

SPÁLENIE KATEGORICKEJ HYDRY.

Aplikácia Clausewitza voči chybám v uvažovaní o kategorizácii vojny

SETTING THE CATEGORICAL HYDRA ABLAZE.

Applying Clausewitz to the Fallacies of War Categorisation

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Abstrakt

Tento výskum má za cieľ odhaliť prvky chybného uvažovania, ktoré pomáhajú neužitočným kategóriám vojny prežívať napriek ich analytickej vyprázdnenosti. Za týmto účelom využíva autor metódu teoretickej analýzy. Zistenia naznačujú, že viaceré kategórie vojny sú charakteristické tromi spoločnými znakmi. Tieto znaky sú založené na viacerých chybných prvkoch v uvažovaní ako preferencia nazerat' na problém vojny cez legalistickú prizmu namiesto strategickej, falošná ekvivalencia medzi vojenskými a nevojenskými nástrojmi moci, neznalosť empirických dôkazov, ignorácia dynamickej podstaty vojny a prehliadanie protivníka ako kľúčového prvku vojny.

Abstract

This research aims to expose the fallacious thinking which enables some of the categories of war to proliferate despite their questionable analytical usefulness. For this purpose, the author uses the method of theoretical analysis. These are the confusion about the nature of war and peace, the emphasis on novelty, and the attempts to capture war as a static phenomenon. The fallacies identified are the prevalence of legalistic lenses over strategic lenses, the false equivalence between military and non-military instruments, the ignorance of the empirical evidence, the ignorance of the dynamic nature of war and the neglect of the adversary as a crucial component of war.

Klíčová slova

Kategorizácia; vojna; strategická teória; Clausewitz; násilie.

Keywords

Categorisation; War; Strategic Theory; Clausewitz; Violence.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary wars are immensely complex phenomena. Non-state actors do not hesitate to challenge the greatest military powers on the planet. The latter possess the military capability to kill millions of people in a short time, but they find it incredibly hard to pin down a handful of soldiers hidden in a desert cave. Violent insurgencies rooted in ethnic divisions and religious identities have erupted in several places all over the world. All of this is accompanied by the still wider use of robotics, long-range missiles, cyber-attacks and ever-present propaganda spread via new types of media.

Some security experts argue that the complexity of contemporary warfare renders our traditional understanding of war outdated.¹ They argue that contemporary wars are so different from those of the past that they deserve new labels to capture their specific character. Thus, current wars are often supposed to be “new”, “fourth generational”, “asymmetric”, “unrestricted”, “hybrid”, and most recently “political”. The list is by no means exhaustive and is likely to grow in the future.

Many of these attempts to categorise war have an important thing in common. They seem to share a hydra-like nature when it comes to their succession. Once it is shown that a specific concept has little analytical value, it may fade into background only to be replaced by a new one with similar characteristics.² Take the recent example of hybrid war. It has received such a serious criticism that even its former proponents now question its analytical utility.³ Yet, instead of vanishing completely, the concept has been repackaged and sold to us under the label of political war.⁴ The main issue here is that the concepts seem to retain much of their flaws throughout the successive process. In this specific case the later concept is even more flawed than the previous one. Whereas one could have a debate about whether all wars are hybrid, it is futile to debate whether all wars are political.

The strongest case for this fact has been made some two centuries ago and there has yet to appear any rebuttal worth consideration.⁵ Thus, categorising war as political does not add any value to the concept. Furthermore, whereas much of the confusion of the hybrid war concept is rooted in the fact that it describes both violent and non-violent actions as cases of war, the new label uses the term war mostly to describe non-violent actions. As will be shown in this paper, this is not useful in analytical sense and it may be very confusing in its consequences. With this pattern of succession in mind, it is probably the right time to start being worried about what category of war we will be given in the near future.

¹ SMITH, Ruppert. *The Utility of Force*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 2007. ISBN 0307278115.

² A good overview of how the different concepts have gradually replaced one another can be seen in WILLIAMSON, Steven C. *From Fourth Generation Warfare to Hybrid War*. Carlisle: US Army War College. 2009. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2m03pn5>.

³ See, for example, GALEOTTI, Mark. *Russian Political War: Moving Beyond the Hybrid*. New York: Routledge. pp. 1-2. 2019. ISBN 1138335959.

