The futures of war: a recent western history

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THE FUTURES OF WAR
A RECENT WESTERN HISTORY

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Introduction: The Recent History of the Future of War

The future has a long history. Visions of future war often reflect recent, sometimes traumatic experiences, cater to the specific security concerns of a nation, address the ambitions and needs of specific services, focus on the revolutionary potential of emerging technologies, provide warnings for the rise of new types of actors or specific peer competitors, or reflect the strategic culture of a specific nation. Certainly over the past three decades, there has been no shortage of visions on what the future of war might look like. Those visions often reflected the experiences of the recent wars Western militaries had been engaged in, and the complex operational dynamics they encountered during these interventions. While such visions often emphasized continuity in war and warfare, others have predicted discontinuities or even revolutionary changes.

Prior to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, three decades of societal dynamics, operational experiences, new technologies, tactics employed by non-state actors and perceived changes in the security

Frans Osinga, The Futures of War: A Recent Western History In: Beyond Ukraine Debating the Future of War. Edited by: Tim Sweijs and Jeffrey H. Michaels, C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 2024. © Tim Sweijs, Jeffrey H. Michaels and the Contributors DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780197790243.003.0003

environment inspired five different yet plausible perspectives on the future of war. These were:

1. Humanitarian wars;
2. Sophisticated barbarism;
3. Immaculate war;
4. Cool war; and
5. Major war.

All of these arose within Western military, policy and academic circles. When published, some seemed relevant for the US, whereas others would be more in tune with European security cultures. Most of these inevitably suffered from presentism: they either emphasized continuities, or offered speculative expectations about the possible impact of new technologies and insisted on disruptive innovations. Other views had a normative slant. With the war unfolding in Ukraine at the time of writing, analysts have once again suggested that this particular war paints the landscape of future war. This chapter aims to capture the trajectory of Western thinking on the future of war prior to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, and concludes that the future of war after the invasion cannot simply be reduced to a single one of the five above-mentioned perspectives. Instead, we should expect the overlap of several different perspectives simultaneously.

The Future in the 1990s

A Revolution in Military Affairs

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s heralded a 'New World Order', especially for the US, whose military power formed a key foundation for maintaining and expanding the liberal world order. The ideological struggle between East and West was over, and democracy, liberalism and capitalism seemed destined to gradually but steadily spread across the globe. In 1991, Operation Desert Storm seemed to demonstrate that US military power was vastly superior to any potential competitor. Indeed, the American political scientist Eliot Cohen suggested that an embryonic revolution in warfare was underway.[1] Technologies such as precision weapons, stealth aircraft,

conventional cruise missiles, electronic jamming devices and new generations of sensor platforms, all connected through data links and coordinated in an operational headquarters in which the traditional and dysfunctional divisions between the armed forces had been removed, resulted in an unprecedentedly effective force that was capable of defeating Iraq (at that time the fourth-largest army in the world) without suffering major losses.

Some considered this new epoch to represent an 'information revolution' since the US-led coalition had information dominance while Iraq was constantly lagging behind, their command centres 'blind and deaf' after targeted attacks. Others labelled it a 'precision revolution' and predicted 'precision-age warfare'; small targets could now be attacked with unprecedented accuracy, a single bomb being enough to destroy a building or a tank, whereas previously several bombs had to be dropped with corresponding collateral damage. As Cohen suggested, everything that can be seen could now be hit. Finally, some analysts mainly saw an 'air-power revolution' because the technological developments had mainly benefited the effectiveness of air operations.[2] Air power was no longer to be regarded merely as a means of support for land operations; with the offense now dominant in air warfare, in the future it would also be possible to wage and decide a war without large troop formations in the area of operations.[3]

Despite intense inter-service debates, the US Army and Navy, like the US Air Force, embraced the new technologies. Whilst the Army proceeded to digitize their armoured vehicles, tanks and operational headquarters,[4] the Navy concentrated investments in information and communications technology (ICT) and data links. The Air Force, meanwhile, tried to shorten the time between observation of a small mobile target and the moment of attack—the so-called sensor-to-shooter time—through data links between sensors and offensive weapon systems. US Admiral Arthur Cebrowski stated that his country's future conflicts resided in 'network-centric warfare',[5] with units interconnected through data links and with support systems such as fighter jets that could 'swarm' and coordinate attacks over far greater distances than was previously possible. The introduction of networks made other flatter, decentralized

forms of organization possible, which would enhance operational tempo.[6] Subsequent successful operations in the early 2000s (such as Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom) seemed to confirm the validity of this 'New American Way of War', and suggested wars could be waged with only limited political risk, as well as in terms of risk for American ground troops, civilian casualties and collateral damage.[7]

The European Perspective: The Humanitarian Impulse

In Europe, strategic history and futurizing largely evolved differently from that in the US. Critics argued that military-technological revolutions only provide military superiority temporarily. Moreover, as this revolution was based on civilian ICT, this dominance would be relatively short-lived because other countries could quickly catch up.[8] Indeed, visions of future war, if at all present, were not shaped by the notion of a technology-driven revolution in military affairs (RMA), but rather by questions concerning where, and for what purposes, the military would ever be deployed now the enemy had disappeared. Towards the end of the Cold War, it had become subrationally unthinkable in most Western European societies that war could happen, and was no longer considered a useful and legitimate tool of statecraft, as John Mueller noted in 1989.[9] War had become 'obsolete'; useless as an instrument because of its destructive effect in the atomic age; superfluous because of the growing interdependence and the binding effect of international organizations; and, moreover, normatively no longer conceivable and no longer appropriate in the policy instruments of highly developed Western societies.[10] 'Soft power'—the positive effects of globalization, international treaties and organizations—was considered more important. Europe, including its armed forces, had become 'postmodern'.[11] As Lawrence Freedman observed, the future would be one filled with 'wars of choice' rather than 'wars of necessity'.[12]

The Balkan crisis reinforced the conviction that peace operations in civil wars represented the dominant role for European militaries. These needed to have the capability to provide what Mary Kaldor called a 'cosmopolitan law enforcement' in an era that would be

marked by civil wars. The utility of force, as Rupert Smith argued, was no longer the achievement of a decisive military victory, but the management of force; the creation of a condition in which a political solution can be sought.[13] The use of military force was only considered legitimate when it concerned humanitarian interests. Huge investments in RMA capabilities relevant for high-intensity warfare seemed irrelevant because:

