



## “THE OLD” OR A NEW TYPE OF WAR IN FUTURE CONFRONTATIONS IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS? – A HISTORICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL PERSPECTIVE –

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*Even though the world is eager for peace, history shows that the war has always been present in international relations and there are no signs that any major change will occur in this respect. Therefore, research, analysis and debates on the war phenomenon have continued in all its aspects, including as far as its physiognomy and features are concerned. This study seeks to answer a few questions regarding the objective and subjective factors that have generated essential changes in the war phenomenon and the way this domain is seen by the military, security studies and irenology specialists and geopolitical and history analysts in the field. Is there not a dialectic of the new and the old, which intertwine in different proportions, depending on the geopolitical and historical specifics of the human groups (states or non-state actors) engaged in a conflict?*

*Keywords: cognitive warfare, strategic shock, military technology, military art, proxy warfare.*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the notion/concept of *war* has been used in such a wide range of meanings and representations that analysts, but especially historians, experience ambiguity when researching and comparing a twentieth-century conflict with a more recent one. In researching the conflicts of the last century, historians have operated with the notion of *world war*, *civil war*, *partisan warfare*, *guerrilla warfare*, *air warfare*, *cosmic warfare*, but also with an extremely vague term as representation and perception, that of the *Cold War*. Today's conflicts have thus acquired a multitude of meanings and representations not only in terms of description but also in terms of analysis. Today, we are informed that, in international politics, there are a series of conflicts whose representation is difficult to imagine not only in the perception of the general public, but also of specialists: *remote warfare*, *information warfare*, *hybrid warfare*, *liquid warfare*, *proxy warfare*, *surrogate warfare*, *vicarious warfare*, *political warfare*. Apparently, this multiplication of meaning leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon of contemporary conflict, but in reality, it increases the confusion in the collective mind of contemporary society.

In an attempt to reduce this confusion, some researchers have sought to identify both the transformations occurred in the essence of the war phenomenon and the ways and means belligerents use to achieve their goals. It followed the first great distinction in the specialised literature: the *old* type of war specific to the conflicts during the Cold War and before it and those wars waged after the end of the Cold War<sup>1</sup>. This distinction, although widely shared, cannot be a very useful tool in understanding the essence of the war phenomenon,

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<sup>1</sup> Mary Kaldor, *In Defence of New Wars, Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1-16, <http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.at/>, retrieved on 12 October 2019.



*For at least two centuries, if we take as a benchmark for the modernity of the war phenomenon the era of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire, there was a lively debate on the theory and practice of military confrontation, generated by the emergence of material and spiritual factors that played the role of turning point or produced a real shock to the world at that time.*

because it may be attributable “*more to the demise of readily available conceptual categories than to the existence of profound differences*”<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, information about new conflicts is incomplete and, most often, delivered with meanings and interpretations that are meant to justify or condemn them in the public opinion. The tendency to denigrate/justify recent or ongoing wars, especially when civil wars of other nations are compared to one’s own wars, is not new. In this sense, analyst Stathis N. Kalyvas found that this phenomenon was also found in the Anglo-American journalists when they presented in the media the Greek civil war<sup>3</sup>. This type of presentation of conflict and violence seems to indicate an ideological conceptualisation of war and, to some extent, a type of mystification of it. One might think that as long as the violence comes from “*correct*” sources/actors, exerting it is fair, correct and legitimate and the story of the war becomes legitimate. Otherwise, promoting violence to achieve political goals, as war was defined by General Clausewitz, will be irrational, brutal and savage<sup>4</sup>. It is not the sources that must be “*correct*”, but their aims and concordance with the system of widely shared norms and values of international law.

For at least two centuries, if we take the era of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Empire as a benchmark for the modernity of the war phenomenon, there was a lively debate on the theory and practice of military confrontation, generated by the emergence of material and spiritual factors that played the role of turning point or produced a real shock to the world at that time. These factors originated in the emergence of new weapon systems and combat technologies, in the changes produced in the organisation, training and leadership of the armies and, last but not least, in the emergence of rare evolutions/phenomena in international relations.