⁴ GALEOTTI, ref. 3

⁵ CLAUSEWITZ, Carl. *On War*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1976. ISBN 9780691018546.

Due to their hydra-like nature, many of the concepts seem to be immune to elimination when dealt with one by one. Accordingly, this paper considers it futile to attempt to list the many flaws with any specific concept.⁶ Rather, the purpose of this research is to eliminate the fertile but fallacious ground upon which many of these concepts seem to be dependent. This is to be done by identification of common themes running across the categories. By the exposure of these themes the research can direct attention to the fallacious thinking behind them. In order to achieve this, the research relies on theoretical analysis. The research also attempts to provide the scholars and practitioners with a positive guidance on how to think about war and its categorisation. This guidance is rooted in insights derived from the works of Carl von Clausewitz. Taken together, the exposure of the fallacious thinking and the insights of Clausewitz may constitute the proverbial flame to burn the hydra without spawning a new flawed category.

The structure of the article is as follows. First, the next section discusses the validity of war categorisation and introduces the approach used in this paper in more detail. It is followed by a brief overview of the several categories of war that have been introduced to understand the wars of today. The purpose of this section is not to provide an exhaustive description or analysis of the conceptual categories. Rather, the purpose is to provide the readers with the opportunity to see the common themes between the concepts which emerge clearly once the concepts are so closely packed together. Second, the common themes running across these categories are identified and the fallacies behind them are exposed. Third, Clausewitzian insights are used to shed more light on the three themes without the baggage of the fallacious reasoning. In the conclusion, the findings are summarised, and their implications are discussed.

APPROACHING THE CATEGORISATION OF WAR

Categorisation of war has been a flourishing business in strategic studies and beyond for several decades. Over the years, wars have been categorised by their causes,⁷ the

⁶ Readers are encouraged to consult the extensive literature on the specific conceptual categories for a more detailed discussion. Some good starting points include CALISKAN, Murat. 2019. Hybrid warfare through the lens of strategic theory. In: *Defense and Security Analysis*, 35(1), pp. 40-58. ISSN 1475-1801; ECHEVARRIA, Antulio. *Fourth-Generation War and Other Myths*. Carlisle, PA: U. S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2005. ISBN N/A; FRIEDMAN, Ofer. Russian "Hybrid Warfare": *Resurgence and Politicization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018. ISBN 0190877375; MCKENZIE, Kenneth F. Elegant Irrelevance: Fourth Generation Warfare. In: *Parameters*, 23(3), pp. 51-60, 1993; MILEVSKI, Lukas. Asymmetry is Strategy, Strategy is Asymmetry. In: *Joint Force Quarterly*, 75(4), pp. 77-83, 2015. ISSN 1070-0692; NEWMAN, Edward. The 'new wars' debate: A historical perspective is needed. In: *Security Dialogue*, 35(2), pp. 173-189, 2004. ISSN 1460-3640. CHARAP, Samuel. The Ghost of Hybrid War. In: *Survival*, 57(6), pp. 51-58, 2015. ISSN 1468-2699. For a distilled form of criticism against several of the concepts, see TUCK, Christopher. *Understanding Land Warfare*. London: Routledge., 2014. ISBN 0415507545.

⁷ Among the more prominent distinctions, there are wars caused by greed or grievances, wars of honour or credibility, wars of fear or wars of material interests. Categories such as new wars also often emphasise the distinct causes of war such as ethnic or religious identity.

objectives that the belligerents pursue,⁸ the instruments they use,⁹ the tactics they use,¹⁰ the armed forces they deploy,¹¹ the weaponry that is employed,¹² the character of the belligerents,¹³ the intensity of the fighting,¹⁴ the geographical battle space¹⁵ and countless other distinctions. All these metrics were supposed to bring some analytical order into the chaos that wars usually exemplify.

Not everyone has become persuaded by the analytical utility of the emerging “alphabet soup” of war categories.¹⁶ On the contrary, some scholars have argued that to categorise wars at all is futile, as it reduces the complexity of the phenomenon to such an extent that it becomes too detached from reality.¹⁷ Instead, they propose to analyse each war in its unique context.¹⁸ This is the right way to avoid tempting but flawed monistic solutions to the complex problem of war at hand.¹⁹ Others have argued that categorisation of strategies is more useful as categorisation of wars, because it respects the interactive and dynamic nature of both phenomena.²⁰ Flawed or not, categorisation is probably here to stay for a long time, if only because people tend to strive for clarity of their mental images of reality so as to be able to effectively operate in the world.²¹ Thus, this paper does not aim to take sides in this intellectual contest. Rather, it aims to provide a benchmark against which the individual categories and their

⁸ One of the more basic distinctions is often made between absolute and limited wars, but for a much more nuanced categorisation, see the latest contribution by KRAUSE, Joachim. How do wars end? A strategic perspective, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 42(6). 2019. ISSN 01402390.

