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# Jaurès's *The New Army* (1911) as a Model of Strategic War Prevention

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## Abstract

The canonical reading of Jaurès's *L'Armée nouvelle* presents this work as an outdated reflection on the establishment of a socialist society supervised by intermediary bodies whose military training would be a major asset. Our reading goes beyond this historically situated approach to Jaurès's book. We show that *The New Army* is not just a response to the General Staff, even less a "theorisation" of the transition to socialism, but that its aim is to rehabilitate the founding principles of democracy (ancient as well as modern), which rests on the constitution of an army of citizens: The "proletarian-soldier" of Jaurès is none other than the "farmer-soldier" of the ancient city and of Year 2 of the French Revolutionary calendar, transposed to the Industrial Age. Relying on a game-theoretical model, we highlight that this defence of democratic principles is backed by a discourse of the economics of war prevention in terms of self-protection. **Keywords:** Jean Jaurès, War, Socialism, economics of prevention, Game theory.

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Jean Jaurès's *The New Army* is a disconcerting book. How can we, in 2023, interpret this 600-page volume, first published in 1911, which is very poorly constructed, dense and repetitive, but which nevertheless has a main theme, focusing on the armed forces, of course—in a flamboyant and slightly old-fashioned style—and on many other things: class struggle, the nation and patriotism, internationalism and the economy? A book that belongs to its era, published on the eve of the First World War, but which also sketches out a new form of military economy? In relation to war, Jean Jaurès has often been considered a pure pacifist, essentially opposing “war as the product of the dominant capitalist class” (Fontanel 1986, 176). In the historical analysis of Jaurès's position with respect to war, Bernstein (1940) sees *The New Army* as advocating a form of militia, and arguing for a revolutionary war as a way of defending the nation, effectively “war against war”, a logical *topos* in a pacific approach. The underlying assumption was that socialist states, eventually, would not wage war to each other (something which was later shown not to be empirically true: Bebler 1987). Nevertheless, “antimilitarists embraced the initial conception of the army as an institution of citizens in defense of the nation, but they could not accept militarism” (Propes 2011, 57), and for part of the French public opinion, there was a problem with *the* army, perceived as antirepublican, not with having an army in general.

The canonical reading of *The New Army* makes it the expression of socialist thought. Its original title is indeed significant: *The Socialist Organization of France – The New Army*. As the preface to the 1915 edition of *L'Humanité* points out:

This is a book full of political thought. *The New Army*, as we know, was to be, in the mind of its author, a preliminary work. Before explaining how he envisaged the French society of the future, before proposing the deep-reaching reforms that would prepare the transformation, Jaurès wanted France to be protected from all forms of aggression.

For, in the eyes of Jean Jaurès, socialism can only be built in times of peace. This is what he states in the first paragraph of his first chapter: “In order to accomplish its evolution towards entire social justice, to inaugurate, or even to prepare, a new order in which labour shall be organised and supreme, France needs, above all things, peace and security” (p. 5)<sup>1</sup>. Hence the need to set up a dissuasive force, capable of imposing peace: “a defensive organisation so formidable that every thought of aggression is put out of the mind” (p. 6). This dissuasive force

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<sup>1</sup>When the excerpts were available in the 1916 English abridged edition, we use these, but provide our own translations when that was not the case. The page numbers refer to the original 1911 French edition.

will be the nation in arms, made up of citizen-soldiers, the result of the symbiosis between the army and the nation, and where the proletariat will occupy the new place that it deserves.

Finally, the organisation of national defence goes hand in hand with the organisation of international peace: “For whatever adds to the defensive strength of France increases the hope of peace, and whatever success France attains in organising peace on the basis of law and founding it upon arbitration and right will add to its own defensive strength” (p. 21). Jean Jaurès strongly criticises the offensive strategy, carried out by “a smaller standing army” (p. 175); this strategy was favoured by the general staff at the time and which he considered suicidal, because “under the pretence of offensive action, the great strength of the nation in arms is eliminated” (p. 177). He counters with “that immense strength of the true defensive turning eventually into an irresistible offensive” (p. 177), which brings all energies to bear. The strategy defined by Jean Jaurès presupposes a complete reorganisation of the armed forces and a radical change of mindset, both in the military and in the working-class world.

*The New Army* was a premonition of the First World War’s characteristics: a massive commitment of fighting forces, the merging of active and territorial armies, the weight of the reserve army, the failure of the offensive and the blitzkrieg, and the virtues of defensive strategy. This visionary aspect has been recognized by some with a certain vision of future warfare at that time (Parent 2014), but the work is now essentially recognised as extremely dated, even obsolete, in terms of the organisation of society, military strategy and the citizens’ army (Desmoulin 2001).

This paper aims to reverse this interpretation. Exclusively adopting an historically situated reading of *The New Army*, which places it precisely in a given period, ignores the universal message of the book. Jaurès was not an economist, but his work is presented as a reflection on the economics of war prevention, if we define the terms “economics” as “the organisation of society allocating means (in this case, military means) to an end”, in this case, the defence of democratic society. *The New Army* is an economic reflection on the means of optimal allocation of resources with a view to the constitution of a dissuasive democratic army capable of preserving the peace. This universalist, future-oriented reading can also be supplemented with a past-oriented reading: the analysis of the historical motives and contextualisation of the work. Jaurès’s conception of war prevention evokes both the citizen-soldiers of the ancient city and the National Guard of 1789.

In our presentation of the work, we insist on one of the book’s unique characteristic, which has not yet been highlighted, which is that the defence of democratic principles is backed

by a discourse on the economics of war prevention, articulated around the central concept of self-protection.

We divide our analysis into three parts. Section 1 first recalls the reception given to *The New Army* on its publication, and allows us to describe its context. We also examine the many elements of the work that support a strictly socialist reading of it. Next, section 2 proposes a novel analysis of the work in terms of the economics of prevention as self-protection against war. We develop a formal game-theoretical model justifying this perspective. Then, in section 3, we explore the manner in which Jaurès allocates human capital in order to attain the desired configuration for his New Army<sup>2</sup>.

## 1 *The New Army as a Socialist Endeavour*

How has this work been perceived? We begin by looking into its initial reception, rather negative for many anti-militarists. Then, we take into consideration the significant elements of socialism that transpired in the book, and that have largely conditioned how it has been understood and analysed through time.

