you will [...] it will no longer be a confederation [...] and will be on the road to despotism.[113]

Modern scholars sometimes describe Proudhon's federalism as a variant on liberalism, and use the priority of liberty to define both.[114] However, as Føllesdal notes, while Proudhon defended federalism 'as the best way to retain individual liberty within "natural" communities such as families and guilds who enter pacts among themselves for necessary and specific purposes', his federative idea turned the state into 'one of several non-sovereign agents in charge of coordinating, without final authority'.[115] The distinctive aspect of anarchist federalism was not just that it tended towards 'association', 'co-sociation', 'reciprocity', 'mutuality', as opposed to 'rule', 'empire', 'dominance' and 'monarchy'.[116] Proudhon's concept was distinctive because it enshrined individual sovereignty and thus demanded decentralisation 'from the top down' to reconstitute society 'from the bottom up'.[117] As the Proudhonist Siegmund Engländer put it: 'As separate individuals, we shall centralise our interests and form larger combination [...] We will all be sovereigns'.[118]

Individual sovereignty was prefigured in the collective force of the groups that constituted the federation and was foundational to it.[119] An a-legal

[112] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, p. 48. Trans., Vernon. Proudhon 1979, 39–40. For a discussion, see also Cagiao y Conde 2012.

[113] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, 48. Trans., Vernon. Proudhon 1979, 40.

[114] Preston King argues that Proudhon's aim was to maximise freedom by 'destroying power' by means of its division and dispersal (King 1982, 40).

[115] Føllesdal 2010.

[116] Forsyth 1981, 5.

[117] King 1982, 41.

[118] Engländer 1873, 47. Engländer appealed to egoism: 'we will not be citizens, ... we will be separate individuals, we will be men'. But the idea chimed with the IWW's conception of leaderlessness. To protect individuals from employer violence, 'Wobblies began answering the enemy's demand to know "Who's your leader?" with, "We are all leaders"'. This Spartacist strategy encouraged IWW '"decentralizers" ... to use the slogan against leadership in general' (De Caux 1978, 14). See Chapter 5.

[119] In Proudhon's work, secession was a principle of justice which protected the federation from becoming a state or a form of structural domination masquerading as freedom. As the federalist Jorge Cagiao y Conde argues, drawing on Proudhon, if you cannot leave, you are imprisoned (Cagiao y Conde 2021).

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principle, it divided power to stop the tendency towards concentration, and it was realised through the right of exit or secession.

Following republican traditions, anarchists often expressed the right of secession as a right of resistance. For example, in 1912, anarchists grouped around Ricardo Flores Magón endorsed the constitutional stance taken by the historian and leader of the Liberal Party, Fernando Iglesias Calderón against the Porfirio Díaz government. To affect the defence of the rights accorded in the 1857 constitution, Calderón reminded Mexicans that the 'prerogatives of the citizens' included the right 'take up arms, in the army or the national guard, for the defense of the republic, or of its institutions in the terms prescribed by the law'.[120]

Yet anarchists added two twists to this long-established republican right. First, whereas republicans tied the right of resistance to the defence of republican institutions and the will of the sovereign, anarchists devolved that to the real individuals and associations who retained their sovereignty. Second, anarchists relaxed the link between secession or exit and resistance. Secession was not a declaration of war. Rather, it was a mechanism for constitutional adjustment and a continual reminder of the work needed to maintain the federation. Secession was a last resort, the assertion of which need not even result in exit. Assuming the mutual pacts between the federated groups were worth maintaining, Proudhon argued that the guarantee incentivised constitutional reform. Secession was a principle of justice which protected the federation from becoming a state, or a form of structural domination masquerading as freedom.

On his deathbed in 1865, he commented on the 'Manifesto of the 60', a call issued by a group of workers for functional and corporatist representation of industry in the French Assembly. In the response he composed, which became *De la Capacité politique des classes ouvrières*, he argued that the emergence of the working class from bourgeois 'tutelage' signalled the emergence of a class that 'now acts exclusively by itself and for itself'. Crucially, this was an example of the sort of secession, or '*scission*', that he had been defending in writings on federalism: 'to secede, legitimately, is the only means to assert our right, and, as a political party, to have ourselves recognised'.[121] The means to this end was mass abstention in national elections.