⁹ Here, it is possible to include economic, political, information, hybrid, and unrestricted wars.

¹⁰ Here, we can speak of guerrilla wars or wars of terror. It is also possible to argue that conventional wars and insurgencies fit into this category in some of their interpretations.

¹¹ For example, see the distinction between regular and irregular wars.

¹² An obvious example is the distinction between conventional and nuclear wars. One could also argue that some interpretations of asymmetric wars fit into this category.

¹³ Inter-state versus intrastate wars, insurgencies, civil wars, revolts and rebellions.

¹⁴ Wars of different intensities (from low to high).

¹⁵ Global wars and regional wars. It is also possible to argue that the distinction between limited and total war belongs here.

¹⁶ For one of the most detailed criticisms, see GRAY, Colin. *Categorical Confusion? The Strategic Implications of Recognizing Challenges Either as Irregular or Traditional*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute. 2012.

¹⁷ *Ibid*; see also SMITH, Michael. L.R. Strategy in an age of ‘low-intensity’ warfare: why Clausewitz is still more relevant than his critics. In: *Rethinking the nature of war*. Duyvesteyn, Isabelle and Ångstrom, Jan. (eds). London: Frank Cass. pp. 36-37. 2005. ISBN 0415354625; For a much more elaborate treatment of the subject, see SMITH, Michael. L. R. - JONES, David. M. *The Political Impossibility of Modern Counterinsurgency*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2015. ISBN 9780231539128.

¹⁸ SMITH, ref. 17, pp. 36-37.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

²⁰ MILEVSKI, Lukas. Respecting Strategic Agency: On the Categorization of War in Strategy, *Joint Force Quarterly*, 86(3), pp. 35-40. 2017. ISSN 1070-0692.

²¹ Even Clausewitz, who is so often listed as the big gun against any categorisation, did in fact categorise quite a lot. See, for example, the distinction he makes between small wars, people’s wars and large-scale interstate wars, in DAASE, Ch. - DAVIS, J. *Clausewitz on Small War*. Oxford University Press. 2016. ISBN 0198737130.

interpretations may be reflected. This in turn may provide both policymakers and scholars with a tool to better refine the existing concepts and to come up with new ones while avoiding the fallacious basis.

The main point here is that there is a difference in analytical utility between distinct categories of war.²² It is argued here that the utility of any category or its interpretation can be judged by examining how much it is rooted in the fallacious reasoning. In the later sections of this article, I have chosen to organise the fallacious reasoning under the three broad categories. These are the confusion about war and peace, the emphasis on novelty and the static picture of war. In general, the category of war which suffers from all or most of the fallacies should be judged as less useful than the category which avoids the fallacies altogether.²³

For the purpose of subsequent analysis, this paper goes over the more representative categories which suffer from all three fallacious themes, at least in some of their interpretations and to some extent. The purpose of the analysis is not to present an exhaustive overview of all the categories, as that would require much more space than is available here. Rather, the purpose is to draw attention to the fallacious patterns. Even a small sample of selected categories should be enough to illustrate them.

OVERVIEW OF THE CATEGORIES

One of the first categories to emerge was the “New Wars” concept. Proponents of this concept argue that contemporary wars are characterised by several changes in kind in comparison to the wars of the more distant past. The actors in contemporary wars are supposed to be mostly non-state and the forces they use are likely to be irregular.²⁴ The objectives the belligerents pursue are supposed to be rooted in ethnic and religious identities of the belligerents.²⁵ The strategies the belligerents use are supposed to be based on deliberate targeting of civilians, instead of seeking out decisive battles.²⁶ New wars are also supposed to be without clear starting and ending points

²² One important caveat is in order. Many of the existing categories come in different forms and interpretations, depending on the author, his professional background and his objectives. Some subtle differences may also be hidden by the distinctions between categorisation of war and warfare, which, though clear in theory, are often completely blurred in everyday parlance. Thus, not only is there a difference in utility between distinct categories of war but also between different interpretations of any specific category. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for reminding me to include this point.