<sup>2</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, “*New*” and “*Old*” Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction?, in *World Politics*, vol. 54, no. 1, October, 2001, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> Fabio Andrés Díaz, *Wars Old and New: How Our Definitions Can Cloud Our Understanding*, <https://www.fragilestates.org/2014/03/13/wars-old-new-definitions-can-cloud-understanding-fabio-andres-diaz/>, retrieved on 12 October 2019.

## A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE WAR PHENOMENON AND THE WAY IT WAS PERCEIVED BY POLITICIANS AND MILITARY LEADERS

In recent years, all these factors, in different proportions and with different intensities, have manifested themselves in the contemporary society. From this perspective, the debates about changing the nature of conflict in international politics fall within the realm of normality for both theorists and practitioners<sup>5</sup>. Referring to this, military expert Thomas E. Ricks believes that, *“Taken together, recent changes in both the technological support of war and the nature of the enemies/adversaries we face have blurred the boundaries between what we have traditionally considered ‘war’ and ‘peace’, military and civilian, foreign and domestic, national and international”*<sup>6</sup>. This fact, in the opinion of analyst George Dimitriu, *“has led to a crisis in the field of strategic studies”*<sup>7</sup>, which has manifested itself through a wide debate of the war phenomenon and, at the same time, of the strategy theory and studies to decipher the way it manifests in international relations in recent decades. Military theory is *“the one that perfects the mind/thinking”*, and its final test is the ability to solve the problems that war practitioners will face on the battlefield. A special challenge for war theorists is that their work must serve both the present and the future. A theorist must study the past using the applied historical method. His goal is to become, in essence, a *“praxis theorist”* who simultaneously reflects on the past and contemplates the present, but always in an attempt to anticipate trends<sup>8</sup>.



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<sup>5</sup> George Dimitriu, *Clausewitz and the Politics of War: A Contemporary Theory*, in *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2018.1529567>, retrieved on 12 October 2019; Mike Wells, Nicholas Fellows, *Access to History: The Changing Nature Of Warfare 1792-1945 for OCR*, Hodder Education, 2017; David J. Lonsdale, *The Nature of War in the Information Age: Clausewitzian Future*, Frank Cass, London, New York, 2004; Mircea Mureșan, Gheorghe Văduva, *Războiul viitorului – viitorul războiului*, Editura U.N.Ap., București, 2004; Ove Pappila, *The Nature of War Today*, in *Kungl Krigsvetenskapsakademiens Handlingar och Tidskrift*, no. 4, 2008, pp. 69-73.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas E. Ricks, *The Future of War (II): As the Nature of War Changes, the Familiar Dividing Lines of Our World Are Blurring across the Board*, in *Foreign Policy*, 15 January 2014, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/01/15/the-future-of-war-ii-as-the-nature-of-war-changes-the-familiar-dividing-lines-of-our-world-are-blurring-across-the-board/>, retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>7</sup> George Dimitriu, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Evans, *The Continental School of Strategy: The Past, Present and Future of Land Power*, in *Study Paper* no. 305, Land Warfare Studies Centre, June 2004, p. 19.



After the first world conflagration ended, military theorists, great commanders, as well as politicians sought to understand what the physiognomy of armed struggle would look like in the future and find the right strategy to win the “next world war”.

Thus, in the field of academic research, but also of expertise, two great currents of thought have emerged. Theorists and, at the same time, prestigious strategists have appeared who believe that, from General Clausewitz to the present day, the nature of war has remained constant, but differs in time and space, depending on how it unfolds/ is waged by the belligerents. They are challenged by those who believe that, nowadays, it is possible for a classical/state or non-classical actor to achieve the political goals of a war without resorting to physical violence and armed confrontations, with casualties and material damages<sup>9</sup>.

The historical analysis of the conflicts of the last hundred years does not agree with any of the “sides”, because it is difficult to discern the form of a future conflict. Before the outbreak of World War I, which killed millions on the battlefield, works and studies on the war were written, which sought to predict what the future war would look like in international politics, under the impact of the second industrial revolution<sup>10</sup>. How many of the military and political analysts were able to predict the physiognomy and, especially, the duration of the First World War? Both belligerent sides have drawn up plans for a war in which victory could be achieved in a very short time<sup>11</sup> and with little losses/small costs<sup>12</sup>. The harsh reality showed that the projection did not match the developments in the theatres of military operations. It was a long war of attrition.