> War no longer exists … war as cognitively known to most non-combatants, war as battle in a field between men and machinery, war as a massive deciding event in a dispute in international affairs; such war no longer exists.[14]

Frustrating peacekeeping experiences informed much of the military and academic debate. When civil war broke out in Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the European Communities—later the European Union (EU)—and subsequently the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), decided on a peacekeeping operation to contain the violence, force the warring factions to agree to ceasefires and thereby alleviate the humanitarian suffering of the civilian population. The operations were initially set up according to the then current UN Blue Helmets model, which assumed several prerequisites: (1) an interstate conflict with functioning political and security authorities; (2) that said political and security authorities actually exercised effective control over the military units; and (3) warring parties consented to the presence of the peacekeeping force, who would remain neutral in the conflict and only be allowed to use force in self-defence.[15] In Bosnia in 1992, these assumptions turned out to be incorrect. In this intrastate war, the warring factions (consisting of Serbs, Croats, Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian Croats and Bosnian Serbs) violated temporary ceasefires when it suited them and showed little interest in initiatives by the United Nations (UN), the Contact Group of Diplomats, or the European Community. UN observers were threatened, UN aid convoys were blocked, and so-called UN Safe Areas turned out to be extremely vulnerable. Air support requested by Blue Helmets frequently resulted in UN observers being taken hostage as a reprisal measure, neutralizing the UN threat.[16] Studies as early as

1992 thus argued for a greater use of force, with suggestions for both 'wider' and more 'robust' peacekeeping.

The horrors of the Srebrenica massacre in July 1995 forced European states to switch from peacekeeping to peace enforcement; conduct effective coercive action by means of an air offensive, and adopt robust rules of engagement accordingly. Operation Deliberate Force—eighteen days of air assaults coupled with artillery and mortar fire by the 10,000-strong ground contingent—finally managed to bring the Serb and Bosnian Serb leaders to the negotiating table.[17] Similar complexity and vicious dynamics plagued NATO in 1998–9 when it became clear that Slobodan Milošević had no intention of stopping the purge of Kosovo. After seventy-eight days of bombing, NATO's Operation Allied Force succeeded in forcing Milošević to withdraw his troops from Kosovo.[18]

Strategic analysts subsequently explored which theories of interstate coercive diplomacy and nuclear deterrence could be applied within the constrained contexts of peace enforcement using only limited military means. In the mid-1990s, these forays identified preconditions such as escalation dominance; a credible and rapidly deployable military capability that can inflict the threatened damage; clearly formulated requirements; a strong, united coalition; the creation of a sense of urgency to meet those requirements; and a reputation that threats are fulfilled.[19] Debates on military strategy revolved around the question of whether the mere threat of bombing would suffice, would symbolic attacks be required, and should bombing be intensive or follow a gradual escalation.[20] By this point, precision weapons provided new options to strike at strategically relevant targets—even those in the middle of cities—and thus exert pressure, introducing 'decapitation' as a new coercive mechanism next to punishment and denial.

Humane Warfare

The superiority of the West in terms of military technology reinforced this shift in Western strategic culture. Moving forward, industrial-style warfare was *passé*, and RMA now provided unchallenged maritime and air dominance.[21] The resulting power-projection capability promised assured access to the 'global commons' and

low risks in conducting interventions.[22] This became a valuable development according to Christopher Coker, who coined the term 'humane warfare' to describe the Western way of war in the 1990s and societal attitudes towards the use of force. It was 'humane' because warfare was accompanied by an unprecedented respect for the law of armed conflict, and because the West only waged war when it revolved around humanitarian interests (or at least when it could be framed that way).[23] For Western militaries, the bar was now set very high precisely because of an increasing aversion to collateral damage and sensitivity to casualties.[24] The high-tech way of warfare therefore became the political and ethical norm. Other scholars cynically labelled Western humanitarian interventions as tools for reducing risks for Western states as these aimed to contain distant conflicts, and prevent regional destabilization and refugee flows that might reach Western borders.[25] Martin Shaw referred to this as 'risk transfer warfare'. In this concept, risks for Western societies, military personnel and politicians must be excluded, and the risks of warfare, if any, are to be passed on to the targeted society and the innocent in the form of euphemisms such as 'collateral damage'.[26]

New Wars, Clausewitz out?

According to Robert Kagan, this strategic culture and vision of the future of war was a denial of history, warning that 'Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus'.[27] Colin Gray was similarly sceptical, giving his book looking at conflict in the twenty-first century the title *Another Bloody Century*.[28] According to various authors, wars of the 1990s demonstrated the future of conflict would be epitomized not by revolutionary weapon systems, but new types of actors employing vicious tactics, rendering Western military superiority irrelevant. These 'new wars' revolved around identity, and featured new dynamics and a fundamentally different conceptualization of war. As such, Martin van Creveld and Mary Kaldor both argued that the instrumental Clausewitzian understanding of war no longer applied.[29]

War had become an end in itself, and everyone with a different identity was an enemy. New types of warlords were, in a parasitic-symbiotic relationship with rivals, intent on continuing local wars in

order to maintain their position of power. Identity wars were total in their societal impact and horrific tactics, which included ethnic cleansing, rape, political assassinations, killings of civilians and the razing of houses. The distinction between combatant and civilian was meaningless.[30] Studies on the 'social construction' of political violence showed how leaders of ethnic factions mobilize myths, cultural artifacts and religion to create enemy images and gradually legitimize extreme violence against 'the other'.[31] Participating in this struggle gives meaning to their existence, as exemplified in the title of Chris Hedges' book, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, which examined how the ethnic conflicts of the 1990s exposed the existential experience of war.[32]

By 1989, Martin van Creveld had already predicted a future featuring such vicious tactics, and Bill Lind had warned that such violent non-state actors would wage 'fourth-generation warfare' which circumvented Western conventional military superiority. This eventually took the form of jihadist terrorists, who would strike deep in the heartland of Western societies to achieve their strategic effects. In doing so, Western casualty sensitivity would be fully exploited, undermining public and political perceptions about the legitimacy of Western action.[33]

The Future after 9/11[34]

The Future is Counterterrorism

Francis Fukuyama's bestseller *The End of History and the Last Man* seemed to promise that the end of the Cold War heralded the end of geopolitics. According to Fukuyama, the demise of fascism and communism meant there was no longer an ideological rival to the liberal-democratic model.[35] Those who rejected this idea, such as Samuel Huntington in his book *The Clash of Civilizations*, in which he argued that wars could still develop along cultural and religious dividing lines across the world, were conveniently criticized, as were those who envisaged rapidly spreading zones of turmoil and warned for the coming anarchy.[36] This sense of complacent security in the West was destroyed on 11 September 2001 with the horrific attacks

on the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, DC, and in 2004 and 2005 by the terrorist attacks in Madrid and London respectively. It had become clear that conflict and violence—still present in so many parts of the world—would not pass by Western societies.