### 1.1 **The Reception Given to *The New Army*: Blacklisted by Anti-militarists**

When it was published, *The New Army* was met with a rather hostile reception. The Right criticised it for its pacifism and the Left for its militarism. To those who, like Maurice Barrès, thought that proletarians were essentially rootless, which would prevent them from being true citizens in the ancient sense, Jaurès describes a rooting that is not physical but cultural, a rooting not in the soil but in the fatherland as a project. To Barrès, who wrote in *Les Déracinés (The Uprooted)*, “That the poor should have a sense of their powerlessness is a primary condition for social peace”, Jaurès replied that the country was rich with the strength of the proletariat; thus, his book met no success from the right wing.

On the left, in a context of social unrest (revolt of the Languedoc winegrowers in 1907, strikes in Draveil and Villeneuve-Saint-Georges in 1908) put down by the army, Guesdists and trade unionists had more than mere reservations about the book. *La Bataille syndicaliste*, the daily newspaper printed by the C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labour), under the pen of Francis Deleisi, observed that Jean Jaurès’s project ran against the deep feelings of the proletariat, which

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<sup>2</sup>We disambiguate *The New Army*, Jaurès’s work, and the New Army, the military institution his book contemplates.

was anti-militarist. It condemned “militarism in schools” and considered that the so-called people’s army, supervised by professional officers, constituted “the most ingenious system for the military subjugation of one class to another”. In the eyes of the Guesdists and the anarcho-syndicalists of the C.G.T., Jean Jaurès was working in the interests of the war ministry and the bourgeoisie.

The harshest criticism came from Germany. The social democrat intellectual Max Schippel derided *The New Army*: “You can’t put a cannon in every old gunner’s bed and give every old sea dog a little warship to float around in his bathtub<sup>3</sup> . . .” The harshest criticism nevertheless came from Rosa Luxemburg in the *Leipziger Volkzeitung* dated 9 June 1911. Her first judgment was an extreme oversimplification. “This book,” she wrote, “is not an investigation of the objective conditions of modern militarism and its relationship to capitalist development, but only a penetrating discussion of the repugnant ideas and prejudices of French patriotism and its warmongering appetites.”

Rosa Luxemburg criticised Jean Jaurès for “introducing militarism into the whole of social life[. . .] It would be like a red thread running through all the institutions and even the party life of the socialist proletariat”. She rejected the involvement of the proletariat in military preparation, whether by sponsoring military gymnastics clubs, shooting clubs, practising open-air exercises or manoeuvres, or workers’ associations providing financial aid for the sons of trade unionists, mutualists and co-operators to train to become officers. Her condemnation was categorical and without appeal.

Luxemburg also accused Jean Jaurès of “chauvinist and petty bourgeois politics” arguing that, in his project, he armed only the soldiers of eastern France and not the entire army:

By this very fact Jaurès strips of its truly democratic and proletarian character his whole system of the ‘armed nation’ and makes it point towards Germany in an obvious way which is nothing other than a regrettable concession to the prevailing state of mind in France of chauvinistic and petty-bourgeois politics still haunted by the spectre of the hereditary enemy.

Rosa Luxemburg rejected any distinction between offensive and defensive warfare. Recourse to arbitration to settle conflicts seemed to her to be futile, and the ultimate recourse to popular insurrection envisaged by Jean Jaurès if a government did not want to accept arbitration was

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<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Jean-Noël Jeanneney in his preface to the edition of *L’Armée nouvelle* by the Imprimerie nationale, see Jeanneney (1992).

proof that war and peace were not questions of law but of force. Her conclusion is an unqualified condemnation of Jean Jaurès' approach: "To give in to the illusion that legal formulae can in any way prevail over the interests and power of capitalism is the most harmful policy that the proletariat can pursue."

The conflict that broke out in 1914 led to a completely different view of Jean Jaurès's book. In the 1915 edition of *The New Army*, the preface (which is anonymous but known to have been written by Lévy-Bruhl) sets the tone:

By reprinting, in the midst of the war, *The New Army*, we are not only satisfying numerous and pressing demands. We are paying the most deserved tribute to the prophetic foresight of its author. No one had foreseen like him the character of the formidable attack which threatened us. No one, above all, had shown, with the same luminous precision, the only way to resist it and to win.

Is the image of Jaurès as a "hero killed before the armies faced off", as Anna de Noailles wrote, combined with that of a strategist? This image, shrouded in a sort of sanctity, has long prevailed in the socialist imagination. Next, we take the work as our starting point in an attempt to identify its "elements of pure socialism".

## **1.2 Elements of "Pure Socialism" in Jaurès: Is the "Prolétariat's Involvement" what Makes the Army New?**

Our aim here is to identify the passages in Jaurès that undoubtedly establish him as a socialist thinker. It would be futile and incorrect to deny that *The New Army* has a strong socialist identity: we can even assert that in this book, Jaurès carries on a dialogue with Marx and seeks to characterise "his" socialism in opposition to that of Marx's *Capital*. It is even tempting to read *The New Army* as a metaphor of the socialist society advocated by Jaurès, and the recent publication of an issue of *Cahiers Jaurès* on the work gives great emphasis to this perspective (Buffotot 2013). The excerpts cited below are a good example of this. Ignoring or neglecting this dimension would be just as misleading as limiting our interpretation of the work to this dimension alone. In the following section, our reading of the work will move away from this single interpretation. For the time being, we will highlight the passages in *The New Army* that underline the author's "socialist" intent.

For Jean Jaurès, the working class “has nothing really to gain by putting its claims into brutal forms. It is under no figure of savagery that proletarian civilisation ought to appear before the world” (p. 448) and he serenely envisages a natural transition from capitalism to socialism.

Capitalism is not eternal, and by giving rise to a proletariat which is every day larger and more organised, it is preparing the force that will replace it. It becomes an obstacle, a force of resistance and reaction, as the elements of a new society develop and are organised; but it has been, throughout the period in which it has been built up, an immense force for progress. And even today, although its power of compression and exploitation is keenly felt by the rising proletariat, it remains a great force of movement. By stimulating and organising the productive forces, it increases the human patrimony which will become, through collective ownership, the patrimony of the workers themselves; and [. . .] it makes possible the revolution of ownership that will set men free. At no time is capitalism a pure force of resistance, an unmixed force of reaction (p. 451).