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<sup>9</sup> George Dimitriu, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, p. 2.

<sup>10</sup> Colonel (r.) dr. Vicențiu Cojan, *Arta militară în Primul Război Mondial*, Editura Academiei de Înalte Studii Militare, București, 2002, pp. 40-79; William McElwee, *The Art of War: Waterloo to Mons*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1974, pp. 106-146; Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War*, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1983, pp. 97-129; Archer Jones, *The Art of War in the Western World*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1987, pp. 387-434.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph A. Karas, Joseph M. Parent, *World War I, in Theory*, in *Politique étrangère*, 2014/1 (Spring Issue), pp. 16-17.

<sup>12</sup> Jack S. Levy, William Mulligan, *Shifting Power, Preventive Logic, and the Response of the Target: Germany, Russia, and the First World War*, in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 40, no. 5, 10 July 2017, pp. 731-769.

the right strategy to win the “*next world war*”<sup>13</sup>. The French believed that not much would change in theory and practice, and for their defence policy opted to build the Maginot Line and the fortress system along the German border. The Germans, defeated, studied the causes of their defeat and came to the conclusion that the next would be a new type of war, a “*Blitzkrieg*”<sup>14</sup>. The first experiment of this type of war was the campaign against Poland in September 1939, followed by the one against France in May 1940<sup>15</sup>. Although both tanks and aircraft appeared during the First World War, few people still sensed the effect of the binomial between the two categories of weapons on the battlefield. This time, although theorists were very close to understanding the physiognomy of the next conflagration, they could not, however, perceive what role the size of the volume of human resources and technology that would allow mobility in the theatres of military operations would play. The United Nations Coalition won, which had a ratio of power in the balance of power far superior to Germany and its allies.

After World War II, the two superpowers that dominated the international political world for more than half a century built armies and alliances, namely NATO and the Warsaw Pact, for *World War III*, which they believed would follow the patterns of the previous one. The emergence of the revolution in nuclear physics and the production of weapons of mass destruction led the two superpowers to a new security dilemma and avoid direct confrontation. In addition to the nuclear arms race, a new phenomenon was taking place in order to deter a possible attack. The *proxy war* appeared, through which the two superpowers would face each other all over the world, indirectly, through loyal allies, but considered powers of medium or small size. Thus, the American armed forces, which were built to stop a Soviet



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<sup>13</sup> Roland Kiss (1<sup>st</sup>. Lt./Res.), *The Future of War, the Wars of the Future* Roland Kiss (1<sup>st</sup>. Lt./Res.), *The Future of War, the Wars of the Future*, in *Defence Review*, vol. 145, Special Issue 2017/1, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Holden Reid, *Fuller and the Operational Level of War*, in idem, *Studies in British Military Thought: Debates with Fuller and Liddell Hart*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 1998, p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel Coetzee, Lee W. Eysturliid, *Philosophers of War: The Evolution of History's Greatest Military Thinkers, The Ancient to Pre-Modern World, 3000 BCE- 1815CE*, Praeger, Santa Barbare, California, Denver, Colorado, Oxford, England, 2013, p. 316.



*With the end of the Cold War, military theorists and analysts in the field of security studies believed that the demise of the USSR, the US's main competitor to global hegemony, would lead the world to secured world peace and economic prosperity created by widespread economic liberalism.*

invasion of Germany, had to fight against mass infantry assaults “in the snowy hills of Korea and guerrillas in the Vietnamese jungle, while Soviet forces, which were built up to invade Western Europe, had to fight on the Chinese border and in the mountains of Afghanistan<sup>16</sup>.