These terrorist attacks spawned a flood of studies on the apparent new form—the fourth wave—of catastrophic fundamentalist terrorism, on radicalization processes, the logic of suicide terrorism, the role of religion and the possible strategies to counter this problem. Studies on al-Qaeda, the Taliban, Hezbollah, and, more recently, the Islamic State in Syria (ISIS) tried to gain insight into the motives, objectives, organizational forms and tactics of these fundamentalist movements.[37] These studies suggested that while the Western instrumental perspective on war may partly explain the behaviour of such groups, there are also eschatological perspectives in play, as demonstrated by al-Qaeda's vision of an eternal 'cosmic', metaphysical and existential religious struggle.[38]

The initial US response to 9/11, Operation Enduring Freedom, demonstrated the value of high-level expeditionary capabilities and the merits of the 'new American way of war'. With relatively little effort, US special forces, in cooperation with abundant air power and the Northern Alliance, defeated the Taliban, giving rise to predictions that this 'Afghan Model'—air power combined with special forces and proxy forces—would be a new strategic feature in future wars. The RMA thesis also seemed validated when the Iraqi army was rapidly defeated in 2003, and Saddam Hussein overthrown in the initial stages of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The US proclaimed a Global War on Terror: in light of US military capabilities, 'rogue' and terrorist leaders now needed to worry for their survival. Future Western security now hinged on assisting failing states to combat criminal groups, armed bands and terrorists, and enhance their own national security to prevent those groups from conducting hostile activities against the West. The 'logical' answer and future role of Western (mostly US) militaries was therefore counterterrorist operations in the so-called 'Arc of Instability'—that region of failing and failed states where violent non-state actors found sanctuary.

The Future is State-building

Looking for more long-term structural solutions to the problem of failing states, the UN and affiliated think tanks suggested 'lines of operations'—development paths—based on the 'Washington Consensus', to enhance the power, legitimacy and effectiveness of local and national governments.[39] This involved the recovery of the economy, the implementation of the 'rule of law' (i.e. building a legal system according to a Western model, with Western values and norms), an effective and representative democratic political system, and restoring security in these countries. The EU told its member states in its 2003 strategic vision that Europe needed to become more interventionist so as to establish a ring of well-developed countries around the continent. Such liberal state-building operations required an interagency approach and not just a military one.[40] From 2005 onward, the 'comprehensive approach' (also referred to as the 'interagency approach', the 'whole of government approach', or the 3D approach) became the dogmatic perspective on future coalition operations within NATO, the UN and the EU.

While sound in theory, the practical problems Western troops encountered in Afghanistan and Iraq quickly led to intense discussion about the validity of liberal state-building.[41] It required a prolonged presence of a sizeable force to ensure security which never materialized, and the inevitable use of military force against militant and criminal elements subsequently eroded the legitimacy of the operation. Local power brokers proved corrupt and disinclined to demonstrate an ability to do without large financial support, while Western legal norms and democratic principles encountered local resistance.[42] In the power vacuum that developed in Iraq, a civil war between the Shiites and Sunnis developed from 2003 onwards. In Afghanistan, the Taliban quickly managed to fill the security gap that had arisen when it turned out that the international force was far too small to exert influence throughout the whole of the country. Successful state-building requires a sufficient degree of security, and gradually politicians were forced to acknowledge that Western forces were now fighting insurgencies.

The New Face of Future Irregular Warfare

Some felt that the solution to these issues lay in a rediscovery of counterinsurgency (COIN) strategies, and an awareness took hold that irregular warfare would be the most likely feature of future war.[43] Classic works on COIN were scrutinized for their current relevance, and concepts such as 'hearts and minds' campaigns and 'clear, hold, build' were rediscovered. However, they were also criticized, as these insurgencies differed (unsurprisingly) from the insurgencies classical COIN theorists studied. While the West harped on about winning the hearts of locals, the use of force to convince the minds—historically an integral part—was no longer an option.[44] David Kilcullen argued that it is during this competition for control where groups such as the Taliban and ISIS intimidate the population and local leaders, and, if necessary, use brute force.[45] Other dissimilarities are that insurgents were not necessarily out to take over the state anymore, but consisted of multiple rival groups and opportunistic criminal actors, rogue militias, child soldiers and fundamentalist terrorists who operated increasingly in urban environments rather than the countryside.[46]

The intifadas that Israel faced between 1987–93 and 2000–05, along with the Second Lebanon War of 2006, indicated the limitations of the traditional Western categorization of war types. Hezbollah, often designated as a terrorist organization, suddenly employed an arsenal of medium- to long-range missiles, and was able to run a capable command-and-control system using commercial ICT. The group also applied tactics for different types of warfare: standard guerrilla tactics, but also positional defence of villages and the ability to disable Israeli tanks. It thus combined characteristics of an insurgency along with those of a regular army, including a sophisticated media organization. In 2007, Frank Hoffman introduced the label 'hybrid conflict' to draw attention to this category-breaking aspect.[47] The emergence of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria attested to this development, with the group brandishing tanks and artillery while also deploying suicide terrorists in its assaults on Iraqi villages.

The wars against these non-state actors also highlighted that with Web 2.0—a shift towards user-generated content and participatory

culture on the Internet—anyone with a laptop and a network connection could now instantly and cheaply send, edit and store evocative images, sound and text worldwide, reaching a global audience. Cyberspace, in addition, offered unprecedented access to funding sources and opportunities to recruit, plan and coordinate actions from afar. As such, a physical infrastructure and proximity to members of the organization is no longer required to plan and execute operations. Future war became one of ideas and narratives being played out virtually on YouTube, Twitter, Telegram and (much later) TikTok.[48] Borders had become meaningless, border control impossible. The Internet provided a refuge, a platform, an audience, an organization and a battlefield.

