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WAR IN THE XXI CENTURY[1]

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War is a global phenomenon, from Europe to Oceania, from America to Asia, all over Africa, recognized as a major issue by scholars of International Relations. This is one of the reasons why we are here presenting a brief essay on this topic.



This presentation is articulated in two distinct parts. Firstly, we will give a perspective of the transformation in the nature of armed conflicts. In fact, war has evolved from the wonderful trinity of Clausewitz model (original violence of its elements, the play of probabilities and chance, the subordinate nature of a political instrument), to an irregular, global, asymmetrical and permanent one, without a clear origin, which can appear in any place, and where everything and everyone can become possible targets.

Secondly, we will try to characterize war in the age of information, where high technology, mass media and zero casualties are dominant.

The transformation in the nature of armed conflicts - a perspective

When we think or speak about war, normally the associated image is a confrontation of the Clausewitzian model, with a three levels analysis - State, Armed Forces, and Population. However, war as a political instrument of the State, opposing one State to another, opposing Armed Forces to other Armed Forces, constitutes a relatively recent phenomenon which will soon disappear (Creveld; 1991; p. 75).

In a world constantly marked by volatile identities (Badie, 2001; p. 71), nothing is certain; the strategic zones of interest have changed to other regions and turned into areas that are now capable of exporting their own instability (Ramonet, 2001; p. 56).

Nowadays global violence can be seen as asymmetrical and permanent, without a clear origin, appearing everywhere, reaching everyone. From a military perspective, this is the kind of situation typical of a unipolar world.

Contemporary wars, after 1945, now contemplate other actors beside States namely intra-state and extra-state actors. These actors are capable of executing military operations, of an extreme flexibility, which resemble a fight for survival (Bauer e Raufer, 2003; p. 165). In these operations there are no rules and no clearly defined objectives; therefore the monopoly of violence no longer belongs to the State (Weber, 1946).

In the Western world the hypothesis of returning to a pre-Westphalia past is growing day-by-day. The current process of change will be gradual, irregular and chaotic. The so called Failed States will in some regions of the planet benefit the growth of a non-state international violence, which in extreme cases can become a kind of privatized violence (Kaldor, 2001; p. 91 - 96).

According to Herfried Munkler (2003, p. 18) we are now going through a process of demilitarization of war. Wars will be fought partly by soldiers and will no longer be directed against military objectives. Its extreme violence is already directed against non combatant, including all domains of social life. In these wars child soldiers are frequently used, and a growing violation of human rights and the laws of war can be perceived (Singer, 2005; p. 7).

Barbarism has a fundamental role: to assure the fidelity of participants and also to create complicity in crime and in terms of stating a collective identity to face the enemy. In Clausewitz words violence reaches the edge, and the so called honor of the warrior is what will distinguish war from savagery (1976; p. 75).

Considering the tendency for other actors to appear in this kind of conflict, the character of the conflict itself had to evolve: These wars are irregular, structural or temporarily asymmetrical; they do not possess fronts, campaigns, bases, uniforms or any kind of respect for territorial limits. The objectives of these wars are fluid and characterized by close combat; the combatants are mixed with the population, which is used as a shield and, if necessary, as a kind of exchange currency. The 'strong

points' of these wars are innovation, surprise and unpredictability. Apparently the ends justify the means, by the occasional use of terror, and the statute of neutrality and civil/military distinction disappear.

These wars are not only more common than the ones in the past, but they are also more important in terms of strategy therefore developing in insurgency operational environments. These new subversive background, are mentioned by other authors as fourth generation warfare. Others consider it to be wars of third kind, and for others they are seen as post-modern wars or, in the words of Mary Kaldor, new wars.

These wars happen basically amongst people, and besides the State itself, they involve a new kind of organizations that keep fighting each other. These are the kind of war that uses all available forms of coercion to convince political opponents of the intangibility of their objectives (Smith, 2006).