Even in the class struggle, in the eyes of Jean Jaurès, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat walk on the same path. He criticised Marx for having emphasised only the darker sides of the bourgeoisie, concerned only with increasing its profits and extending its empire. Jaurès reproaches Marx for having ignored “the part of human good faith, the sincerity of moral and social enthusiasm” (p. 457) which the bourgeoisie has shown at certain times. Indeed:

The bourgeoisie would not have had the strength to undertake and conduct, through terrible difficulties, the economic revolution, if it had approached it with a shrivelled and sordid soul, if it had not had faith in the final excellence of its work for the whole mass of men, in whom it was obliged to recognise brothers, according to Christ and according to reason (p. 462).

The very victory of the bourgeoisie overflows and surpasses it. Its ideas and events give society an impetus which goes far beyond purely bourgeois interests. On the other hand, the bourgeoisie is not uniform; it is “anarchic and diffuse” (p. 473) and, in the diversity of its elements, there are always those who are more in harmony with the new forces and sensitive to an expansion towards social justice. Thanks to its capacity to adapt, the bourgeoisie can permit broad evolutions without irremediable ruptures. In fact, the bourgeois class and the working class serve each other and collaborate in the preparation of a higher order. The bourgeoisie has taught the working people political action on a grand scale, the conquest of central power, and the control of the



state. It has also taught the working people that they must first rely on themselves. “The critique of the bourgeoisie has helped give form to scientific socialism. It forced the proletariat to free itself from idyllic socialism, to understand that a new society could only be constituted by great inner efforts by the exploited class” (p. 507).

Jaurès thus shows his gratitude towards the bourgeoisie, which was able to recognise its proletarian brothers and to be a driver of progress. For Jaurès, who was an expert classicist (he wrote his secondary PhD thesis in Latin), the way in which the bourgeoisie articulates itself with the proletariat rather than opposing it seems to stem from the perception of “bourgeois Athens”, and references to political organisation from Ancient Greece to the French Revolution. “In Germany as in France [in the nineteenth century], the relationship to the Roman world initiated a reflection on the state, whether it was the Republic or the Empire. Through the Greek *polis*, the question of political action and its place in society is raised” (Vidal-Naquet 1990, 161–210). This bourgeois Athens represents a living democracy, whose trade and luxury contributed to progress, as opposed to Sparta, which, during the Revolution, was admired by the Montagnards, the most radical political group. The aligned interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, and the recognition of the latter’s role in progress, can thus be seen as an echo of the way in which the representation of the ancient *polis* was constructed around the French Revolution, and in the years that followed. This particular perspective developed by Jaurès seems to be anchored in a certain reading of history, reflecting nineteenth century historiography.

Reciprocally, the working class brings to the bourgeoisie the spur of its demands, necessary for the movement and progress of industry. The bourgeoisie and the proletariat share the same culture and their thinking influences the other’s. The two antagonistic classes have a reciprocal interest in each having the greatest intellectual strength and reaching a higher solidarity where virtues will be the common good.

From this basis, and despite a widening of the class struggle towards “an absolute and aggressive internationalism, towards a class-based politics which is both universal and unyielding” (p. 510), “It is still possible that great transformations may be effected without any breach of continuity; we may yet have internal revolutions which will crush nothing and dislocate nothing” (p. 511). And Jean Jaurès states that: “A new economic balance of power is preparing, through a long series of passionate conflicts, which will get rid of capitalist and bourgeois privileges, but which will not shatter either the living forces of what we now call bourgeoisie, or the independence and individuality of different nations” (p. 511), with the democratically-constituted state playing the role of arbiter in class conflicts.

For Jean Jaurès, nationality and democracy have always been inseparable. In defending the independence of democratic nations, the proletariat defends its own freedom of action and its chances for the future. It is certainly necessary to push for the evolution of social justice, in universal peace and through the concerted effort of the workers of all countries, “but Democracy and Nation are, after all, the essential and fundamental conditions of any further and higher creation” (p. 545).

In these passages, Jaurès’s socialism is affirmed both as an ideal and, in economic terms, as a form of smooth transition (not violent as in Marx) from a capitalist society to the kind of stationary state of peace and universal harmony that would be socialism. The common reading of *The New Army* sees this dimension alone. Yet in our view, analysing the book only in this historically situated perspective (that of the pre-1914 march towards socialism) and interpreting *The New Army* as merely a search for the conditions of the transition from the capitalist system to socialism —as a sort of revisited “Marxist” theory of the movement and transition to socialism— is too narrow. This reduces the work to a mere historical curiosity, whereas it has an undeniable universal dimension, to the extent that its translation into English in 1916 was even paradoxically used by British liberals to justify their support for conscription army and mandatory military service (Jousse 2013).

As we will see, however, the work has in fact a more general scope that prevents it from being confined as an outdated episode in the history of socialist thought. This universalism of thought is served in a very original way by a discourse on the economics of war prevention.

## **2 Prevention Economics and War**

We examine the economic underpinnings of prevention, as it can be applied to war. We also develop a formal model that encapsulates this perspective.

### **2.1 The Principle of Prevention Economics in *The New Army***

Prevention is defined as “any act intended to avoid expected phenomena”. Since the seminal paper by Ehrlich & Becker (1972), economists have tended to distinguish between two kinds of prevention: *self-protection* and *self-insurance*. In this context, *prevention* can be defined as all actions carried out with the aim of preparing for or preventing the occurrence of certain risks, but also of minimising the negative consequences of their occurrence. The objectives of prevention

can therefore be either to reduce the occurrence of a risk or to adapt behaviour should the risk occur (Kenkel 2000).

Applying prevention or insurance logic to war requires some adjustments. War has, in fact, significant specific features. We can measure its financial costs *ex post*, but it is not “insurable” *ex ante* other than through a policy of prevention. In economic terms, war is a prime example of an uninsurable event and Jaurès defends the policy of self-protection as the only way to contain it effectively, as we will show with the formal model.