Indeed, Hezbollah in 2006 managed to claim a victory over Israel not because of military success, but through a targeted media campaign. In Iraq and Afghanistan, groups such as al-Qaeda, the Taliban and ISIS used social media to give the impression that they had a much greater position of power than was actually the case.[49] Suicide bomber attacks, gruesome killings, beheadings and ambushes on patrols of Western troops were planned and carried out not for their immediate tactical military effects, but rather to produce propaganda material.[50] The aim was to erode local support for Western troops, to intimidate both those troops and the local population, to suggest the futility of Western efforts, and thus influence the political processes in the capitals of Western countries.

In response, Western military forces developed 'influence operations' doctrines, which were conceptually merely a rediscovery of traditional psychological warfare. Through so-called 'strategic narratives' and coherent reporting (i.e. strategic communication), an attempt was made to explain both to home audiences and the population in the mission area what the intentions and legitimacy of the Western military presence were,[51] and to de-legitimize the actions of the insurgents or terrorist movement.[52] This, however, turned out to be an asymmetric battle. Insurgents can ground their actions within the historical and religious context of the local population,[53] and can also freely distort facts and spread lies, which for Western units would directly undermine their credibility.[54]

The Search for Low-risk Warfare

Not surprisingly, the highly ambitious yet frustrating operations in Iraq and Afghanistan inspired critique.[55] The West had rediscovered the myriad challenges COIN campaigns pose for democracies: the requirement of long-term commitment and large numbers of troops; the severe political constraints; the inevitably high number of Western military casualties; and the problems of demonstrating tangible success.[56] The future would instead reside in alternative low-footprint, low-risk operational concepts.[57] The success of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001 highlighted the strategic value of the so-called 'Afghan Model', or proxy warfare.[58] Yet some doubted whether the success of this concept could be replicated outside Afghanistan.[59] The US application of this concept during Operation Iraqi Freedom in northern Iraq, however, where American special forces teams worked with Kurdish fighters to bind several Iraqi divisions in the north, suggested otherwise.[60] In 2011, proxy warfare was again successfully employed in Operation Unified Protector—the NATO operation against Muammar Gaddafi's regime in Libya—when a UN mandate precluded deploying NATO ground forces. The fight against ISIS similarly demonstrated the strategic utility of proxy warfare, which was deemed an important new policy instrument for Western leaders, as it promised success with minimal investments in lives of Western soldiers and thus limited political risk.[61] However, success depends on the extent to which the interests, objectives, endurance and risk assessments of the Western coalition are aligned with those of the proxy forces.[62]

The use of proxy warfare has energized fierce societal and academic debate. Some have argued that drone strikes and proxy warfare were just forms of 'surrogate warfare' and another Western method for avoiding the risks of war, albeit with questionable effectiveness, ethics and legitimacy. Drones, for example, with their ability to carry out long endurance observation and kinetic engagement with leaders and bomb experts of terrorist movements, initially offered an alternative future mode of waging low-risk asymmetric warfare.[63] However, their use has involved 'extra-judicial killing' marred by inadequate assurance of 'accountability' in the targeting process.

Moreover, moral disengagement and dehumanization were deemed inevitable when operators experienced these strikes as video games, as demonstrated in the rising numbers of civilian casualties.[64] Others warned of the 'dronification of foreign policy' and 'everywhere war' in which violation of sovereignty became too easy and risk-free for Western politicians. Subsequent empirical studies, however, discounted many of the initial concerns and criticisms as unfounded and demonstrated their significant impact on the targeted groups. The International Committee for the Red Cross even concluded that, in principle, carefully deployed drones enhanced accuracy and discrimination of attacks.[65] Other RMA technologies also worked against violent non-state actors.

2014 and the Return of the Future of War as We Knew It

The Future is Hybrid Conflict

Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 seemed to radically invalidate the pre-2014 predictions that proclaimed sustained low-intensity operations against violent non-state actors would be the norm. As a result, the West was now forced to recalibrate what the future of war would look like. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev told the West in 2016 that a new Cold War was a fact.[66] Dispelling *The End of History* myth, the ideology of authoritarianism now presented itself as a competitor to liberalism. Russia, keen to restore its status as a superpower, believes in a unique and dominant civilization with almost mythical (and certainly orthodox religious) foundations in which there is no room for Western liberal values and legal principles. Behind the rhetoric lies a deep mistrust of 'the West' that inspires its aim to restore the spheres of influence and strategic buffer between Russia and Western Europe.[67] The West was caught by surprise by Russia's rapid success in Crimea, insufficiently aware of the many subversive actions that preceded the operations and the non-military face of it. Absent of tank battles, the annexation of Crimea was not war in the traditional sense, but rather seemed to suggest the West needed to prepare for a future filled with 'hybrid conflict'.[68]

The 'hybrid warfare' label denoted the orchestrated Russian deployment of conventional military means, irregular methods of combat, subversive activities, deployment of paramilitary units, incitement, psychological warfare, propaganda, media manipulation, deception activities, deployment of unmarked special forces units, cyberattacks and control of the media. Studies concluded that hybrid warfare amounts to a long-term, gradual strategy that suffices with the achievement of small incremental political successes—a *fait accompli*; individually, these are probably not *casus belli* for the West, but can, over time, cumulatively create a new situation. It is a strategy that aims to exert influence without directly using armed force; in this way, it is hoped it will ultimately achieve its political goals or create the conditions to quickly achieve a local victory by military means. Through continuous actions—intimidation of political leaders and opinion leaders, bribery, media manipulation, sanctions, military threats along the border in the form of exercises, cyberattacks, etc.—it seeks to test political resistance, sow social unrest, increase the degree of international commitment and undermine the credibility of Western deterrence.