In supporting division and sub-division, exit acts as a non-ideal constitutional bulwark against domination. As Whitaker puts it, the ideal was to limit the 'self-destructive' effects of democracy by protecting property 'decentralized into hands of the people as producers' against 'the democratic despot' that would put it in the hands of the owners against the majority.[122] The imperfection was the producers' readiness to resist democracy for the federation.[123]

[120] Calderon 1910.
[121] Proudhon [1865], *OP*, *De la Capacité*, 185.
[122] Whitaker 1983, 30.
[123] Decentralised federation also disincentivises the emergence of 'mutual protection agencies', by meeting what Robert Nozick describes as the inconveniences of the state of nature (Nozick

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To sum up: in Elazar's terms, Proudhon's template can be described as a 'grand design', an arrangement 'created out of a series of building blocks or self-governing cells from the smallest, most intimate connections to the universal commonwealth'. Each of these is 'internally organized and linked to others by some form of consensual relationship' and 'oriented toward some form of consensual relationship […] some higher end of human harmony'.[124] Critics charge that his 'central idea' is 'vague and problematic in its institutional form'.[125] Yet the fuzziness was a function of Proudhon's commitment to anarchy. Decentralised federation broke 'categorically' with unitary constitutionalism and resisted what Tierney calls the 'legal-normative conception of modern politics to one state, one constitution, one people'. He aspired to set the 'collective, territorially located sites of constitutional personhood' against 'the plurality of government' and the 'constitution of the state'.[126] Proudhon blurred the distinction between treaty and pact but admitted of no 'singular legal act' structuring the federation.[127] His aim was to meet the task that Rousseau had set himself and, in Proudhon's view, had miserably failed to achieve. This was to devise a political association that would defend the 'whole common force, the person and goods of each associate' and 'while uniting himself with all' ensure that each obeyed themselves alone 'remain as free as before'.[128] The trick, Proudhon argued, was to accept anarchy. Divisibility, symbolised by the commitment to individual sovereignty, was the key. In distinction to the social contract, decentralised federation achieved unity or social

2012, 12–15). In preserving equality, it further undercuts the disintegrative effects of 'libertarian exit', the drive of 'independent, sovereign, and private countries', to release themselves from big government and the 'threatening rabble' (Craib 2022, 13). Federico Ferretti discusses the anti-capitalist dimension of decentralised federation, distinguishing anarchist initiatives from Hayekian evolutionary economics and related market-led schemes that equate decentralised federalism with the relaxation of government controls and unobstructed competition (Ferretti 2016).

[124] Elazar 1979, 4.

[125] Whitaker 1983, 31.

[126] Tierney argues: 'Federalism is a categorically different model of rule from unitary constitutionalism. It is based upon collective, territorially located sites of constitutional personhood, manifest in a plurality of governments embedded within the constitution of the state, rather than upon a uniform and unitary conception of the demos encapsulated in one governmental form'.

[127] Beaud disagrees: 'all Federations rely on a *constitutional compact* that is known as a *federative compact*. In other words, this compact seems to be the proper way, in legal terms, to think the relation between the idea of a Constitution and that of a Federation understood as a political form. In the same way that there is a single federative type, which entails rejection of the opposition between the Federal State and the Confederacy as identification of federalism, so also there must be a single legal act structuring the Federation. In other words, the federative constitution – that is, the federative compact – enables the classic distinction between the federal constitution and the confederal treaty to be done away with' (Beaud 2017, 34–35).

[128] Cited in Noland 1967, 35. The symmetry between Rousseau and Proudhon's ambitions and their divergent solutions are expertly discussed here.

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cohesion by means of the establishment of mutually agreeable contracts, agreements, exit penalties and the pursuit of redress. Whether these took the form of bilateral agreements between individuals or groups, or between cities, states and regions, association is agreed consciously, consensually, and is always open to change. At the same time, federation is not reducible to the constituent groups or individuals because individuals define community loyalties through their association. As Patrice Rolland puts it: 'The federation becomes the salvation of the people; it also saves man by dividing him from the tyranny of his morals and from his own madness'.[129]

As we discuss below, Proudhon's template was modified and adapted following his death. Yet as Colin Ward argued, decentralised federalism, what they both called the 'confederation of confederations', has remained a mainstay of anarchist sociology for over 150 years.[130]

Variations in Decentralised Federation

The Paris Commune of 1871 and the break-up of the IWMA cemented the most significant modification to Proudhon's model.[131] At the point when anarchists began to refine their organisational practices, now in opposition to Marxist social democracy, decentralised federation was communalised. As Engländer wrote, the Commune became a test of the federal principle, and a 'germ of an organisation of society', the 'egg of society', which stripped 'national representation of its sovereign power'.[132] The modification of Proudhon's template, which we track in Bakunin's thought, prompted a debate about the status of workers' associations and what became known as the prefigurative politics of decentralised federation.