They also try to point out the exaggerated prices for the expected benefits, thus provoking consequences in the international system as a whole. In these wars the biggest victims are innocent civilians who represent more than 90% of the casualties (Pearson e Rochester, 1997, p. 306). In the last decade, about 2 million victims were children (an average of one child every three minutes) (Singer, 2005; p. 4-5).

In less developed countries (where the State had never been able to show its strength towards other social entities), during violent confrontations, the distinction between government, Armed Forces and population, disappears.

In a nearby future, the types of war can be classified as regular and irregular. Regular wars are those which follow the model defined by Clausewitz. Therefore when we talk about irregular wars the main actors can no longer be the State and its Armed Forces.

States can start a war against a terrorist net, a revolutionary movement, a rebellious army or even against transnational criminal organizations. Irregular wars can also be fought amongst all the referred entities and may not involve the State. In both types of wars, superiority in the access and treatment of information is of paramount importance. New and subtle instruments of intervention, which are frequently a part of these conflicts, are private military companies that can be looked at as an extension of the foreign policy of the State itself.

Adding to the above mentioned types of War, there is still one type which is worth mentioning: The war of transformation.

This war was described in 1994 in the book by Alvin and Heidi Toffler, War and Anti-war. The authors announced a division of the world into three parts, which were associated with three kinds of war: agricultural wars, typical of the agrarian revolution period; industrial wars, a product of the industrial revolution, and finally wars of information, resulting from the revolution in information and knowledge.

Wars which are typical in terms of the society of knowledge have transformation forces as their main root and are connected with the great-powers, mainly the US military power.

There is a wrong tendency of labeling wars of transformation merely as high-tech wars. In fact, they are much more than just that. Wars of transformation are based not only on high technology but also (Garcia; 2005 b; Telo, 2002):

- On the use of space;
- On new tactics and the new organic composition of units;
- On the essential need for maintaining violence within political, ethical and strategic limits (accepted by the international community);
- On post conflict State Building;
- But also on civilianization (half military/half civilian)
- And above all, on the organizational model of the existing technologies, which are already available in civilian markets, and from which it is possible to create new and different capabilities in a system of systems.

Technology modifies the character of war, and not its nature, implying a new concept for the term war, in which the frontier between war and peace is no longer clear.

The order of Battle in Network Centric Warfare, develops around the concept of fast domain, operations RISTA (reconnaissance, intelligence, monitoring and target acquisition), together with the use of intelligent high precision weapons. The new battlefield is dominated by a system of systems, on the basis of Command and Control Warfare, therefore constituting the fifth dimension of war

(Pereira, 2003; p. 160), where informational manoeuvre overlaps, and some times substitutes land manoeuvre.

More than continuous, operations are now simultaneous. Due to a smashing technological superiority and to Effects Based Operations, there is much less casualties. Gravity Centers include not only the physical space but also and above all, the cognitive domain. Nowadays, the purpose is to immobilize, control, modify and mould enemy's behavior, in order to create a new political environment where losses can be controlled as a way to prevent negative reactions from the public opinion. For this reason, Edward Luttwak defined this phenomenon as post-heroic war; force used without jeopardizing lives. New technologies and the digitalization of Units dictate new strategic, tactical and organizational doctrines.

The robotization of the battlefield is on the way. Transformation warfare is recently the modernizing factor of psychological warfare and traditional insurgency. Now and in the future operational environment, the most important is the field of information, mainly the access to it, the control and process of it in order to obtain knowledge and later to share it.

Soon, psychological technologies will have new instruments to influence "hearts and minds", and these instruments will raise the role of psychological warfare and of information warriors. These warriors will also learn how to implement false realities and how to induce psycho-cultural movements, therefore favoring certain national interests, and creating a virtual reality whenever reality itself contradicts any strategic imperative (Valle, 2001)..

At a strategic level, information warfare implies the domain of the cyber-space; and it also implies that cyber attacks cannot be forgotten. This different kind of war implies a security and defense policy for cyber-space, therefore imposing the creation of a new geopolitical dimension, the dimension of cyber-space (Adams, 1993).