Starting from the founding model of the economics of prevention by Ehrlich & Becker (1972), which analyses the interaction of preventive behaviour with existing insurance systems, these authors distinguish three ways of responding to the occurrence of a negative event (in the case of Jaurès, this negative event obviously refers to war): buying an *insurance policy* to receive income in case the negative event should occur; undertaking *self-protection activities* to reduce the probability of a negative event occurring; and finally, undertaking *self-insurance activities* to reduce the magnitude of losses in case a negative event occurs. Ehrlich & Becker (1972) studied the choice between insurance and self-protection, on the one hand, and insurance and self-insurance, on the other. For Ehrlich and Becker, the more risk averse an individual is, the more he or she values each of the two instruments: insurance and self-insurance. These two instruments make it possible to limit financial risk by modifying the distribution of income; insurance and self-insurance are substitutes. Conversely, the relationship between insurance and self-protection seems more ambiguous. For Ehrlich and Becker, moral hazard arises only if the purchase of insurance reduces the demand for self-protection. If insurance premiums are fair and reflect the self-protection activities of individuals, then the individual or insured will continue to have an incentive to spend on self-protection, thereby lowering the price of insurance. In this case, there is no moral hazard. Insurance and self-protection activities are therefore complementary. In fact, this attitude towards self-protection will also depend on the price of preventive goods. If preventive measures are available at a lower cost, then partial insurance would be a possibility to reduce moral hazard. The partially-insured individual will still have an incentive to invest in prevention.

This concept masterfully characterises the project laid out in *The New Army*: a (re)organisation of civil society in the sense of self-protection in order to avoid, or minimise the probability of the occurrence of war.

## 2.2 A Simple Strategic Model for War Prevention

The notion of probability attached to the occurrence of war, which, we will argue, is what Jaurès wanted to minimise, is not something that can be simply modelled exogenously: war is a strategic outcome. In order to be able to represent the occurrence of war, we build a two-player game where each player represents a country, and can simultaneously decide whether to attack or not. This approach to modelling conflict is well established: see for example Schelling ([1960] 1980) and Boulding (1962). We only consider a single period; while Axelrod (1984) looked at the emergence of cooperation out of repeated games, in the context of war this would require the assumption of very long term decision and planning, which are not fully consistent with the observation of recurring wars. In many of these modelling approaches, pure strategies (that is, deterministic optimal choices) are often considered, such as in Maoz (1990) for example, leading to a variety of paradoxes. We focus on the potential for mixed strategies at the Nash equilibrium, which introduce randomness and will allow us to discuss such a notion as the probability of being attacked. Schelling addressed randomization to some extent, through the notion of surprise (Schelling [1960] 1980, 173–186); but we only consider it as an optimal strategic response.

More formally, we consider a strategic situation between two countries  $i$  and  $-i$ , or 1 and 2. Both countries are assumed to know the other’s characteristics, but not whether they will go for war or not, since that decision is taken simultaneously. We reason in terms of the differential utility (or disutility) of war relative to uniform peace. The base-case outcome is therefore this no-war “ideal” situation, of value 0. In the case where there is war, then there is a trade-off relative to that peace situation. We write the trade-offs for bilateral attack  $-b_i$  for country  $i$ , or unilateral attack  $u_i$  (if the other country is not waging war at the same time), or unilateral defense  $-d_i$  (if one is not waging war but the other is attacking). We assume that  $b_i > d_i$ : bilateral war is always more destructive than letting the other country pillage or exploit one. Also,  $u_i > 0$ , so that an undefended attack is a net positive for the attacker: the benefit of pillaging or exploiting the other country. The strategy followed by each country is written as  $S_i \in \{W, P\}$  (for war or peace). We write the payoff associated to a strategy  $\Pi_i(S_1, S_2)$  as a game, between countries 1 and 2:

		Country 2	
		$P$	$W$
Country 1	$P$	$(0, 0)$	$(-d_1, u_2)$
	$W$	$(u_1, -d_2)$	$(-b_1, -b_2)$

There are two pure strategies Nash equilibria in this game, where locally neither player would want to select another strategy: either country unilaterally attacks the other. In this symmetrical situation, without any coordinating mechanism, there is no way in which either country can be assured either equilibrium may be reached, however. Therefore, the only optimal approach that can be systematically followed, for both countries, is to play mixed strategies: randomize the choices optimally.

We write the probability that country  $i$  attacks as  $\pi_i$ . At the Nash equilibrium for mixed strategies, a player's probability of attack makes the other player indifferent, and this is sufficient to characterize the optimum of that equilibrium. Country 1's expected gains if they do not attack is hence equal to their expected gain if they attack, when the other country is also acting optimally:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbb{E}[\Pi_1(W, S_2)] &= \mathbb{E}[\Pi_1(P, S_2)] \\ -d_1\pi_2 &= u_1(1 - \pi_2) - b_1\pi_2.\end{aligned}$$

Solving, and noting that with our assumptions  $u_i - d_i + b_i > u_i$  we obtain, replacing 1 with  $i$  and 2 with  $-i$  since the problem is symmetrical:

$$\pi_{-i} = \frac{u_i}{u_i - d_i + b_i},$$

and  $1 > \pi_{-i} > 0$ . The expression for the probability of entering war for a country is driven by the characteristics of the opposing country. In this framework, randomness emerges as a result of optimal behavior. This Nash equilibrium shows that, with the parameters we selected, and in particular because bilateral war is very damaging, always attacking or never attacking is not an optimal strategy. The lower the gains obtained in unilaterally attacking another country (lower  $u_1$ ), the less likely it is that other country will attack, since there is a lesser necessity for it to reduce Country 1's utility in waging war. Also, the more one suffers in a bilateral war (larger  $b_1$ ), the lower the probability of being attacked: this is because it makes waging war less attractive to Country 1, and as a result Country 2 has less of an incentive to attack it with a high probability as a deterrent. Finally, a greater resilience to suffering a unilateral attack (lower  $d_1$ ) reduces the probability that the other country will attack, along the same underlying logic: it reduces Country 1's utility gain in waging war, and hence reduces Country 2's need for preemptive striking.