With the end of the Cold War, military theorists and analysts in the field of security studies believed that the demise of the USSR, the US's main competitor to global hegemony, would lead the world to secured world peace and economic prosperity created by widespread economic liberalism<sup>17</sup>. The armed forces of the great powers, and not only, have been prepared to deal with regional crises, intrastate conflicts and insurgencies<sup>18</sup> through military operations called “*other than war*”<sup>19</sup>. This type of war-specific operations were seen during the Cold War as at most a peripheral task of the armed forces of the great powers. The events of September 11, 2001 came, which invalidated the beautiful theories of the *niche war* of the 1990s and generated other changes in strategic theory. Most military officials believed that the world had entered the logic of a global war on terrorism<sup>20</sup>. These conflicts, known as “*campaigns for freedom*”, “*stood out as unusual, in the sense that they were not wars of national survival, as were the two world wars, but wars of choice, that is, those on which the political administrations of Washington and London deemed necessary*”<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> Roland Kiss, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Richard K. Betts, ed., *Conflict After the Cold War: Arguments on Causes of War and Peace*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Bettina Renz, *Russian Responses to the Changing Character of War*, in *International Affairs*, no. 95, issue 4, 2019, p. 818.

<sup>19</sup> *Military Operations Other Than War. Air Force Doctrine Document 2-3*, 5 October 1996, pp. 7-23.

<sup>20</sup> Alastair Finlan, *Contemporary Military Strategy and the Global War on Terror: US and UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2001-2012*, Bloomsbury, New York, Sydney, London, New Delhi, 2014; Bruce R. Nardulli, *The Global War on Terrorism: An Early Look at Implications for the Army Documented Briefing*, Arroyo Center. Strategy, Doctrine, and Resources Program, RAND, 2003; Michael J. Boyle, *The War on Terror in American Grand Strategy*, in *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944)*, vol. 84, no. 2 (March 2008), pp. 191-209; Lieutenant Colonel (r.) Robert R. Leonhard, *The Evolution of Strategy in the Global War on Terror*, <https://www.jhuapl.edu/Content/documents/Strategy.pdf>; retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Alastair Finlan, *op. cit.*, p. 2.



After almost two decades of actions carried out selectively by the great powers, in various areas where global terrorist networks and groups were established, the effects of the strategies adopted by military specialists and politicians were found to produce results that were more than modest. Some military analysts are not afraid to say that *“the fight against global terrorism has failed”*<sup>22</sup>, and military strategies in the Washington Department of Defense *“initiated a necessary course correction to address this challenge. As Secretary of Defense James Mattis said in January [2018, A/N], high power competition – not terrorism – is now Pentagon’s top priority”*<sup>23</sup>. This little journey through the history of one hundred years of conflict shows us that military theory lags behind practice and whoever prepares the defence of their society based on previous military experiences will fail in a future defence war!

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Although there are many analysts and theorists of international relations who considered, at the end of the twentieth century, that a war between great powers became unlikely in the context of increasing globalisation and increasing interdependencies<sup>24</sup>, today more and more specialists and military strategists wonder what the future war will look like in a confrontation in which high-tech states and mass armies will be engaged. Specialists from Rand Corporation (RAND) have tried to provide an answer to what seems unbelievable today, namely a confrontation between China and the US<sup>25</sup>, and other researchers

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<sup>22</sup> Brahma Chellaney, *The Global War on Terrorism Has Failed. Here’s How to Win*, in *Foreign Policy*, 11 May 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/11/the-global-war-on-terrorism-has-failed-heres-how-to-win/>; Brandon J. Weichert, *America Is Losing the Global War on Terrorism*, in *The American Spectator*, 24 April 2019, <https://spectator.org/america-is-losing-the-global-war-on-terrorism/>, retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>23</sup> Elbridge Colby, *How to Win America’s Next War. The United States Faces Great-Power Enemies. It Needs a Military Focused on Fighting Them*, in *Foreign Policy*, 5 May 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/05/how-to-win-americas-next-war-china-russia-military-infrastructure/>, retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>24</sup> John S. Mearsheamer, *Disorder Restored*, in Allison Graham, Gregory F. Treverton, eds., *Rethinking America’s Security. Beyond Cold War to New World Order*, Norton Company, New York, London, 1992, pp. 218-221.

<sup>25</sup> David C. Gompert, Astrid Stuth Cevallos, Cristina L. Garafola, *War with China, Thinking Through the Unthinkable*, RAND Arroyo Center, 2016.



have sought an answer to a scenario of worsening relations between Moscow and Washington<sup>26</sup> or even a confrontation between the two nuclear powers<sup>27</sup>.