Troll armies, as well as official state-controlled media, manipulate public opinion through targeted social media influence operations, and undermine the legitimacy of an incumbent government and/or the outcomes of democratic elections. The views of Western authorities and the reliability of Western media are questioned through frames that suggest that Europe is weak and decadent, violates traditional Christian values, and has no answer to problems such as migration, Islamic terrorism, drugs and organized crime.[69] Emerging out of a close study of the high-tech 'Western way of war', hybrid warfare purposefully seeks to stay below the violence threshold of the Western understanding of war, so that the geographically and time-dispersed actions of diverse assets are not recognized as acts of war, and effective decision-making on countermeasures becomes difficult (and may not always be forthcoming). In doing so, it becomes the grey zone between peace and war.[70]

Critics noted that the label of, and focus on, hybrid conflict was a manifestation of both confusion and ignorance.[71] The combination of military and various non-military means has long been the norm in

warfare. The Second World War, for example, in addition to clashes between armies, also saw continuous guerrilla actions, economic blockades, industrial mobilization and propaganda campaigns. In Crimea, we merely saw a repeat of Russian Cold War practice with the deployment of Spetsnaz units deep into the opponent's territory, incitement of local political radical elements, application of *maskirovka* (use of deception, camouflage and covert action) and 'reflexive control' methods (spreading confusing information in such a way that the target audience no longer knows which source to trust, what is true and what is fiction). In 1999, two Chinese colonels reminded the West of such a conceptualization of war in their book titled *Unrestricted Warfare*, arguing that a multidimensional strategy, with many non-military methods of influence, was the way to circumvent and compete with the military superiority of the West.[72]

Rediscovering Deterrence and State-on-State War

The annexation of Crimea also seemed to demonstrate a surprising level of professionalism and discipline of Russian military units, and an impressive modernization of combat systems.[73] With these resources, Russia executed 'snap exercises' in which large numbers of equipment and personnel (sometimes more than 100,000 men) traversed quickly over strategic distances to produce an intimidating threat along a European border under the guise of an exercise.[74] Western military security was further challenged by Russia's 'Anti-Access/Area Denial' (A2/AD) capabilities, which precluded future assured Western access to Eastern Europe and the use of its airspace, roads and sea transport.[75] This undermined NATO's ability to defend the Baltic states and hence the credibility of the West's conventional deterrence posture.[76] NATO responded with enhanced readiness measures, positioning of 'tripwire' forces, air-policing operations, strengthening its cyber capabilities, and calls for increasing defence spending. Member states started to conduct high-intensity warfare exercises to relearn Article 5 operations. Suddenly, the future of war for the West looked to be quite different from what they had experienced during the Cold War.

This future also included the nuclear dimension. While Russia was testing new cruise missiles, positioned nuclear capable missiles in Kaliningrad and was prepared for a (limited) nuclear war,[77] Europe after 1990 produced hardly any discourse on nuclear deterrence and had long harboured serious doubts about the relevance of these types of weapons. Despite NATO's Warsaw Summit declaration in 2016 that 'any employment of nuclear weapons against NATO would fundamentally alter the nature of a conflict', analysts concluded that the organization lacked an adequate response to a Russian escalation, and by default had to rely on a relatively low credibility 'deterrence by punishment' strategy.[78]

Emerging Technologies and the Future of War

The 'New Cold War' also brought attention to the increasing threat posed by cyberattacks. The first article on cyberwarfare had been published in the US as early as 1993, and increasing emphasis was placed throughout that decade on the importance of information operations, particularly gaining and maintaining information dominance, disrupting the enemy's ability to effectively command units by disabling its headquarters, sensors and data links (so-called command-and-control warfare), and the rapid sharing of information within one's own ranks (a core theme within network-centric warfare). Furthermore, the protection of critical infrastructure, such as telecommunications facilities, energy networks, financial networks and transportation infrastructure, gained prominence.[79]

The Russian denial-of-service attack on Estonia in 2007, however, demonstrated the actual susceptibility of open modern societies to cyberattacks.[80] Increasing Chinese cyber activity, the 2010 Stuxnet attack on Iran and the 2012 Flame attack in the Middle East also propelled cyberattacks into the security-political and military realm.[81] In June 2011, then US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta warned that the next Pearl Harbor could be a cyberattack, echoing Richard Clarke's 2011 use of this metaphor as a warning in a much-discussed book.[82] British general Sir David Richards warned that the West had to rethink its perception of security, war and warfare because while tanks, fast jets and fleet alliances had been the

dominant weapons of war ten years earlier, future attacks would be carried out semi-anonymously via cyberspace.[83]

Here, too, theorizing and debates quickly followed incidents and technological developments. Given that cyber weapons are not the prerogative of nation-states but within easy reach of all kinds of actors, Joseph Nye foresaw a fundamental shift of power and potential threat to the international legal order. A dependence on complex cyber systems to support military and economic activities creates new vulnerabilities in major states, which can be exploited by other state and non-state actors. It was evidence of the continued diffusion of power from governments to other types of actors, and was part of one of the great power shifts of this century.[84]

Considering the limited and non-lethal impact of cyberattacks, other analysts doubted whether it was possible to talk about cyberwar in the Clausewitzian sense.[85] Another debate highlighted the specific character of cyberspace, which produces a fundamentally different deterrent dynamic than in the conventional or nuclear domains.[86] Cyberattacks are difficult to counter because (a) so many actors have cyber weapons at their disposal, and (b) the threshold for using them is low, as is the damage caused by them and the chance that retaliation will be enacted. As such, it follows that it will not do much damage. If deterrence is the aim, then this can only be done by being very active in cyberspace and by continuously carrying out exploratory, defensive and also offensive cyber operations.[87] The consequence is that activities in cyberspace can lead to an increase in international instability. It is subsequently no longer a question of whether there can be a cyberwar—it is already a fact.[88]

Another factor featuring in visions of future war was the emergence of new technologies such as hypersonic missiles, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, and the combination of these last two in the development of Autonomous Weapon Systems (AWS, or in the colloquial 'killer robots'). Swarms of AWS can overwhelm air defences and continue to patrol over an area in search of specific predefined targets such as tanks, artillery systems or mobile missile launchers, as well as specific individuals. AI systems can also offer great advantages in monitoring data streams, video images and in analysing other types of data.