In this minimal setup, we can now more precisely define the notions of self-insurance and self-protection we conjured up earlier. Self-insurance, reducing the severity of a loss, would correspond to reducing  $b_1$  (we take the viewpoint of Country 1), that is the large amount of loss

suffered in the case of bilateral war, conditioned upon the occurrence of that very negative event. Self-protection, on the other hand, corresponds to reducing the probability of being under attack, that is reducing  $\pi_2$ . Paradoxically, if there was an insurance market so that  $b_1$  could effectively be lowered, it would in fact also increase the probability of being attacked at the same time, as we indicated above. In this strategic context, it seems like self-insurance, even if it was possible, may not be a good choice because of the signal it sends to the other country: “I don’t mind being at war”.

We will next examine how Jaurès effectively proposes to reduce  $\pi_2$  through his set of proposals, and how he measures the social and economic cost of implementing the measures in question. Indeed, Jaurès clearly conceives of prevention as *self-protection*: the enrolment of young recruits and their continued training through exercises throughout their lives is, in his eyes, a credible dissuasive preventive threat to the external enemy. Conversely, the book does not place itself directly in a perspective of *self-insurance*, which appears particularly well-founded and lucid on the part of the author.

### **3 The New Army as an Investment in War Prevention**

We give Jaurès’s book a new economic and strategic reading, and point out the perennial aspect of the principles he laid out. In this section, we show that he uses categories which, ahead of their time, belong to the theme of the economics of risk prevention. The quotations from the author that illustrate this dimension underline the modernity of the work. Jaurès mobilises, before its time, the major argument of self-protection as the only effective guarantee against the outbreak of war. Self-protection does not mean only deterrence as, unexpectedly, we show how *The New Army* promotes a more pacifist stance, reducing as well the optimal probability of attacking another country.

#### **3.1 Jaurès’s “Proletarian-Soldier” as Self-Protection Against War**

Jaurès drafted legislation to implement the principles of economics of war prevention which he advocates. “The Republic can, from this moment, call upon this comprehensive working-class thought if it wants to organise a truly defensive, popular and effective army” (p. 572). Article 16 of the bill submitted by Jean Jaurès to the Assembly emphasises this army’s purely defensive nature and the necessity, in the event of conflict between nations, to resort to arbitration: “The Army thus constituted, has *one single object, —to protect the independence and the soil of France*

*against all aggression* [emphasis added]. All war is criminal if it is not manifestly defensive; and it can be manifestly and certainly defensive only if our Government proposes to the foreign Government with which we are in dispute to settle that dispute by arbitration” (pp. 684-5). Article 18 calls on all governments of countries represented at The Hague Court to negotiate an arbitration procedure.

The major figure in Jaurès refers to the “proletarian-soldier”, which harkens back to the hoplite of ancient Athens and the “farmer-soldier” of Year 2 of the French Revolutionary calendar. Jaurès was highly critical of how national defence was organised. Despite appearances, the army was not the nation’s army. The active army —with soldiers garrisoned for two years whereas four times less time would be enough to teach them what they must know— was unworthy of its name. It was run by a caste, cut off from the nation, and trapped in a routine. The reserve army, which should have been the real active army, did not enjoy the place it should have; its potential energy was left undeveloped. “Hence military service, under the present system, provides a somewhat lazy education for the ‘Active Army’ and has a depressing and deadening influence on the reserves”, writes Jean Jaurès (pp. 48-9).

The roles must be reversed. The reserve was the army’s main force and should therefore become the real active army. The barracks should be a school to give the fresh recruit, in a few months, the necessary basic training. In the country itself, combat units should be organised, fully-staffed companies which would be periodically called up for training. This is how Jean Jaurès wanted to promote the nation in arms. The stark contrast that Jaurès highlights between professional armies and proletarian armies goes back to the social organisation of Ancient Greece, and especially the opposition between Athens and Sparta, according to the famous funeral oration of Pericles, recounted in Book II of Thucydides, which Jaurès must have known. In it, Thucydides emphasises what makes Athens powerful, in opposition to Sparta. In Athens, the citizens were not professional soldiers, but came from all walks of life: it was not preparation for war that distinguished the Athenians, but valour. The social organisation, moreover, did not create categories according to military specialities, despite their different degrees of prestige in the texts and literary references. In inscriptions, hoplites (bearers of heavy weapons) are not distinguished from the sailors or the peltasts (light troops who served in skirmishes or to harass the enemy) (Vidal-Naquet [1981] 2005, 125–149).

The bill that Jaurès tabled in the Assembly is significant in this respect:

- “All able-bodied citizens from 20 to 45 are bound to help in national defence. From 20 to 34 they are in the first line, thence until 40, in the reserve; thence until 45, in the Territorial Army”, according to Article 1 (p. 675);
- “The recruiting is done by districts; the citizens are drafted into units corresponding to their district of domicile”, Article 3 states (pp. 675-6);
- Soldiers are to receive continuous training. Article 4: “The education of the army will be in three steps: (a) preparatory (boys and youths); (b) recruit school; and (c) periodical after-trainings” (p. 676).

The notion of a non-professional army is based on weapons or combat techniques that exploit the lack of training of combatants. There is a parallel between the marching phalanx, in which men “just” had to hold their spears and march forward in tight formation (Hanson [1991] 1994), and men armed with rifles that only need to be pointed in the right direction. The transition to armies recruited from the broader population and armed with rifles began with the Thirty Years’ War in the seventeenth century (Bois 1993), but it was not until the metal cartridge and pyroxylated gunpowder were introduced in the late nineteenth century that a final degree of technical complexity was removed from the handling of the weapon. From this point of view, Jaurès was writing at the exact time when, after a long period that had emphasised the soldier’s skills, it was his valour that once again took priority. Thus, to a certain extent, Jaurès’s position on the subject of a conscripted army, as opposed to a professional one, can be seen as stemming from a reference to the classical world, which contrasts Athenian flexibility with Spartan mechanics, and from the military technological environment of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The education of children and teenagers, from 10 to 20 years old, was not to teach military movements and manoeuvres at an earlier age, but to give them what we would today call physical or sports education, to keep them in good shape. This physical education would be given by the officers of the units concerned, but teachers and doctors would also be called upon, as well as a Council of Military Development, whose members would be elected by universal suffrage and which would supervise the overall functioning of the units and would be involved in the promotion and posting of officers. The establishment of training for children and adolescents to prepare for military training may evoke Book II of Plato’s *Republic*, but it may also suggest Sparta, the model city for Plato. Jaurès was familiar with Plato’s texts, and also with the texts of Plutarch and Xenophon (who were more overtly hagiographic towards the Lacedaemonian city),



which constitute the bulk of the tradition on Spartan education (Kennell 2013). The myth of the very demanding training of young Spartans, taken away from their mothers at the age of seven to learn the art of combat from their peers, is now considered historically inaccurate, but it was a topic of study in the early twentieth century (Jeanmaire 1913).