Inheriting Proudhon's mantel, Bakunin promoted decentralised federation as a communal process. In 1866, a year after Proudhon's death, he set out an elaborate, labyrinthine conception of decentralised federation in the 'Revolutionary Catechism'. It called for the internal reorganisation of each country based on the 'absolute freedom of individuals', productive associations and communes and the right of self-determination for each nation, people, region, province and commune, however small or weak. Union, as Proudhon had argued, would result from the 'mutual attraction of the parts' and 'internal local necessities' judged only by those units. Each entity would conclude its own alliances and unite or separate according to its own 'will and needs' and without regard for any 'so-called historical rights of the political, commercial or strategic needs of states'.[133]

[129] Rolland 1995, 61.
[130] Ward 1992. See also Adams 2023.
[131] On the political dispute, see Angaut 2007.
[132] Discussed in Engländer 1873, 151.
[133] Bakunin 2000, arts 66002AEF, N (1), f. 24. Trans. Dolgoff, Bakunin 1980, 85.

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An interesting reminder of Proudhon's 'Political Catechism' (1858),[134] Bakunin's 'Revolutionary Catechism' described the 'autonomous commune' as the 'basic unit of all political organisation'. It would elect its own 'functionaries, lawmakers and judge' and administer 'communal property and finance'. It would have the power to create its own constitution and laws but could only be part of the 'provincial federation' if these were consistent with the 'fundamental principles of the provincial constitution' and 'accepted by the parliament of the province'. Further, communes were obliged to 'accept the judgments of the provincial tribunal and any measures ordered by the government of the province'. Communes refusing to accept the provincial laws would not be entitled to its benefits.[135]

Bakunin's post-1871 conception, though largely consistent with this early outline, had a looser feel. Instead of constitutional alignment, he spoke instead about 'spontaneous organisation of work and collective property' by the 'freely organised and federated productive associations'.[136] Emphasising the differences between his conception of federation and Marx's idea of the centralised 'worker's state', he argued that 'the masses', groups, communes and associations, would destroy the state by putting an end to the 'iniquities enshrined in legal law' and what he called its associated cults.[137] The 'future social organisation' of society could only be realised 'from the bottom upwards, by the free association or federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal'.[138]

The next generation of post-Commune writers, including Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus and Landauer, further relaxed the structures of decentralised federation and simultaneously thickened the social relationships. Kropotkin took his cue from the Swiss watchmakers he met on his first visit to western Europe in 1872. Writing in his memoirs, he described decentralised federation as the idea that: 'Each nation, each separate region, and even each local section had to be left free to develop on its own lines'.[139] Turning to the social relationships, he described the trust that the Swiss workers vested in their association, 'the love with which they spoke of it, the sacrifices they made for it'. Federalism, he noted, had an 'elevating influence' exercising a profound 'effect' on 'their minds':

Every day, week after week and year after year, thousands of workers gave their time and their money, even went hungry, in order to support the life of each group, to secure

[134] For a discussion of the latter, and its link back to Comte's *Positivist Catechism*, see Prichard 2013, 137–138

[135] Prichard 2013, art. 66002AEF, II K f. 17.

[136] Prichard 2013, art. 71009, f. 4.

[137] Prichard 2013, art. 71009_EF, f. 16.

[138] Prichard 2013, art. 71009_EF, f. 20. Trans. CIRA, Bakunin, Michael 1971. Élisée Reclus argued similarly that the anarchist idea of the International, 'No Gods, No Masters' became a 'living reality' in the Paris Commune (Reclus 1898, 251).

[139] Kropotkin 1899a, 281.