The proliferation of drones provides an increasing number of state- and non-state actors with the ability to carry out air strikes with relatively simple and affordable means, both on military targets and civilian facilities. In the West, the ethical and legal aspects of these weapon systems are still under investigation, and the requirement remains for a minimum of meaningful human control concerning the decision to use lethal force. Because AWS developments are mainly driven by commercial dual-use technologies (and hence commercial interests), the inevitable proliferation of AWS may result in destabilization and rapid escalation during a crisis. Further dehumanization of warfare lurks in the danger that AWS will be used somewhat casually because the lives of friendly troops are not put at risk. AI will likewise become available to various types of actors, facilitating the production and dissemination of fake news and deep fakes. Furthermore, AI-enhanced intelligence organizations may be able to pinpoint the location of nuclear weapons among rivals in the future, which could result in the erosion of deterrence stability. This risk becomes all the greater when an actor also has access to a new generation of hypersonic, long-range cruise missiles that travel too fast to be intercepted by existing anti-aircraft and anti-missile systems, and so fast that a reaction from the opponent will probably arrive too late.[89]

Five Perspectives on Future War

By the end of 2021, Western analysts had collectively painted a broad and colourful canvas featuring five distinct strategic landscapes. The first one, capturing the many ongoing civil wars in the 'Arc of Instability', predicted that the West must still be prepared for humanitarian crises and corresponding humanitarian operations, and that such 'humanitarian wars' are (and should remain) the primary justification for the use of the military instrument. Kaldor coined this the 'liberal peace security culture', which she associated this with international organizations such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the EU and the UN. Repeating her 1990s argument, Kaldor's normative cosmopolitan vision sees a future in which wars in failing and fragile states must be settled, and

violence contained through peacekeeping operations so that human suffering can be alleviated.[90]

A related second vision of the future—sophisticated barbarism—predicts that wars in the future will revolve around the actions of violent non-state actors—an ecosystem of terrorist movements, well-armed criminal organizations, warlords overseeing militias, and insurgents. Ethnicity or religion is occasionally a motive for their struggle, but often this goes hand in hand with economic profit. This view is a continuation of Martin van Creveld's line of argument in his 1989 book *The Transformation of War*, which also echoes Kaldor's 'new wars' thesis, as well as the 'fourth-generation warfare' model from the 1990s and Frank Hoffman's hybrid conflict concept from 2007. Recently, authors such as Kilcullen and McFate predict these groups will increasingly be able to inflict damage on Western countries through cyberattacks and the use of drones.[91] Moreover, they will easily organize themselves into 'smart mobs' via social media and the use 'barbaric' tactics to intimidate populations. Their battlefield is increasingly the city, an environment in which it is difficult for Western soldiers to operate. According to McFate, there will be a 'durable disorder', which repeats Kaplan's 1990s warning on the spread of anarchism in large parts of the world.[92]

The third vision—immaculate warfare—follows on from this and considers what it means for Western armed forces now that 'the future is irregular', as Seth Jones predicts. Western military personnel will mainly be deployed in a COIN fashion across a multitude of protracted conflicts in unstable regions.[93] But unlike before, the West will not employ large formations in a conflict zone, but will rely on the use of special forces, the training of proxy forces, reconnaissance assets capable of observing areas for a long time, and armed drones that can be deployed if necessary to execute a precision attack on a few individuals. The primary aim is not defeat of the insurgents or terrorist movements, but risk management: to contain the risk that these groups will lead to regional destabilization and/or form a direct threat to the West.[94] This is the battle the US is waging in various African countries as well as against ISIS. Andreas Krieg and Jean-Marc Rickli describe this form of warfare as 'surrogate warfare', which is characterized by the West trying

to exert influence in conflict areas with minimal physical presence and therefore minimal political risk.[95] In a similar vein, Russia has deployed privatized military companies such as the Wagner Group in various African countries.

The renewed geopolitical rivalry—the return of strategic competition between the US (with its European allies), Russia and China—form the context of the fourth vision: cool war. In addition to the notion of hybrid threats, others have dubbed this vision 'new total warfare', 'political warfare' and 'grey-zone warfare'.[96] These concepts consider strategic competition to be war. Just as during the Cold War, this rivalry involves a wide range of instruments and activities in various military and especially non-military domains, which can affect various sections of Western society. Some perceive this as a 'cool war' or 'soft war', to emphasize the idea that the continuous use of so-called non-kinetic means predominates in attempts to exert influence.[97] Instruments and activities include economic espionage through cyberattacks, economic sanctions and financial warfare, financing the bribery and intimidation of politicians (and liquidation by poisoning if necessary), and financing and even arming militant anti-European political groups in democratic states.[98] Troll armies spreading fake news through social media also feature prominently in the array of influence methods, much like in Singer and Brooking's *LikeWar*.[99] In fact, as Galeotti describes, 'everything has become weaponized'; war and peace merge.[100] Subsequently, defence in cool war requires boosting societal resilience and a whole-of-society approach.[101]

The final vision is that of the return of major war, which reflects shifting power relations. Pace John Mueller, war in the classical sense—as an armed encounter between two large countries—is no longer impossible and less unlikely than, for example, in 1999.[102] The influence of the US (and therefore of the West) is waning relative to China. The liberal world order is eroding.[103] International organizations such as the UN, World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have been under pressure since the financial and economic crisis of 2008. The EU is struggling with the rise of nationalist and populist sentiments and illiberal political movements across the continent. This is not a return to the Cold War, because

unlike that period, authoritarian powers are now actively seeking to disrupt stability. Ideology once again plays an important role. Fukuyama has been belied: in authoritarianism, there is indeed a competitor for Western liberalism. And the question is, which international order will win this competition?[104] Authoritarian regimes increasingly pursue aggressive revisionist foreign policies and boost both their offensive capabilities and A2/AD screens to blunt potential Western responses. Limited 'probes'—minor incursions into the airspace or territory of Western countries—are likely; these will probably not justify a large-scale Western response, but may gradually change the status quo, test the Western willingness to resort to serious reprisals and enhance escalation risks.[105]

Such confrontations will likely see the employment of swarms of drones and killer robots. New defences such as electromagnetic pulse systems will be developed, and offensive hypersonic missiles may be used as a new type of threat. AI will be used to analyse large amounts of data from large numbers of networked commercial and military sensors and satellites. AI and quantum computing will provide advice via new cognitive processes on decisions about, for example, the right time for a conventional attack, a cyber offensive, or whether to escalate or whether to launch an anti-satellite weapon.[106] Space will also have increasing military applications, including offensive ones.[107] This warning of war with Russia and/or China, which may well involve a new RMA,[108] inspires Western searches for novel operational concepts such as 'multidomain battle' and 'cross-domain deterrence' to exploit emerging technologies and thus provide an appropriate military response to military challenges such as the A2/AD problem, cyberattacks and nuclear threats.[109]

Visions of Future War Meet the War in Ukraine

Wars are educational moments that serve to gauge the extent to which prior views on future war hold water. A brief excursion into the war in Ukraine will allow preliminary observations about the validity of the five perspectives presented above. At first blush, several predictions seem to have materialized, albeit not in their pure form or with the dramatic impact analysts anticipated.