In Jaurès's proposal, young men entering their twenty-first year would be called up for six months to a recruit school at the garrison centre nearest to their home, where they would learn military manoeuvres. The notion of a specifically military training, over a short period of time, for twenty-year-olds is reminiscent of the *ephebia*, particularly in Athens. A specific age group being separated from the rest of the population for a given period corresponds to a form of rite of passage, well attested in Antiquity (Vidal-Naquet [1981] 2005, 151–207). Jaurès's idea of the state providing for the physical education of children and adolescents, with a military aim, may therefore have been inspired by the historiography of his time about Sparta. Then, the evolution of this physical training into military training as the youngsters aged recalls the institution of *ephebia* in ancient Greece, also well known to nineteenth century historiographers.

In the thirteen years of active service required of them, soldiers would be called up eight times for exercises and manoeuvres. These manoeuvres, depending on their nature, would last 10 or 20 days. Each soldier would have his military clothes at home. Armouries would be set up in the main towns of each canton and in the largest towns. In the *départements* of the East, each soldier would have his weapons at home. This would be a nation armed and in a state of continuous mobilisation, capable of bringing its defensive force to bear against any external threat. The policy of self-protection through the continuous training of citizens' troops was, in Jaurès's view, a credible defence against external invasion.

There is a notable difference between the proletarian-soldier as conceived by Jaurès and the citizen of the ancient *polis*. While in Roman as well as Greek antiquity, the relationship to land was essential, notably for citizenship (the *metics*, who were not citizens, did not have the right to own land, for example), we can wonder how these explicit or implicit references to this past can be articulated with the fact that the proletariat, almost by definition, does not own land. The way in which the Athenian *polis* was perceived may in fact have played a role in minimising this disconnection from the land. In Victor Duruy's *A History of Greece*, first published in 1851 and reprinted for many years (Duruy 1851), this link to the land was ignored and the focus was on trade, industry and banking, which were more indicative of development. As an admirer of Athens, Duruy contrasted it with Sparta, which was "barren" (Vidal-Naquet 1990, 206–208). If we perceive the Athenian of the fifth century BCE as a poor craftsman or a sailor, without land

holdings, then it becomes much easier to imagine a parallel with the contemporary world of the early 20th century, either consciously or unconsciously.

There are very specific aspects in Jaurès's recommendations that drive the way in which one anticipates the model parameters would be affected:

- Widespread combat ability, albeit not at an expert level, along with rapid mobilisation potential;
- Particular attachment to locality and land, reinforced by the fact that the military districts keep people from the same place together.

The territorial links in this New Army, combined with everyone's ability to fight (especially with weapons at home) should be expected to reduce the negative impact of an enemy army attacking one's country by surprise. The attackers would be hindered at every step, and have limited ability to extract resources from the country, hence a reduction in  $u_2$  (the benefit of an unilateral war for the enemy), which contributes to reducing  $\pi_1$ , in comparison with the current army.

### **3.2 The “Proletarian-Officer” as an Investment in Human Capital for Greater National Self-protection**

Let us continue our reading of Jaurès's work in terms of the economics of prevention. Jaurès attached great importance to the training of officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). He wanted to take this training out of the special military schools and entrust it to the university, which would ensure a higher, more open-minded level and would break the army away from the caste to bring it into communion with the whole nation. Jaurès goes into great detail about the recruitment, training and promotion procedures for officers and non-commissioned officers. Let us simply remember that the officer corps are made up, on the one hand, of professional non-commissioned officers and officers and, on the other, of civilian non-commissioned officers and officers. Only the NCOs who were responsible for educating soldiers at the recruit school would be professional. One-third of the officers would be professionals and two-thirds would be civilians. Both would have the same prerogatives at the command level.

It is important for officers and non-commissioned officers to be recruited from all social backgrounds. It is necessary “that the elite officers can be recruited and are recruited. . . from the sons of the bourgeoisie, but also among the sons of the proletariat, and which keep the alive memory and the mark of their origins” (p. 382). Jaurès dreams of a democratic mingling of all

social elements in the military institution, beyond the fact that the working class would bear the burden of their education. Hence a vigorous appeal to workers' organisations:

Let the working-class friendly societies and trades unions and co-operative societies choose, from among the boys in the primary schools, such as have the best recommendations from their class-masters and their drill-masters; such as possess the most vigour and intelligence, and the greatest aptitude for a life of combined study and action. Let these boys, supported partly by the workmen's societies and partly by the nation, be sent to the higher schools and to the University for their degree in military science; then there will be a visible bond between these young men and the permanent Labour organisations of the country. These officers, while they rise, will feel that they are not leaving the great working class (p. 383).

And Jean Jaurès insists. The idea may seem strange to involve proletarian organisations in the training of army cadres. But "it is through organisation that working-class strength asserts itself and prepares the new destiny; the only truly national army, the only true people's army, is that which will be able to welcome these new social forces and adapt to them by appropriating them" (p. 384).

This social "intermingling" proposed by Jaurès in the functioning of the New Army can be put into perspective by noting its links to Greek antiquity through aspects that were well-known in the late 19th century. In 508 BCE, Clisthenes introduced a large number of innovative political reforms, which laid the foundations for Athens' democratic development in the following century. One of the most important aspects was the intermingling of all levels, with random groupings of elected officials from different social echelons having to work together to ensure the functioning of the city. Recent analyses of this *modus operandi*, and of its military, imperialist and economic effectiveness, show that the restructuring of the political system following Clisthenes' reforms was consubstantial with Athens' economic and military success. It has been shown that it was precisely this intermingling that, by forcing decision-making to be decentralised and information to be shared, allowed for greater responsiveness and efficiency of the whole system (Ober 2008, 118–167). By breaking the traditional ties between members of the same tribe and introducing randomness in the attribution of responsibilities, Clisthenes' reforms forced Athenians to collaborate by sharing the private information available to each of them: "Athenian government can best be understood as a complex and effective machine designed [...] to identify and collect relevant social and technical knowledge" (Ober 2008, 133). The democratic intermingling of all social elements that Jaurès calls for thus seems to be directly inspired by the

revolutionary reforms that Clisthenes had enacted, which had somehow torn the citizens away from their autochthonic references, and to benefit from the same advantages, i.e., from the fact that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts thanks to the combination of diverse perspectives.