In wars of transformation, supremacy in means and systems of communications is vital. In most cases, space tends to be understood as the fourth dimension of war. Those who have the capacity of dominating space will dominate the world. Aided by space based global intervention weapons, space will become militarized, and will create a new form of dissuasion. These concepts also imply a geopolitical concept for space (Boniface, 2002; p. 122)..

Civilianization made the distinction between civilian and military men disappear, for it is no longer a question of Armed Forces entering in combat on their own, but together with the political communities they serve. Thus, this phenomenon of interpenetration works as an indicator of a new kind of Armed Forces: professional, with small contingents and reduced staff, major connections with Universities and research centres, integrating more women, more minorities and, with a growing tendency for the privatization of military activity (Moskos, Williams e Segal, 2000).

Both traditional structures and missions are now welcoming civilians. Private Military Companies have an important role in this area.

Wars of transformation are also distant wars. For most States defensive power is very limited in its response. These wars are also distant in terms of command and control, and the media plays a major role in it. In transformation wars, the duration in terms of intensity is very short - weeks - and its importance lie on this fact in terms of public opinion and political interest (Telo, 2002; p. 222). This means that in a post-war operation period, the military presence will remain for a long time, similarly to what currently happens in Iraq.

Nowadays it is consensual that war does not correspond to the well known classification of Clausewitz for whom the War was "(...) a true instrument of policy, a continuation of political relations, and an accomplishment of these by other means (...)" (1976; p. 737). In fact, nowadays there has been an inversion of that principle: Politics is the continuation of War. Presently, war is a superior way of politics, superior because more demanding, leading to permanent special care and to a more complex elaboration of thought. Nevertheless, we also understand that war can be the failure of politics. One of the most important implications of this qualitative change in the concept of war is the alteration of the functional links between politicians and the military.

The involving politics is now crossing all levels of military action: The structure of military command, dealing with different levels of responsibility, is mainly concerned with political action. At a tactical level, a commander of a small force plays a local role in its contact with the population and authorities.

Wars involving a great power either on its own or in coalition, can be regular or irregular, and will always be made by forces of transformation. Now in Iraq, the intervention of the coalition is characterized by technological superiority; aerial supremacy; space domain; use of intelligent

weapons and intense information warfare.

In Iraq, the coalition force gave place to a new Blitzkrieg, thus breaking the Iraqis will to fight on.

However, after the military occupation, a transformation in the nature of the armed conflict emerges, no longer following the Clausewitzian model: other actors besides States become involved. Depending on the circumstance and the approach, we characterize these new actors as outlaws, terrorists, guerrillas, mercenaries or freedom fighters. None of them is representing a State.

Though stabilization operations are generally carried out by transformation forces, they now occur in a subversive environment: an environment, of close combat, where neither a comprehensive strategy nor a well defined tactic exists; the objectives are fluid; innovation reigns, surprise and unpredictability are its dominant characteristics.

Terror is frequent, the distinction between civilians and military disappears, and combatants are mixed with the population. In this context, the population plays a basic role of logistic support, in terms of intelligence and at the same time, protection and source of conscription. On the other hand, the population is also the main target and the major victim.

In operational situations of this kind, the generalization of breaking both the laws of war and the regime of human rights protection is normal. In terms of insurgency wars we must remember the old premise: these wars are not gained by means of military action, but lost due to military inaction.

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AS AMEAÇAS TRANSNACIONAIS E A SEGURANÇA DOS ESTADOS

Francisco Proença Garcia

2005/09/23

AS GUERRAS DO TERCEIRO TIPO E A ESTRATÉGIA MILITAR

Francisco Proença Garcia

2005/09/02

MILITARY POWER

Alexandre Reis Rodrigues

2004/04/23

CONTRIBUTOS PARA O EMPREGO DO BATALHÃO DE INFANTARIA NA LUTA CONTRA-SUBVERSIVA ACTUAL

Francisco Proença Martins com ...

2004/04/04

DISSUAÇÃO OU PREVENÇÃO?

Alexandre Reis Rodrigues