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the appearance of the papers, to defray the expenses of the congresses, to support the comrades who had suffered for the association, – nay, even to be present at the meetings and the manifestations.[140]

In another iteration of the idea, Kropotkin globalised and pluralised the commune to transform the federation into an association without frontiers or borders. Commune organisation forged egalitarian connections between territorially located groups, as well as within them, building an infinite number of cross-cutting communities of interest. Individuals would group together with other like-minded individuals scattered 'over a thousand towns and villages'.[141] Later on, he described the commune as 'an oath of mutual aid'.[142]

This communal sharpening of federalism accentuated bottom-up federal processes and produced two distinctive modes of organising, variously tuning federalism to workplace or municipal organising.[143]

The 1907 International Anarchist Conference exposed the broad lines of fracture within the anarchist movement. In resolving that syndicates were the 'living germ of the society of to-morrow'[144] the Conference sparked a debate between Errico Malatesta, a syndicalist sceptic, and Pierre Monatte, the champion of the anarchist syndicalism.[145] Malatesta charged syndicalists with privileging workers over non-workers, ducking fears about workers' nationalist and patriotic proclivities and subordinating mutual aid to worker solidarity, thus overplaying the workers' anarchist sympathies and narrowing anarchism's moral vision.[146]

For the syndicalists, Monatte conceded the risks of 'centralisation' and 'officialdom' in workers' organisations and the need to inject into syndicalism 'a clear understanding' of what the aspiration for social revolution entailed.[147] Syndicalism, he argued, offered anarchists a natural home: syndicates were workers' organisations, mistrustful of politicians and suspicious of parliamentarism; they offered a clear path to social transformation. To address Malatesta's qualms about workers' education, he argued: 'Every strike is a lesson in revolutionary action'. The revolution would not come 'before the workers know their power', but through its exercise, driven by the educative force of social solidarity.[148] Monatte's position, later echoed by Rudolf

[140] Kropotkin 1899a, 277.
[141] Brown 1944, 5.
[142] Kropotkin 1972a, 159.
[143] Although the overlaps were telling, twentieth-century activists have tended to present them as alternatives.
[144] *The International Anarchist Congress Amsterdam* 1907, 21.
[145] As was Kropotkin. See his preface to Pataud and Pouget 1990, xxix–xxxvii.
[146] *The International Anarchist Congress Amsterdam* 1907, 18. Malatesta also worried that syndicalists presented the general strike as a proxy for revolution, thereby misleading workers into thinking that 'they could do things without fighting' (Pataud and Pouget 1990, 19).
[147] *The International Anarchist Congress Amsterdam* 1907, 16.
[148] Pataud and Pouget 1990, 15.

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Rocker, was that syndicalism engendered solidaristic collective actions capable of transforming workers' ambitions.[149]

In the 1940s, when European anarchists considered how to rebuild their movements after the crushing of the Spanish Revolution, Tom Brown and George Woodcock fleshed out two contrasting organisational plans.

Writing under the byline 'The Commune', the antifascist labour organiser Tom Brown produced a matrix to describe anarchist syndicalist federation. The vertical axis united workers by trade, from local factory or job committee to district and national Councils of Labour. The horizontal axis united them by locality. Job committees were part of local federations of syndicates. Workers in each 'factory, mine, shop, garage, or other place of work in any one town or locality' would be 'affiliated to the local federation' such that 'any city, town, or group of villages may have an organisation representative of engineering works, railmen, busmen, teachers, shop assistants, tailors, municipal workers, builders, clerks, musicians and other workers'. The composition varied according to the geographic location of industries, and it included unemployed, housewives and small groups of 'odd trades'.[150] But the syndicalist constitution was designed to align labour organising and local community action.

Responding to what he described as the 'continued moribundity of syndicalism',[151] George Woodcock, the future historian of anarchism, rebooted the commune as a federative idea based on co-operation and designed to 'co-ordinate and secure the efficient running of public services and to give expression to the wishes and needs of the people'.[152] Anarchism, he argued, could not 'succeed as a negative doctrine of industrial struggle' or with 'a syndicalist idea of organisation […] influenced by capitalist ideas of monolithic centralism'.[153] While the commune included the organisation of producers in factories and workshops, the richness of 'communal life', he argued, sprang from the connections individuals established as consumers and through shared interests in, for example, 'sport, art and sciences'.[154] Making local associations organised for the 'satisfaction of the social necessities of life', the 'pivotal' units of organisation, Woodcock recast the federation as the commune of communes: 'local community association', leading to 'regional and international federations of communes', providing the only 'sound foundation for international solidarity'.[155]

The historical lineages of these two concepts of decentralised federation are sometimes drawn to expose the looseness of municipal organising and promote organisationally robust workplace organising.[156] Anarchist practice suggests that

[149] Rocker 1989b.
[150] Brown 1944, 5.
[151] Woodcock, George 1947, 11.
[152] Woodcock, George 1947, 13.
[153] Woodcock, George 1947, 14.
[154] Woodcock, George 1947, 13.
[155] Woodcock, George 1947, 14.
[156] Skirda 2002; Van der Walt and Schmidt 2009a.