## GEOPOLITICAL REFERENCES AND SCENARIOS – THE PHYSIOGNOMY OF WAR IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

*In the fight between US competitors for global hegemony, China has adopted a number of (so far) specific soft power strategies in an effort to improve its influence in these regions.*

Geopolitics can bring new frameworks for interpreting the physiognomy of the conflict of the future in international relations, because it explains why states and non-state actors, as strategic players, are interested in controlling certain spaces (physical-geographical, symbolic-virtual and, more recently, cybernetic/communications in the economic, financial and social field), considered to be of vital interest. As these spaces intersect or even overlap depending on the evolution of the political-military, economic and financial interests of the great powers, rivalry and conflict become inevitable in international relations. The real/perceived changes in the political, military, and economic-financial leadership of the United States regarding areas of interest have led them to *“redirect their resources – military and otherwise – to Europe and East Asia, to ensure that we are willing to protect ourselves and our allies from the revisionism of our rivals”*<sup>28</sup>. According to recent studies by US military analysts, the US should expect, for example, *“a great 21<sup>st</sup> century energy competition to cover not only the Middle East and Central Asia, but also the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) regions and Africa”*<sup>29</sup>. In the fight between US competitors for global hegemony, China has adopted a number of (so far) specific soft power strategies in an effort to improve its influence in these regions. Beijing’s strategies are designed to portray China as a non-threatening but reliable economic partner that can provide

<sup>26</sup> R. Loss, L. Kucharski, A. Reddie, *Annotated Bibliography: “U.S.-Russian Nuclear Arms Control: Crisis and Collapse or Crossroads?”*, 27 July 2018, <https://www.osti.gov/servlets/purl/154494>, retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>27</sup> Leonid Savin, *Is the US Preparing for War With Russia?*, in *Gheopolitika.ru*, 14.06.2019, <https://www.geopolitika.ru/en/article/us-preparing-war-russia>, retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>28</sup> Mark D. Miles, Charles R. Miller, *Global Risks and Opportunities. The Great Power Competition Paradigm*, in *Joint Force Quarterly*, Issue 94, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2019, p. 81.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*



the countries in the region with the capital, technology, infrastructure and equipment needed for greater prosperity and stability. China is not like the United States, and that promotes a destabilising and predatory influence<sup>30</sup>. In the face of these types of strategies promoted by the leaders of the great powers aspiring to hegemonic status, the US Administration cannot remain indifferent and must quickly redefine its type of reaction/response, including by developing scenarios of a future conflict.

The great paradigm of power competition presented in the national defence strategies of the great powers aspiring to global or regional hegemony offers a way to think strategically about interstate competition in a multipolar world. Current geopolitical developments show that the Middle East, Central Asia, Latin America and Africa will be key areas for great power competition between the United States, China and Russia. US military experts believe that *“military power will ensure our partners and allies, and military cooperation can catalyse greater regional integration. In a rivalry in which diplomatic, informational and economic power will be the decisive means, we must ensure that our military power is fully positioned to support our governing efforts”*<sup>31</sup>. In this situation, military specialists and strategists of the great powers do not yield to a dense media fog of today related to cyber and/or hybrid warfare. The proliferation and improvement of military capabilities in cyberspace will not change the nature of war. The basic concept of cyberwar starts from the premise that one must have the ability to control/destroy the opponent’s communication infrastructure and its political and economic foundations. And according to specialists, *“this idea can hardly be called revolutionary”*<sup>32</sup>. Some experts point out that the emergence of major US competitors for hegemony in different regions of the world also leads to the possibility of a large-scale confrontation in all four dimensions of the battlefield<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 83-85.

<sup>32</sup> Maxim Suchkov, Sim Tack, *The Future of War*, Valdai Discussion Club Report, August 2019, p. 8.

<sup>33</sup> Michael E. O’Hanlon, *The Future of Land Warfare*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, DC, 2015, pp. 6-8.