²³ One could argue that this general rule does not apply to every case. It is possible that not all three themes are equally important all the time. As everything in war, the importance of the themes to the utility of any concept varies according to the specific context of any conflict.

²⁴ KALDOR, Mary. Old Wars, Cold Wars, New Wars, and the War on Terror, *International Politics*, Vol. 42, No. 4, pp. 491-493, 2005. ISSN 1740-3898.

²⁵ KALDOR, ref. 24, p. 493.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 492.

as opposed to the older wars. Because of these changes, the authors in this tradition also argue that it is very hard to distinguish between war and peace in today's world.²⁷ Second, the category of "Fourth Generation Wars" has emerged. Within this approach, the proponents first divide military history into four distinct categories, based on objectives, strategies and tactics of the belligerents.²⁸ Then they focus on the most recent category, the fourth generation of war, which is supposed to describe the character of war in the last few decades. The supposed characteristic of these wars is that they are to be waged by non-state actors operating through network organisations.²⁹ The aim of these actors is to decrease the will of the adversary to continue the fight.³⁰ The actors of these wars are supposed to use a broad range of violent and non-violent instruments, from propaganda to terrorist attacks.³¹ These wars also occur in the environment where states have supposedly lost the monopoly on violence.³² This trend is supposed to contribute to the blurring distinction between war and peace.³³

Third, another distinct category of "Unrestricted Wars" has also emerged. Proponents of the category argue that wars of today are not only about armed forces, but that they are also waged by political, economic and information instruments.³⁴ Subsequently, the main point these authors make is that the contemporary wars are characterised by the transgression of many boundaries which had been taken as granted before. Thus, we are supposed to see unprecedented blurring of lines between war and peace, between violence and non-violence and between allies and enemies.³⁵

Fourth, the category of "Asymmetric Wars" has occurred.³⁶ This category of war is characterised by the emphasis on the asymmetries between the character and the means of different actors. The proponents specifically warn that the highly sophisticated and advanced armed forces of superpowers face elusive enemies which

²⁷ See KALDOR, Mary. In Defence of New Wars. *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2(1). 2013. ISSN 2165-2627.

²⁸ LIND, William S. - NIGHTENGALE, Keith. SCHMITT, John F. - SUTTON, Joseph W. - WILSON, Gary I. The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation. In: *Marine Corps Gazette*, pp. 22-26. 1989. ISSN 0025-3170.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ HAMMES, Thomas. War Evolves into the Fourth Generation, *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 26, No. 2, pp. 189-221, 2005. ISSN 1743-8764.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² LIND, ref. 28, p. 24.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ QIAO, Liang. - WANG, Xiangsui. *Unrestricted Warfare*. Beijing: PLA Literature and Arts Publishing House, 1999. ISBN 1626543054.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ For a variety of different concepts which can be put under the category of asymmetric war, see CREVELD, Martin v. 2017. *More on War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 176-181, 2017. ISBN 0198788177; SIMPSON, Emile. *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First Century Combat as Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 101-102, 2018. ISBN 0199327882; METZ, Steven - JOHNSON, Douglas, V. *Asymmetry and US Military Strategy: Definition, Background, and Strategic Concepts*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2001. ISBN N/A.

leverage their strengths against the former's weaknesses.³⁷ These enemies can take many forms and roles, such as guerrillas, insurgents, or terrorists.³⁸ Furthermore, in these conflicts, politics and military conflict often merge into one to such a degree that they penetrate all social interactions and thus make any distinction between war and peace meaningless.³⁹ Proponents of this category are often quick to point out that asymmetric wars are not new in principle but that the rapid security context of recent decades makes them much more prevalent and unique today.⁴⁰

Fifth, there is the very famous category of "Hybrid War". There are several different concepts of hybrid war but most of them share the sentiment that contemporary wars are waged by a simultaneous employment of different instruments of power and different combinations of armed forces.⁴¹ The novelty of this approach is supposed to reside in the simultaneous and synergistic employment of these distinct instruments.⁴² Due to the emphasis on the important role of various instruments of power, the proponents often argue that it is very hard to distinguish between war and peace anymore.⁴³

Finally, and very closely building upon the previous category, the most recent category to emerge was the one of "Political War". It has been argued that this kind of war is different from the old wars characterised by violent engagements.⁴⁴ Instead, the real currency of political wars are money, propaganda and espionage.⁴⁵ This kind of war is waged exclusively by non-military instruments of power such as media, spies and business lobbies.⁴⁶ Political wars are conducted via disinformation campaigns and by the

³⁷ CREVELD, ref. 36, pp.180-189.