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the correspondence between modes of organising and formal structure is weak. As we show in Chapter 5, the Industrial Workers of the World was a federation on paper, but its organisational practices were slack. From our perspective, the dispute about communalisation reveals the depth of the practical challenges that decentralised federation poses. Proudhon's ambition was to constitutionalise anarchy, not to organise anarchists. The challenge of the anarchist vision is to augment the federation and multiply the associates without scaling up.

Evolution, Revolution and Decentralised Federation

In 1992, Colin Ward remarked that the 'evolution of the political left in the twentieth century' tended towards statism. The legacy of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin was dismissed as 'irrelevant' and the 'agenda for both federalism and regionalism' was set by the political right.[157] Ward's gloomy assessment accentuates the cognitive stretch required to imagine how anarchist constitutional practices shape and reshape global politics as Proudhon and others intended. In this final section, we consider evolutionary and revolutionary answers to this problem.

The first, outlined by Proudhon, used the international order to frame the process of federation. The second, expounded by Bakunin, proposed internationalism to transform the world order. The dissolution of the state and militarism and the kindling of a new spirit of independence, he argued, were the routes to the creation of a United States of Europe.[158]

As Kropotkin, Élisée Reclus and others argued, evolution and revolution can be conceptualised as facets of the same process, rather than alternative strategies or moralised positions. To show the applications of this conception, we explore Colin Ward and Ioan Bowen Rees's analyses of the European Union, subsidiarity and regionalism. For both, the European Union delimits constitutional possibilities, thus also revealing the scope for transformative action. This set of contemporary reflections not only contrasts with proposals for a United States of Europe in the nineteenth century but also draws attention to a concomitant lack in contemporary anarchist thinking.

Evolution

When Proudhon looked at the French Revolution, a seminal event in the history of constitutionalism, he described it as a dramatic but not a defining

[157] Ward 1992.

[158] Bakunin contrasted the independent spirit of 'Anglo-Saxon' America to the increasingly slavish European psyche. Resistance to Napoleon in Spain 1807–14 and in Russia in 1812 indicated that Europeans still had some fight (Bakunin 2000, art. 76001_EF). Proudhon argued against a United States of Europe and defended the South in the American Civil War, which also failed to endear him to his contemporaries. The United States of Europe, he argued, is either 'a trap or devoid of meaning' (Proudhon 1979, 53 n.).

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constitutional moment. In his view, it was the opening salvo in the general insurrection of peoples against the imperial orders of Europe. The storming of the Bastille had swept away the idea of divine right and opened a debate about the right to rule that would be resolved by reason backed by force. 'War', he argued in *Si les Traités de 1815 ont Cessé d'Exister*, 'had emancipated the subjects: it was necessary to reckon with them'.[159] The re-emergence of European peoples, signified by the Revolution, had generated 'a general renaissance in politics, political economy, public law, freedom and society generally',[160] that was uniquely constitutional: the second great constitutional era, following the Age of Atticus in 30 BC. Like the first period, this second period had 'inaugurated a period of peace', borne witness 'to a contemporary sense of general revolution and the willingness of heads of state to aid in this process'.[161] The innovation of the nineteenth century was to constitutionalise the new balance of social power, or *pouvoir*.

To explain, Proudhon argued that the Treaties of Vienna which committed Austria, Britain, Prussia and Russia to fight Napoleon until he was defeated, had been epochal. Rather than revert to a simple balance of power, or the Westphalian model, the Great Powers had been compelled to constitutionalise to contain the revolutionary and republican impulses of European peoples, radicalised by twenty-five years of war. In contrast, the Treaties of Westphalia, concluded in the aftermath the Reformation, the Peasant Wars, and the struggles for autonomy and superiority of the plural kingdoms and empires of Europe, had only marked the beginning of the secularisation of European politics, the balancing and sharing of sovereign powers between princes, papacy and Emperors, and the recognition of contingent territorial rule.[162] The Congress of Vienna had for the first time established the principle of political 'equilibrium' without the papacy; it was the first secular pact or treaty in Europe.[163] It was a de-facto federalist constitution which would persist for as long as independent powers balanced one another.[164]