*Scenarios for a possible conflict between two or more powers that possess mass armies certainly exist and are of interest to both political and military leaders alike, but it is hard to believe that the aims pursued and therefore the physiognomy of their conflict will have much in common with the wars and conflicts of recent universal history.*

And here is how, in the more distant/near future, what we call the new wars today will have no relevance in the fight for hegemony on a global scale! Robert D. Kaplan pointed out, as early as 2005, that in the struggle for global hegemony, the dreaded opponent for America was not Russia, but China, and that this confrontation would go on by all forces, from land to naval and aerial ones<sup>34</sup>. In January 2019, the same analyst wrote: *“That future has arrived, and it is nothing less than a new cold war: The constant, interminable Chinese computer hacks of American warships’ maintenance records, Pentagon personnel records, and so forth constitute war by other means. This situation will last decades and will only get worse, whatever this or that trade deal is struck between smiling Chinese and American presidents in a photo-op that sends financial markets momentarily skyward. The new cold war is permanent because of a host of factors that generals and strategists understand but that many, especially those in the business and financial community who populate Davos, still prefer to deny. And because the U.S.-China relationship is the world’s most crucial – with many second- and third-order effects – a cold war between the two is becoming the negative organizing principle of geopolitics that markets will just have to price in”*<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *A New Cold War Has Begun*, in *Foreign Policy*, 7 January 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/07/a-new-cold-war-has-begun/>, retrieved on 12 October 2019.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Randolph Kent, *The Future of Warfare: Are We Ready?*, in *International Review of the Red Cross* no. 97 (900), pp. 1341-1378; Mark F. Cancian, *Avoiding Coping with Surprise in Great Power Conflicts*, A Report of The CSIS International Security Program, Washington, 2018; James Holmes, *A U.S.-China War Scenario: How Would China’s Military Attack a “Great Wall in Reverse”?*, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/us-china-war-scenario-how-would-chinas-military-attack-great-wall-reverse-49697>, retrieved on 12 October 2019.

of the state<sup>37</sup>. The corporate alliance between the state and private industry has an impact on politics, the economy and society, but in ways that have not conformed to the recognised patterns of behaviour associated with modern warfare<sup>38</sup>. This is probably the reason why the war-state relationship, specific to the modern and contemporary era, should be seen as declining.

In this type of war, the goal will not be to achieve victory, but to achieve political and/or strategic interests<sup>39</sup>, and not only those of the state, but also of non-state actors in a certain region/area of industrial, financial or commercial interest. Katie Paul wonders what kind of victory was achieved in Iraq and Afghanistan? The analyst believes that, *“At a very minimal level, Iraq is simply a victory, because Saddam Hussein has disappeared. But so much can happen between eliminating the original fighter and securing peace. It is that goal that was difficult to achieve”*<sup>40</sup>. Today, the control of a conquered military space is no longer managed as in the era of the classical war, when, *“after taking over the country, no one showed reproach to the external power. But, it is much more difficult to get the victory today, because the occupying powers cannot resort to the same strategies used in the past”*<sup>41</sup>. It is a possible explanation for developments in Iraq after the military victory over Saddam Hussein’s regime. Another example is provided by the Russian Federation, which, in the conflict with Ukraine, which resulted in the annexation of Crimea, did not seek to defeat it and declare victory in a war as was done in classical conflicts. It only aimed to gain a strategic advantage in the Black Sea area. This type of conflict calls into question a key element of international security, which has

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<sup>37</sup> Randolph Kent, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, p. 1355.

<sup>38</sup> Warren Chin, *Technology, War and the State: Past, Present and Future*, in *International Affairs*, vol. 95, issue 4, July 2019, pp. 765-783.

<sup>39</sup> Milena Michalski, James Gow, *War, Image and Legitimacy. Viewing Contemporary Conflict*, Routledge, New York, 2007, pp. 198-200.

<sup>40</sup> Katie Paul, *Why Wars no Longer End with Winners and Losers*, in *Newsweek*, 1/11/10, <https://www.newsweek.com/why-wars-no-longer-end-winners-and-losers-70865>, retrieved on 23 September 2019.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*



*The physiognomy of war will be strongly influenced by several factors, both objective, such as the revolution in knowledge, and by some subjective, related to the perception/error of perception of a leader of a state that has weapons of mass destruction in its military potential.*

functioned in recent decades – that of deterrence<sup>42</sup> and leads to a strategic dilemma: How to deal with small/limited attacks with large strategic consequences of a great enemy/competing power in an era of rapid technological change?<sup>43</sup>

Couldn't the Russian annexation of Crimea encourage China? What will be the reaction of the great powers that have been/are engaged in promoting regional security through peacekeeping operations? What kind of war could be born: a classic one or one specific to the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