³⁸ CREVELD, ref. 36, p. 189.

³⁹ CREVELD, ref. 36, p. 190.

⁴⁰ GRANGE, David L. *Asymmetric Warfare: Old Method, New Concern*. National Strategy Forum Review. 2000.

⁴¹ HOFFMAN, Frank. - MATTIS, James. N. *Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. *Proceedings*, 131(11), pp. 18-19. 2005. ISSN 0041-798X; HOFFMAN, Frank. *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Arlington: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies. 2007; FRIEDMAN, Ofer. *Russian "Hybrid Warfare": Resurgence and Politicization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2018. ISBN 0190877375; MANSOOR, Peter R. Introduction. In: *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*. Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor (eds). New York: Cambridge University Press. 2012. ISBN 1107643333; JOHNSON, Robert. *Hybrid War and Its Countermeasures: A Critique of the Literature*. In: *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 141-163, 2018. ISSN 1743-9558; RENZ, Bettina - SMITH, Hanna. *Russia and hybrid warfare - going beyond the label*. Helsinki: Kikimora Publications. 2016. ISSN 1457-9251.

⁴² HOFFMAN, *Conflict in the 21st Century*, ref. 41, pp. 7-8.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ GALEOTTI, *Russian Political War*, ref. 3, p. 1. Galeotti emphasises the fact that these non-violent means of war are not new in themselves. Rather, he sees novelty in the extent of the war and in the special circumstances that influence the conduct of political war in the contemporary world. Nonetheless, he clearly differentiates this new kind of war from the traditional concept of war, GALEOTTI, *Russian Political War*, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

support of foreign political parties.⁴⁷ The aims of these wars are the destabilisation of specific regions and the confusion of targeted societies.⁴⁸ Since political wars are all about the use of non-military instruments over longer periods of time, it is very hard to find clear demarcation line between this kind of war and peace.

THEMES AND THEIR FALLACIES

Confusion about peace and war

The first and arguably the most dominant theme running across all the categories is the supposed increase in difficulty when it comes to distinguishing between war and peace. Often, wars of today are characterised as virtually endless. They are seen as exploding in intensity and then fading away but never really vanishing. Given this presence of constant wars, peace is seldom, if ever, achieved.

This narrative is based on two interrelated fallacies. The first one is the tendency to overemphasise legalistic lenses at the expense of strategic lenses when deciding whether there is war or peace. Now, to be sure, war can be thought of as a legal condition and this perspective is perfectly valid in some contexts.⁴⁹ But war cannot be only seen as legal condition as that would result in absurd consequences.⁵⁰ If this was the case, then the occurrence of war would depend solely on the subjective decision of the responsible administrative bodies. A government could claim that there is a war without any evidence grounded in the real world. Conversely, a government could deny the presence of war even if a whole society was engulfed in it. The analytical deficiency of this approach is perhaps best illustrated when contrasted to the concept of peace. It is hardly plausible that we would accept the notion that there is a peace in a country if armed engagements took place all over the territory. No matter the government's assurances of the peaceful state of affairs, there would be no reason for anyone to take them seriously. Legalistic lenses are not suitable to examine the existence of war or peace as a real-world phenomenon.

The evidence whether there is war or peace can only be clearly seen once the phenomenon is looked upon from the perspective of strategic theory. The theory posits three requirements for any state of affairs to be understood as war. First, strategic theory understands war to be inherently tied to the presence of violence, whether real or imminent one.⁵¹ Violence, in turn, is understood as the deliberate infliction of

⁴⁷ GALEOTTI, Mark. Controlling Chaos: How Russia manages its political war in Europe. In: *European Council on Foreign Relations* [online]. 2017. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2x2tcxs>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ WRIGHT, Quincy. *A Study of War*. Vol.1. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1942. p. 8. ISBN 0226910016.