Proudhon argued that the influence of Rousseauean nationalist republicanism had derailed this constitutional project. Nevertheless, the macro-federalist

[159] Proudhon [1863b], *OC*, vol. VIII, 255.
[160] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, 78–79, n.
[161] Proudhon [1863a].
[162] Proudhon [1863b], *OC*, vol. VIII, Chapter 2. On Westphalia and the myth of the sovereignty-based international order and the balance of power and perpetual peace between the Treaties of Utrecht and Vienna, see Osiander 2001; Ghervas 2017.
[163] Proudhon [1863b], *OC*, vol. VIII, 259. When Napoleon III pronounced the 1815 treaties dead, and the civilising mission of France in Europe and the world operative once more, world leaders worried about a new French Imperial era and war on the continent. Proudhon argued that challenging the 1815 balance of power and the latent 'solidarity' it presupposed was to regress to the simpler terms of the Treaty of Westphalia and the Thirty Years War, and the competing Empires' incommensurable claims to universal sovereignty Proudhon [1863b].
[164] Proudhon [1863b].

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constitution had opened an evolutionary path which, if deepened, promised to inaugurate a new era of pacification and constitutional reform. Europe could become a 'confederation of confederations'. Italy, Greece, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the Danube should first be reconstituted as federations to reflect their internal territorial and cultural diversity. The existing federations in Switzerland, Belgium, and the German Bund would be the model and the guarantor of those other federations, while Britain and France would, in time, need to follow suit, he thought. General disarmament would follow.[165]

Revolution

Bakunin's revolutionary defence of federalism dates to his call for a Universal Federation of European Republics in 1848. This was articulated within the context of his broader critique of imperialism and the virtues of pan-Slavism in the post-Imperial age to come. In his *Appeal to the Slavs*,[166] Bakunin argued that nations were organic and subterranean realities. Following Hegel and Herder more closely than Proudhon was able to do, he identified the constitutional dominium of the European empires as the barrier to change and promoted pan-Slavism as a political project to release the constituent Slav nations, rather than a regional politics of identity, as the solution.

Nearly two decades later, Bakunin called for a 'future Universal Federation of Peoples' to 'embrace the entire world'. This 'International Federation of revolutionary peoples, with a parliament, a tribunal, and an international executive committee', he argued, 'will naturally be based on the principles of the revolution'.[167] The twelve principles were predicated on a sound assessment of realities: Bakunin argued that federated states should not have standing armies, but should commit to providing collective security; all states should be sovereign, but all should also send a delegate to an International Tribunal that could adjudicate 'without appeal' on matters relating to the federation.[168] None of this would be possible, he argued, without a prior socialist and anarchist reorganisation of existing states and republics.

The following year, in 1867, Bakunin addressed the Congress of the League of Peace and Democracy, at Geneva.[169] Sharing the stage with Jules Barni, a French liberal, and two world-renowned figures, Victor Hugo and Garibaldi, he gave his fullest defence of a 'United States of Europe'.[170] The following year, restating the argument of the 'Revolutionary Catechism', he made this recommendation:

[165] Proudhon [1863a], *OC*, vol. VIII, 64. For more on the prescience of Proudhon's reformist ideas, see Amoudruz 1945.
[166] Bakunin 2000, art. 48020_ET.
[167] Bakunin 2000, arts 66002AEF, II N f. 23.
[168] Bakunin 2000, arts 66002AEF, II N (8) f. 27.
[169] For a critical account, see Carr 1935.
[170] Bakunin 2000, art. 68003_EF, f. 80.

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That all members of the League should therefore bend all their efforts toward reconstituting their respective countries, in order to replace their old constitution – founded from top to bottom on violence and the principle of authority – with a new organization based solely upon the interests, the needs, and the natural preferences of their populations – having no other principle but the free federation of individuals into communes, of communes into provinces, of the provinces into nations, and, finally, of the nations into the United States of Europe first, and of the entire world eventually.[171]

Bakunin identified 'political republicanism' as the major stumbling block to European reconstitution. Legitimised by politicians who put the glory of the nation above all else, it represented a continuation of *raison d'état*, led to exclusion and unity by means of command and domination. Only 'federalist republicans', who must also be socialists, atheists and anti-theologians, could realise the promise of European freedom, namely the creation of an 'international confederation' to defend and promote organic 'solidarity'.[172]