The physiognomy of war will be strongly influenced by several factors, both objective, such as the revolution in knowledge, and by some subjective, related to the perception/error of perception of a leader of a state that has weapons of mass destruction in its military potential. In the first case, it is very possible that, in the future battlefield, the direct presence of man will be reduced due to the involvement of robots, drones and other artificial intelligence fighting techniques<sup>44</sup>. But man cannot be absent. In the second case, things get complicated. If a leader of a nuclear-weapon state becomes convinced that they can achieve a political or strategic goal through the limited use of nuclear weapons, a new “Cuban missile” crisis may ensue. In the case of the Cuban crisis, the solution was not found in the usual diplomatic arsenal of the two superpowers. According to analyst John K. Warden of the Center for Global Security Research, “*Limited nuclear warfare is a terrifying possibility that most Americans prefer to ignore. But as the United States turns its attention to high-powered competition, it must take into account the important role that nuclear weapons play in adverse strategies for a war against the United States and its allies*”<sup>45</sup>. From this perspective, the American analyst considers

<sup>42</sup> Klaus-Dieter Schwarz, *The Future of Deterrence*, SWP Research Paper, Berlin, June 2005, [https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research\\_papers/Microsoft\\_Word\\_S13\\_05\\_swz\\_engl\\_ks.pdf](https://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/research_papers/Microsoft_Word_S13_05_swz_engl_ks.pdf), retrieved on 12 October 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Michael E. O'Hanlon, *The Senkaku Paradox: Risking Great Power War Over Small Stakes*, Brookings Institution Press, Washington D.C., 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Randolph Kent, *op. cit.*, in *loc. cit.*, p. 1356; Warren Chin, *Technology, War and the State: Past, Present and Future*, in *International Affairs*, vol. 95, issue 4, July 2019, pp. 765-783.

<sup>45</sup> John K. Warden, *Limited Nuclear War: The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenge for the United States*, Livermore Papers on Global Security no. 4, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Center for Global Security Research, July 2018, p. 44.

that “*The problem of limited nuclear war must be understood as it exists in the current security environment, not as it was before*”<sup>46</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

War, as a classic phenomenon, as enshrined in the military history of the last century, is no longer an effective tool at the international level for achieving political interests and goals due to the increasing destructive capabilities of nuclear, chemical, biological weapons. This has led states to turn to non-military means to subdue their rivals and achieve their economic and financial interests in a resource-rich or commercially efficient area. In this geopolitical environment, battles will be fought on the “*theatres of operations*” generated by economic and financial competition, those of social networks through campaigns to influence public opinion to overthrow a government that is contrary to their own interests, even if it is legitimate, those of cyberspace to create material and financial damage, but also those of political ideologies. All these, metaphorically, are called forms of non-classical warfare. But, in such confrontations, there is an enormous risk, generated by misperceptions about how each of the great competing powers in regional/global hegemony will react to reach a critical point, that of the belief/conviction that war is the *ultimo ratio*! Perception errors generated by the illusion of technological advantage over a possible opponent! In this context, the classical war can no longer be avoided. History offers, in this sense, multiple examples. We will draw attention only to the error of perception of the political and military leaders in the Central Powers camp, who believed that they had technical and logistical superiority over the states in the opposing camp, generated by a higher number of kilometres of railway<sup>47</sup>. The accidental factor generated by the “*machine factor*”, equipped with artificial intelligence in triggering a preventive reaction of one



ROMANIAN  
MILITARY  
THINKING

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Francis J. Gavin, *Crisis Instability and Preemption: The 1914 Railroad Analogy*, in George Perkovich and Ariel E. Levite, Editors, *From Understanding Cyber Conflict: Fourteen Analogies*, Georgetown University Press, 2017, chapter 7, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/GUP\\_Perkovich\\_Levite\\_UnderstandingCyberConflict\\_Ch7.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/GUP_Perkovich_Levite_UnderstandingCyberConflict_Ch7.pdf), retrieved on 12 October 2019.



great power over another, cannot be excluded<sup>48</sup>. However, the belief that reason will always underlie political decisions that make the difference between peace and war in international politics has never disappeared in human history.

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