When Russia started its invasion in Ukraine—which it dubbed a 'special military operation'—major war, which NATO in 2010 had dismissed as a very small risk, once again tragically returned to Europe. Preceded by 'cool war' methods such as the spreading of disinformation, a rapid victory—hoisting the Russian flag over Kyiv's government buildings and the eradication of Ukraine's identity—seemed assured. Its quantitative superiority and doctrine led to expectations that Russia (the world's ninth-largest economy) would be able to overrun Ukraine (the fifty-sixth-largest economy) easily. Russia had mustered between 150,000 and 190,000 troops along the long Ukrainian border in so-called battalion tactical groups (BTG), divided over four fronts. While insufficient for achieving Putin's maximalist objective (the full occupation of Ukraine), it could have enabled a rapid advance, too fast for Ukraine to mobilize units or for the divided West to generate a timely robust response. As such, ousting the democratically elected government in Kyiv certainly seemed feasible. Russia could count on, if necessary, three times the number of tanks and artillery pieces that Ukraine could mobilize, eight times the number of combat helicopters and ten times the number of combat aircraft. Assuming Russia had embraced the Western RMA capabilities, a campaign not unlike Operation Iraqi Freedom seemed likely, but now with the additional employment of hypersonic missiles and swarms of drones, as well as intimidating nuclear threats.

For the first two or three days of the invasion, this scenario seemed to unfold. Massive cyberattacks attempted to paralyse Ukraine's transport and communications infrastructure. Around 1,000 cruise missiles and stand-off weapons were launched at airfields, military headquarters and air defence positions.[110] Communications and radar systems were disrupted by intensive jamming operations, temporarily neutralizing Ukrainian surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems. Ukrainian fighter jets lost against the qualitatively and quantitatively superior Russian counterparts, who could use airborne early-warning and extended-range air-to-air missiles. Airmobile units landed with helicopters at Hostomel' airfield near Kyiv, waiting to connect with the mechanized columns advancing towards Kyiv from the north and northeast, and ready to

receive transport planes transporting hundreds of infantrymen and armoured cars to Hostomel'.

Zelensky, however, won the 'like war' with his savvy use of social media, unifying his nation and creating the moral foundation energizing Western support, which in turn amalgamated into a continuous series of intensifying economic and financial sanctions.[111] His commanders saw their situational awareness benefit from simple cell phone and tablet apps which enabled troops and civilians to spot enemy units and weapon systems, and transmit those locations to headquarters. Those headquarters also exploited the near real-time transmission of drone footage through networks that have been provided and supported by commercial companies such as Starlink communication satellites. Adaptability and the ability to use civilian technologies—drones, commercial communication tools, simple target-location apps, crowd-funding, etc.—have shown their potential. Predictions of the increasing impact of emerging technologies such as AI and killer robots seem validated with the introduction of Switchblade drones.

Immaculate war also seemed evident. First of all, Putin claimed that this was a 'special operation' aimed at regime change, conducted with a limited number of highly trained units in a very short time, and promising quick success with limited risk for Russian casualties. Second, it manifests itself in Putin's use of informal armed groups such as the Wagner Group and Kadyrov's Chechen fighters. Third, it is evident in the prevalent use of stand-off munitions to attack the opponent while keeping their own troops out of range of enemy weapons. Russia employs massive numbers of cruise- and hypersonic missiles, intense barrages of long-range rocket artillery as well as scores of drones, which are now a permanent feature on the ecosystem of the battlefield. Drones combined with artillery significantly improved locating targets, as well as fire accuracy, responsiveness and counter-battery tactics. As a result, artillery caused the most damage to materiel and led to the most casualties. For the infantry, small drones provide cheap intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and can be armed with improvised grenades to provide their own short-range organic air power, often with deadly results against dug-in enemy troops. Swarms of cheap long-range

Iranian Shahed drones reinforce the image that Russia is intent on bludgeoning the opponent from afar and reducing the political risks for the Kremlin regime.

In general, the variety of drones makes it extremely risky for an opponent to mass units and materiel. The same applies to the impact of multiple-launch rocket-like systems, which from the summer of 2022 onward forced Russia to place command centres and ammunition depots at a greater distance from the front, aggravating existing command and logistical challenges. Ukraine's use of high-mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS) were also useful in disabling Russia's SAM systems. As a RUSI report summarises, 'There is no sanctuary in modern warfare. The enemy can strike throughout operational depth. Survivability depends on dispersing ammunition stocks, command and control (C2), maintenance areas and aircraft'.[112] The tenets of network-centric warfare seem to have become reality.

There is, however, another potential pointer: the restoration of the Clausewitzian notion of defence being dominant over offense. A cyber version of Pearl Harbor has not materialized despite massive cyberattacks, nor have autonomous weapons systems or hypersonic missiles proven real, strategic-level game-changers offering offensive dominance. The dramatic asymmetry in capabilities between the warring parties that immaculate warfare presupposes also proved absent. After one week, while the Russian advance in the south of Ukraine was going reasonably smoothly, the advance from the north and northeast stalled. Failures in conducting combined arms tactics and logistics, as well as not exploiting its air power advantage to achieve air superiority, conduct air interdiction, strategic attacks and provide responsive close air support, all contributed to the failing of the envisioned ten-day 'special operation'.

These failings were enhanced by Ukraine's surprisingly effective resistance. It managed to quickly bring artillery fire to bear on Hostomel' airfield, shoot down several helicopters, and eliminate the landed Russian units, precluding them from landing with transport aircraft. The Russian advance from the north was bombarded with artillery fire and attacks from small, mobile infantry teams, taking out tanks and armoured vehicles with anti-tank weapons and often

making use of drones. Ukraine's mobile SAM systems denied Russia the use of airspace, providing much-needed freedom of manoeuvre for its ground troops and logistics.

When, on 9 April, Putin declared that his troops would retreat from Kyiv and instead focus on the Donbas, that failure was de facto acknowledged. A disconnected, under-resourced, four-front attritional war ensued, including pre-modern siege warfare in which Russia encircled and pulverized Ukrainian cities, resulting in terrible numbers of civilian casualties. The last major cities to fall to Russia after prolonged artillery barrages and costly urban combat were Mariupol, Severodonetsk and Lysychans'k. The defence of these cities cost Ukraine dearly too, but bought it the time it needed to mobilize new units and bring Western artillery, howitzers and later HIMARS launchers to the front. Ukraine re-took the Kharkiv Oblast in September 2022, and the city of Kherson in November, just before winter conditions precluded further manoeuvres.