After the Paris Commune in 1871, Marx's removal of the General Council of the IWMA to New York and the unification of Italy and Germany, anarchists pursued Bakunin's revolutionary projects transnationally against 'German communism'. The first resolution of the Saint-Imier Congress of the Jura Federation in 1872, affirmed the autonomy and independence of the workers' federations as the 'first condition for the emancipation of the workers'.[173] The second delineated 'the pact of friendship, solidarity and mutual defence' celebrated by Kropotkin. It committed members to 'regular and direct communication and correspondence with each other, completely independent of any governmental control' and to the defence of 'Federations or Sections'. The third made the 'destruction of political power' the 'first duty of the proletariat' and tied 'free economic organisation […] based upon the labour and equality' and federation to the 'the spontaneous action of the proletariat […] of trades unions and autonomous communes'.[174] The resolutions were a rallying cry against Marx and for decentralised federal revolution.

Federalism in Europe

The difference between Proudhon and Bakunin's approaches to decentralised federalism was that Proudhon projected it as the fulfilment of the constitutional ordering of European politics, which conceded or reckoned with the prevailing inter-state balance of power, and Bakunin advanced decentralised federation against this constitutionalism. Later anarchists conflated these processes, downplaying the significance of the distinction. In 1898, Élisée Reclus wrote:

All advancements are interdependent, and in proportion to our knowledge and power, we desire them all – social and political progress, moral and material progress, and

[171] Bakunin 2000, art. 68003_EF, 5 f. 14. Trans. Dolgoff in Bakunin 1980, 104–105.
[172] Bakunin 2000, 68003_EF ff. 36–37. Trans. Dolgoff in Bakunin 1980, 118.
[173] Enkell 2018, 362
[174] Schwitzguebel et al. 1872.

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progress in science, art, and industry. In every sphere we are not only evolutionists, but just as much revolutionists, since we realize that history itself is but a series of achievements that follows as series of preparations.[175]

In the imediate post-WWII period, the language of survival was more familiar than the idea of evolution or revolution. Writing in 1947, Rocker argued: 'The only way out of the present chaos' and 'the only possibility for rebuilding the devastated countries' was to federate Europe as a 'first step' towards 'world federation, with equal rights for every people, including the so-called colonial peoples'.[176] Nearly fifty years later, Colin Ward lamented: 'The actual evolution of the political left in the twentieth century' had wrongly dismissed the legacy of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin as 'irrelevant' and so enabled the political right to set the 'agenda for both federalism and regionalism'.[177]

In survival mode, anarchists have engaged more readily in revolutionary activism, both communal and syndicalist, than with evolutionary constitutional design. Yet the tradition is not dead. In the 1990s, the signing of the Maastricht Treaty prompted Colin Ward and Ioan Bowen Rees to reflect on the principle of subsidiarity, and the Policy of the Regions from an anarchist point of view, and their assessment is instructive.

For Ward, one of the most prominent anarchists of the post-war period, the promise of subsidiarity and regionalism was their *realism*. This was revealed by the constraints imposed by the British Government. Subsidiarity had been negotiated into the treaty by Margaret Thatcher to prevent a 'European super-state exercising a new dominance from Brussels'.[178] Ward described her rhetoric as 'the language of delusion' and dismissed this prospect as utterly unrealistic. Following Proudhon, he argued that Europe was just too big to be a super-state: The realistic prospect was the one that Thatcher halted when she designated the Westminster Parliament the local unit of decision, to reassert state sovereignty. Subsidiarity, he argued, did not end there. Rather, it demanded the Europe of Regions, with its defence of minority rights and languages, and devolved powers.

Ioan Bowen Rees set out the full implications of Ward's position for minority communities in Europe in a detailed and extensive discussion published in Welsh in 1993. Unlike Ward, Rees did not identify with the anarchist movement and was a central figure in the Welsh nationalist movement during the 1980s and 1990s.[179] Nevertheless, Rees opened his argument with a defence of anarchist realism *and* idealism, noting that Proudhon in particular, took 'men

[175] Reclus 2013, 138. See also Kropotkin 1887a.
[176] Rocker 1989b, 160.
[177] Ward 1992.
[178] Thatcher cited in Ward 1992, np.
[179] Ioan Bowen Rees was the father of Gryff Rees, lead singer of the Welsh indie band Super Furry Animals. See Perrin 1999.