Thus reorganised, by mobilising and amalgamating all the forces of the nation democratically, the army, “not for the benefit of a class or for the creation of a spirit of aggression” (p. 201), will be able to respond to its “sublime object: for the preservation of national security and the free development of social justice” (p. 273). In this way, Jean Jaurès positions the organisation of a New Army in the continuity of the French Revolution. He devotes a long chapter—the longest in the book—entitled “Militarism and Democracy<sup>4</sup>” to the establishment of a social republic, which would be an extension of a political republic, resulting not from a break with the past but from a natural evolution.

At the beginning of this chapter, Jaurès returns to the necessity for the proletariat to occupy positions in the hierarchy. The army has until now been merely an instrument in the hands of the bourgeoisie, the instrument of internal repressions and external colonial adventures. The proletariat must become involved in its hierarchy to transform the military institution and make it truly the instrument of the whole nation. It can only do this from within, hence the need to occupy as much of the command as possible. “The proletarian and socialist spirit, with which the mass of artisans and peasants is inoculating the army” (p. 444) means that this mass “would not be a tool fit for every design” (p. 444). Therefore, the organised proletariat must provide as many new officers as possible for the New Army.

In our understanding, changing the way the officers’ corps is formed, Jaurès also changes their perspective on war. In the traditional army, and in particular with career officers, the notion of glory in combat would be of some existential importance. In the late 19th century and early 20th century, France had developed substantial armament driven at colonizing weaker countries (Bernstein 1940, 128). In contrast, the officers formed from the proletariat are not likely to have a family history to represent, for example. One important consequence is that the officers in the New Army should be much less likely to be willing to march on another country in order to carry out their existential goal of being in combat. Hence, this new moral setup of the New Army’s command is expected to reduce  $u_1$ , the gains in waging unilateral war, which again reduces

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<sup>4</sup>The title of the French version is: “Le ressort moral et social. L’armée, la patrie et le proletariat”.

$\pi_2$  in turn. The “proletarian and socialist” spirit Jaurès refers to is therefore important in the construction of this New Army as an optimal war prevention organization.

### **3.3 A Theorist of the “Social Return” of Investment in Human Capital: Handling the Cost of War Prevention**

Referring to the model by Grossman (1972) is useful to tackle the self-protection dimension of the preventive approach which runs through and characterises *The New Army*. Grossman introduces the concept of “health capital” and shows that it differs from other forms of human capital. This model is based on the idea that a patient is born with a stock of health capital, which she manages until death. Investment in health can therefore be seen as a demand for prevention; such investment increases the amount of time in good health that the individual can devote to production and consumption activities, and compensates for the loss of health due to the depreciation of the stock of health capital with age. For Jaurès, military, athletic and educational activities organised at all ages for those who can be mobilised (in schools, universities, and active or reserve armed forces) will maintain citizens’ strength and the dissuasive force of the citizens’ army. More generally, military training is presented as an investment by the nation in human capital.

If we define human capital as intangible capital embodied in physical persons, which can be increased by physical preparation, health care and training, a form of capital with a measurable return that may differ at the individual and at the aggregate levels, then this notion of human capital plays a central role in Jean Jaurès’s argument about the transformation of the army and the country. The idea is first presented in negative terms: if the reward for the training of officers were not sufficient, then many potential officer candidates would “turn away from a thankless career” (p. 344). Jaurès demonstrates his elitism by explaining how the levelling down of the entrance examinations for officer training schools would be harmful because “the most capable would perhaps be repelled by a superiority which would never have the opportunity to assert itself authentically and which could neither show its measure nor find its reward. Only those for whom study is a fully disinterested and self-sufficient joy would continue with a strong mental effort of spirit...” (p. 346). In contrast, we understand here that since education is costly, it must be sufficiently rewarded, otherwise the only people who study are those who do it for their enjoyment. More generally, Jaurès asks straightforwardly: “What is the use of the high education of the early years if it does not, all things being equal, provide a man with true superiority [...]?” (p. 375). Of course, there can be no question in the thinking of a socialist theorist of a selfish

superiority, so the author endeavours to show that the formation of human capital benefits not only the individuals but also the proletariat, and of course the nation as a whole.

From the individual point of view, in *The New Army*, Jaurès intends to establish a system of incentives to attract the nation's elite to the army: "Advantages will be given to military students during their university years, their living expenses will thus be covered by the nation and the various groups that I have mentioned, and a promotion bonus will reward this first substantial effort sufficiently to ensure that an abundant elite will sign up for the various competitive entrance examinations for the military education section" (p. 389). Contrary to the practices he had observed<sup>5</sup>, Jaurès pleads for *continuous* training: "at each fresh step in promotion, a fresh educational effort is demanded from the citizen thus promoted" (p. 299). This is a decisive argument in favour of investing in human capital: "We do not want all the education, all the mental work of the officers, to take place only during these university years. We want their education to be personal, we want their learning to last as long as their careers, we want staggered courses and a virile habit of personal work to keep their minds sharp" (p. 388). Jaurès thus describes the initial and continuous training of army officers as a form of investment. As for returns, Jaurès distinguishes between private returns (i.e., higher pay for the highest ranks), and the "social return" (p. 384). This "social return" comes not only from the fact that a national army made up of well-trained officers is more effective, but also that this army, because it comes from the working classes, expresses both the genius and the vital energy of the proletariat. In Jaurès's view, this combination is invincible. The result is a rise of  $b_2$  in our model, the penalty to the attacker, resulting in falling probability of attacking the enemy, *i.e.*  $p_1$ .