Well into 2023, barrages of artillery (sometimes Russia fired 30,000 shells a day) and waves of Russian infantry smashed against well-developed defence lines in the terrain, towns and cities along the long, stagnating frontline, daily losing hundreds of soldiers. Russia belatedly launched missiles and drones against Ukraine's logistical infrastructure first, and after the fall of Kherson, also against Ukraine's power plants. Due to Russian shortages of missile stockpiles, the relative inaccuracy of the strikes, increasing intercept rates (aided by supplies of Western air defence systems) and rapid repair capabilities, the frequency and intensity of these strikes failed to have a strategic impact, apart from boosting the West's resolve to support Ukraine. One year into the war, Russia had probably lost half of its deployed tanks and more than 6,000 armoured vehicles, as well as 200,000 soldiers, including between 40,000 and 60,000 dead.[113]

With such losses in armour, the era of tank warfare seems to be over. The faith of Russia's airmobile operations and the heavy losses among attack helicopters also suggest that the future role of aviation needs to be reassessed. The same seems to hold for the dominant role of air power. Here, the effectiveness of large numbers of mobile air defence systems had denied both sides the use of offensive air power

over and beyond the frontline. Russia, by default, reverted to the use of cruise missiles, drones and hypersonic missiles to circumvent this problem. Nevertheless, Ukraine's steep learning curve, combined with the introduction of Western air defence systems, improved the interception rate to a stunning 80–90 per cent. The de facto ability to maintain air denial suggests that, once again, the defence is now dominant in air warfare, much as it was during the Cold War. This seems to validate studies of the past decade that warned of the challenges of new A2/AD capabilities whilst undermining concepts such as network-centric warfare that argued the RMA would boost the offensive.

The Future of War Continues

It is unwarranted to draw definitive conclusions concerning the future of war, to use the Russo-Ukrainian war as a touchstone for critically assessing previous visions of future war, or to argue for a radical overhaul of existing defence policies and investment priorities. First, Russia's initial failures have shaped the trajectory of this war. The Kremlin assumed a divided Ukrainian population, a weak regime and weak military resistance. It overestimated its own military capabilities, and the secrecy of its plans meant that (a) the frontline troops received orders far too late—sometimes only hours before the start of the advance; (b) too little coordination had taken place between the BTGs themselves, and between the BTGs and the necessary supporting artillery and Russian air power for close air support; and (c) the logistics were not in order, and the units crossed the border with their tanks and armoured vehicles in non-combat formations. Moreover, the campaign plan was poorly thought out and marred by a weak, corrupt and highly centralized command-and-control system with a culture that stifles lower-level initiative and reliable information. Troop discipline was lacking, in part due to the absence of a well-trained non-commissioned officer cadre. Finally, materiel proved to be poorly maintained and in a bad state.[114] All these elements explain the demonstrated inability to conduct proper combined arms tactics and, at the operational level, to execute joint operations.

Russia's failures and Ukrainian successes remind us that there is a large measure of continuity in this war. The use of drones demonstrates the usual action–reaction dynamic, in which new weapon technology that proves itself on the battlefield quickly results in the development of specific countermeasures in tactics, doctrine and defence systems. As a result, the average lifespan of a drone in this war is five to six sorties. At the tactical and operational level, familiar important factors are reconfirmed, such as quality of training, intelligence (with which the US and UK provide crucial support to Ukraine), logistical organization and capacity, competent leadership, and the importance of troop morale and well-designed defence lines, including minefields and trenches.

Russia's default strategy of attrition harks back to twentieth-century interstate warfare dynamics. The renewed acquaintance with the Russian strategic culture of total war and the realization that the West must be prepared for industrial warfare remind us of the importance of what Michael Howard called the 'forgotten' dimensions of strategy.[115] The quantity of weapon systems, ammunition stocks, industrial capacity, spare parts, redundancy, societal resilience—these are all strategic qualities. Whether the future of war can be gleaned from this clash between two quite similar twentieth-century armed forces is doubtful.

The war in Ukraine holds interesting and worrisome paradoxes. It is postmodern as well as modern (and sometimes even pre-modern). It sees accelerated innovation at the technical and tactical level that seems to validate predictions of future war. It also confirms predictions concerning the return and shape of major war. Moreover, it includes elements of cool war and immaculate war. In Russia's criminal, indiscriminate, horrific and destructive assaults on the identity of the Ukrainian people, we recognize the tenets of pre-modern and modern-style warfare, as well as the tenets of sophisticated barbarism and the brutal strategies long discarded by the West. Mariupol fell after prolonged, almost mediaeval, siege tactics. City bombings and the long battle in Bakhmut show stark similarities to the battle of Stalingrad. In the surrounding countryside, the muddy trenches resemble those of the Somme in the First World War. This war already ranks among the top 10 per cent of

the bloodiest wars of the past 100 years, even without counting the civilian casualties. The casual use of nuclear threats by Russian media personalities and senior politicians also echoes a previous era.

Lawrence Freedman was right to conclude that predictions about the future of war and warfare need to be read with a healthy dose of scepticism. Still, while in their pure form, none of the five futures discussed in this chapter present 'the future', they function perhaps like string theory in physics: an esoteric belief that reality is composed of multiple dimensions. Though some of these will probably be wrong, they nevertheless serve to inspire fruitful analysis and experiments.[116] Indeed, as the recent strategic history of the West suggests, Western militaries, in their obligation to prepare for future war, need to study the range of potential futures and understand the specific political, strategic and operational dynamics of each scenario they deem likely to present in the not-so-distant future. To wit, in 2023, another civil war emerged in Sudan; Russia's Wagner Group gained influence in Mali via a proxy warfare fighting style; and Chinese fighter aircraft regularly violated Taiwanese airspace. Each of these indicate that concepts such as sophisticated barbarism, immaculate warfare and major war are relevant notions to make sense of possible futures. Presuming that the future is a singular one that the armed forces can focus on will, as the past three decades have proven, often result in organizational amnesia. Knowledge and expertise concerning other kinds of war are lost. As both Frank Hoffman and Robert Johnson note, they remind us that the future of war is plural.[117]