⁵⁰ See a more detailed discussion of this tendency in MEWETT, Christopher. Ain't No Party Like a Clausewitz Party: Part 1. In: *War on the Rocks* [online]. 2014. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2x2NCWR>

⁵¹ See for example STRACHAN, Hew. The lost meaning of strategy, *Survival*, Vol. 47, No. 3, pp. 33-54, 2005. ISSN 1468-2699; See also GRAY, Colin. *Modern Strategy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 55, 1999. ISBN 0198782519.

physical harm on people.⁵² Furthermore, strategic theory also emphasises the relationship between violence and politics. Not every drunken brawl should be understood as war. It is only when violence is employed as means to achieve political objectives that we should speak of war.⁵³ Finally, violence needs to be interactive, not unilateral. It must be employed by both sides of the conflict.⁵⁴ So, when viewed from this perspective, it is very easy to distinguish between war and peace. War is when and where violence is used in interactive manner to achieve political objectives; at all the other times and places, there is peace.

The second fallacy is the tendency to see equality between the military and non-military instruments of power where there is none. The categorical distinction between them is clear. The former conveys the inherent potential to inflict violence, while the latter does not. Subsequently, there is no comparison to be made between the certain destruction and damage the armed forces can produce and the very gradual and uncertain effects of economic sanctions, propaganda or political disruption.⁵⁵ Hence, it is not useful to label the employment of non-military instruments of power to constitute war. Once the non-military instruments of power are recognised to not constitute war in themselves, it is very easy to identify where and when war occurs and where it does not. War is only where the military instruments are employed in interactive relationship.

These two fallacies may produce some very practical problems, because they have the potential to confuse every element of society. First, they needlessly confuse the general population of the state. Persuading citizens that they are in a war, when in fact they only face propaganda or organised crime, may make the people much less sensitive to government's restrictions when the real war comes. To avoid the confusion, citizens of the many Western states should be told the truth, that they are living in the most peaceful period of human history.⁵⁶ Second, they confuse the armed forces and disrupt the communication between them and the political elites. In general, when military men speak about war, they have violent interaction in mind. When politicians speak of war, this may mean any activity from economic competition to violent aggression. Worlds of these two actors are already so different that any communication between them is complicated. Putting redundant language barriers in their way is bound to produce more confusion than understanding. Third, they confuse the very politicians and security experts that employ them in the first place. As Milevski shows in his most recent piece, there is a different logic at work in war and peace. In short, non-military instruments of power convey more power when used in peace than when used alongside

⁵² KALYVAS, Stathis.N. *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 19, 2006, ISBN 0521670047.

⁵³ GRAY, ref. 51, p. 55.

⁵⁴ RANDALL, Peter S. Strategy and the Role of the Enemy. In: *Infinity Journal*, 4(3), pp. 28-32, 2015.

⁵⁵ MILEVSKI, Lukas. 2019. *Grand Strategy is Attrition: The Logic of Integrating Various Forms of Power in Conflict*. Carlisle: United States Army War College Press; See also MILEVSKI, Lukas. Strategy Versus Statecraft in Crimea. In: *Parameters*, 44(2), pp. 23-33. 2014.

⁵⁶ GAT, Azar. *The causes of war and the spread of peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2017. ISBN 978-0-19-879502-5.

the military ones in war.⁵⁷ Labelling the current state of affairs as war at the time of peace, the elites run the risk of misunderstanding the true effects various instruments may produce. In general, any war is confusing enough on its own. There is no need to add more confusion through the flawed use of conceptual language.

Emphasis on novelty

Another theme running across the categories, although with varying emphasis, is the widespread perception of novelty at the expense of continuity. Contemporary wars are often supposed to be new in terms of actors, objectives, strategies, armed forces and of course, in terms of difficulty to distinguish between war and peace. Some scholars argue that this is a useful pragmatic approach, because soldiers should be examining what is new to best prepare for the new challenges.⁵⁸ Subsequently, our traditional conception of war is often considered as outdated and borderline useless.⁵⁹

This tendency to perceive novelty and to ignore continuity in the conduct of war is fallacious because in many cases it is just empirically wrong. A combination of quantitative and qualitative studies that have been done show that there is no consistent difference between the contemporary and the older wars.⁶⁰ This makes perfect sense given that wars are still waged by people against other people. Human nature does not seem to change that much and nor does the conduct of war.⁶¹

The only feature of contemporary wars that may be new relates to weaponry. However, the impact the new technologies have on the overall character of war is too often overrated. As Kenneth Payne explains, even nuclear weapons have not changed the nature of war.⁶² It is thus not clear how much change can we expect to arise from far less destructive weaponry, such as drones, which are so often heralded as harbingers of the new face of war. It may be that the employment of artificial intelligence will bring about a novelty worthy of the label, but we will have to wait for that. In general,

⁵⁷ MILEVSKI, ref. 55, pp. 15-40.