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as they are' and yet defended the rights of individuals to the end.[180] Proudhon, he remarked, had advocated for French regional devolution. This was a model for Welsh nationalism too. Proudhon may not have anticipated it, but the European Regional Development Fund was precisely the sort of structural adjustment that minority communities like Wales needed. Its implementation, filtered through the Westminster Parliament, only reinforced Rees's sense of its transformative potential. He imagined a Europe of 'around 200 regions'.[181]

The point to be taken from Proudhon, Rees argued, was that in a federation the centre's prerogatives must diminish as the federation grows, not the other way around. The principle of subsidiarity ought to have entrenched this principle, but Thatcher's resistance to the Policy of the Regions stymied its devolutionary promise.[182] Rees's Proudhonist decentralised federal alternative did not resonate with the Welsh left at the time. But it showed where anarchist revolutionary aspiration intersected with anarchic evolutionary change.[183]

CONCLUSION

This chapter opened with a militant reflection on the perceived threat of mob rule and used the idea of nonconformity to explore anarchist responses. It has been argued that the problem of anarchy runs far deeper than the threat of 'muscular individualism' or 'mobocracy'. In promoting its role as the arbiter of the recalcitrant, the sovereign state constructs its enemies and constitutionalises crisis and conflict to reaffirm its necessity. By describing politics as war, anarchists invert the critique of anarchy, that, if realised, would sanction might over right, permitting the domination of society by arbitrary will. Society is already constituted to defend and sustain the wills of key individuals and mobs, but these mobs are propertied elites, and key individuals are the oligarchs of global capitalism. As we argued in Chapter 1, constitutions reflect and entrench the specific inequalities and balances of power that prevailed at their inception. The association of war and politics, and the 'revolutionary ontology' that Proudhon devised to theorise this, suggested that the problems usually only identified in international relations were also fundamentally the problems of politics: war, conflict, uncertainty and anarchy.

[180] 'mae'n anodd meddwl am neb arall a allai gyfuno nwyd chwyldarol mor gryf gyda pharodwydd i wynebu'r ffeithiau am bobl fel y maent, ac ymwrthod unrhyw drais ar yr unigolyn' ('it is hard to think of anyone else who could combine such strong revolutionary passion with a willingness to face the facts about people as they are, and reject any violence against the individual') (Rees 1993, 151).

[181] Rees 1993, 172.

[182] Rees 1993, 164.

[183] It is impossible to explore other more contemporary examples here, for example, the Democratic Confederalism of Rojava, or the constitutional settlement of the Zapatistas. For a short discussion, see Graeber 2014.

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The solution that nineteenth-century anarchists proposed was federalism. Federalism is order in anarchy, not a state of being, or a political state, but a set of constitutional processes and principles that guide the mutual flourishing of individuals in societies. For the anarchists, it involved multiple sovereigns, it had no constituent moment or people and no definitive constitutional form. Decentralised federation extended and demanded the practice of shared self-government in every sphere of social activity. Within this process, it was possible to imagine that a confederation made up of federations which permitted 'some issues' to devolve to 'the central unit' and other flatter or 'interlocking' federations in which member units participated in or constituted the central body. The principle of individual sovereignty on which it was based allowed for both arrangements, if the collective agents were constituted by contract or free agreement in mutual aid.[184]

With the consolidation of Bolshevism, anarchist decentralised federation dropped out of socialist discourse. Traces of anarchism could found in at the margins of interwar constitutional debates, notably in pluralism and guild socialism.[185] In the UK, Bertrand Russell, Harold Laski and G. D. H. Cole excavated anarchist ideas.[186] Yet the dampening effects of the Red Scare in the United States,[187] combined with Soviet repression, abetted by European communist parties,[188] turned anarchism from a major contender in international socialism into an also-ran. In the longer term, Cold War publishing diplomacy sucked the air out of the left for seventy years.[189]

The rise of the counterculture and alterglobalisation movements in the 1960s and in the late 1990s and early 2000s reset debates about class and non-class inequalities, global power relations and the balance of social and political power. As we show in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, the historical frames of reference had all but disappeared, but the desirability of building 'from the bottom up', horizontalism and free agreement survived.

[184] Engländer 1873, 34–35.
[185] Laborde 2000.
[186] For a discussion, see Prichard 2011; Wyatt 2023.
[187] Zimmer 2009.
[188] Durham 1985.
[189] Pristed and Magnúsdóttir 2022.

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