The idea that the nation should invest in the training of officers to benefit from a more effective army might appeal to the bourgeoisie calculating in economic terms, but in Jaurès's time, the army was helping to put down a working-class movement. The socialist thinker therefore had to prove to the proletarians that the officers, in particular, could be loyal to them: "There is only one way of ensuring that the working classes shall have their own men in the army, unceasingly penetrated with working-class influence and spirit. They must themselves undertake, in fact, the burden and control of these young officers' education" (p. 383). Jaurès intends to reassure the proletarians about the loyalty of the army officers whose training they will have paid for. To do this, he clearly measures the *social cost of officer training*, which was no longer just the individual efforts mentioned in the previous quotations, but also all the costs of schooling and

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<sup>5</sup>He points out that "in France, [...] the whole educational effort is too often concentrated upon the first years of the officer's career" p. 299.

living expenses for the students. This investment is profitable both for the working class that has agreed to the expense – the return for its investment is a loyal army – and for the nation as a whole, which benefits not only from better trained officers but also from the vital energy of the proletariat through these officers who will know how to mobilise their men at the moment of combat. Jaurès’s entire *New Army* is in fact a plea to show both his party and the nation that the social return on investment in the training of officers (and non-commissioned officers) is far greater than the individual return, which is already positive since those who can afford to make this investment are already doing so: by giving other social categories the means to become officers through training (i.e., through investment in their human capital), Jaurès is showing all stakeholders that they will gain something. As he intends to persuade all stakeholders to support his project, Jaurès adopts the language of enlightened self-interest, and to demonstrate the advantages of training more officers, he cites the individual and social return of such training. From this very special point of view, it is therefore unsurprising that he foreshadows the theory of human capital. This project of a New Army as an investment by the Nation as a whole and by the proletariat in particular is a public policy to respond to the demand of the whole Nation for prevention against war. The programme laid out in *The New Army* is, in fact, a public offer of self-protection against war.

Of course, the investment in human capital may be lost in case of war, and  $b_1$  may thus rise: this tends to lower the probability of being attacked,  $p_2$ . There are thus costs, gains and losses that must be balanced. In the context of the model we developed earlier, the expected gain given a set of parameters can be calculated. The expected gain for Player 1, which at the optimum is the same whether they attack or not, is:

$$\mathbb{E} [\Pi_1] = -d_1\pi_2 = -d_1 \frac{u_1}{u_1 - d_1 + b_1}.$$

This value is negative: the fact that there may be war always makes things worse. However, the degree by which this expected payoff is negative is reduced by the various organizational strategies developed in *The New Army*, as we have discussed. Jaurès’s argument, hence, can be expressed as factoring in the strictly positive gain  $g_{\text{NA}} = \mathbb{E} [\Pi_1^{\text{NA}}] - \mathbb{E} [\Pi_1]$ , where NA signals the altered values due to the *New Army*’s recommendations. This difference can be written:

$$g_{\text{NA}} = d_1^{\text{NA}} \frac{u_1^{\text{NA}}}{u_1^{\text{NA}} - d_1^{\text{NA}} + b_1} - d_1 \frac{u_1}{u_1 - d_1 + b_1} > 0.$$

Jaurès’s argument, from the standpoint of building a defensive army, is that  $g_{NA}$  is greater than the actual cost of training the soldiers and officers of the New Army. There is, in addition to that trade-off, the gain from able to adopt a more pacifist stance, since the optimal probability of wanting to attack the other is also reduced.

The various ways in which Jaurès’s recommendations, in his analysis, contribute to reducing the occurrence of war through self-protection, are summarised in Table 1. The table shows Jaurès’s plans for the New Army, and their anticipated effects according to the formal model we have developed.

Table 1: *Summary of Recommendations from The New Army and their Effect on War Risk*

Recommendation	Effect on Parameters	Effect on War Risk
Army of proletarian-soldiers with recurrent training, reduce exposure to an invading army	Decreases $u_2$	Lowers probability $\pi_1$ of wanting to attack
Majority of proletarian-officers promoted on merits, unlikely to search for glory in war	Decreases $u_1$	Lowers probability $\pi_2$ of being attacked
Investment in human capital entails larger penalty for the attacker, but human capital loss for the country in case of war.	Increases $b_1$ , increases $b_2$	Lowers probability $\pi_2$ of being attacked, lowers probability $\pi_1$ of wanting to attack

## 4 Conclusion

What should we make of *The New Army* in 2023? Should we look at on Jaurès’s work with “the tender glance that we give to sepia-coloured images of the past”, as Jean-Noël Jeanneney so nicely puts it (but refuses to do so)? Can Jaurès be reduced to a “socialist Demosthenes” (Bernstein 1940, 134)? We have deliberately chosen to analyse the book from the innovative angle of the economics of war prevention, which appears to us to be the underlying main idea of the book, while bringing to light the numerous underlying classical references, most of them implicit.

Over the past century, warfare has mutated: nuclear deterrence has radically transformed the situation; the conscript army is dead in the West. The professional army has taken its place, with specialised intervention forces equipped with sophisticated equipment, carrying out expeditious commando operations. The enemy now seems to be scattered across nebulous terrorist organisations that infiltrate democratic societies. All this suggests that deterrence based on the nation in arms can be consigned to the dustbin of history. Our analysis has nevertheless



highlighted the modernity of *The New Army*: for Jaurès, the need to structure democratic society as an economy of war prevention reminds all those who have forgotten that the founding principles of democracy (ancient as well as modern) rest on the formation of an army of citizens.

In our view, Jaurès's 1911 book should be given less a historically situated reading in terms of the transition to socialism than a reading that underlines Jaurès's reassertion of the universal principles that organise any Republic (ancient or modern): arming its citizens is consubstantial with any democracy, its very definition and its strength. Our contribution to the rehabilitation of this largely criticised and neglected text is to highlight Jaurès's reference, ahead of his time, to an economy of self-protection against war. We argue that if the work still stands out, still sparking scepticism and misunderstandings, this is because its defence of a very classical conception of the Republic is backed by an "avant-garde" argument, falling in the register of the economy of risk.

The book is resolutely turned towards overcoming two paradoxes: on the one hand, the possibility of founding a hierarchy of necessity in a democratic society without renouncing its principles, and on the other, the idea that one country can simultaneously diminish the prospect of being either the initiator or the victim of a war of aggression. Jaurès resolves both paradoxes by showing to the right that a form of armed pacifism is the best self-protection against war, to the bourgeoisie that it is a rationally attractive investment, and to the proletariat that it is the way towards emancipation through peace.

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