⁵⁸ BRAHMS, Yael. "Get Real" - A Pragmatic Approach to a Philosophical Debate on the Changing Nature of War, *Defense & Security Analysis*, 23(3), pp. 225-235. 2011. ISSN 1475-1801.

⁵⁹ SMITH, ref. 1.

⁶⁰ KALYVAS, S.N. - BALCELLS, Laia. Does Warfare Matter? Severity, Duration, and Outcomes of Civil Wars, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 58(8), pp. 1390-1418. 2013. ISSN 1552-8766; KALYVAS, Stathis. N. Civil Wars: "Old" and "New" Civil Wars: A Valid Distinction? In: *World Politics*. 54(1), pp. 99-118. 2013. ISSN 1086-3338; MELANDER, Erik - OBERG, Magnus - HALL, Jonathan. Are 'New Wars' More Atrocious? Battle Severity, Civilians Killed and Forced Migration Before and After the End of the Cold War. In: *European Journal of International Relations*, 15(3), pp. 505-536. 2009. ISSN 1460-3713; NEWMAN Edward. *Understanding Civil War: Continuity and Change in Intrastate Conflict*. London: Routledge. 2014. ISBN 0415855179.

⁶¹ Many of the factors that are often assumed to be new can actually be traced back several millennia. See most of them at play in THUCYDIDES. *The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to 'The Peloponnesian War'*. Trans. Strassler R.B. New York: The Free Press. 1996. ISBN 0684827905.

⁶² PAYNE, Kenneth. Artificial Intelligence: A Revolution in Strategic Affairs? In: *Survival*, 60(5), pp. 7-32, 2018. ISSN 1468-2699.

humans are notoriously bad at predicting the future of war so scepticism toward the claims professing radical novelty in wars is warranted.⁶³

The consequences of this fallacy may be dire in two ways. Stressing the novelty of the contemporary wars may motivate relevant actors to ignore the strong continuities with the past. Ignorance of these continuities leads to the absence of opportunity to learn about the complexity of war from the past case experience.

Furthermore, somewhat ironically, the neglect of the continuities may result in our inability to understand the novel features when they appear. This is because without understanding what is not new one cannot clearly identify what really is new. Thus, the constant search for novelty might result in overlooking the novelty that might really be worth the attention.

War as a static phenomenon

The last theme running across the concepts is the tendency to capture war in a static moment, just like taking a photograph. This is seldom explicitly stated, but it is most clearly visible in some of the labels given to the categories. For example, the category of hybrid war indicates that an actor uses some combination of instruments of power or a combination of tactical actions in pursuit of his objective. Similarly, the category of asymmetric war indicates that there is some disparity in term of means between the belligerents. Other categories tend to emphasise the static nature of a political objective, such as ethnic or religious. The underlying assumption behind all of these ideas is that these variables remain stable throughout the course of war.

Capturing and subsequently categorising wars might be tempting but it is also fallacious. The case of asymmetric war illustrates the problem in the best way. It is the very purpose of strategy to create asymmetry between the belligerents, because asymmetry can be translated into unilateral advantage and subsequently exploited.⁶⁴ Thus, all the sides of the conflict strive to increase the means at their disposal and to decrease the means of the enemy. Therefore, any asymmetry in terms of means is likely to be a temporary state, from which it is not reasonable to generalise the character of the whole war. The same can also be said about political objectives of the belligerents and about strategies they employ in their pursuit. Participants of wars tend to adapt both to the actions of the adversaries and their allies and to the occurrence of unexpected events beyond their control. War is hence an inherently dynamic phenomenon with constant shifts of means and objectives resulting from actions and reactions.

The consequences of this fallacy are again twofold. By classifying war into rigid categories, we are forfeiting the opportunity to see war as an ever-changing phenomenon. This may invite underestimation of the dynamics the war may contain and thus impair our ability to anticipate dramatic changes in the evolving character of war. Furthermore, this rigid categorisation openly invites predetermined tools to solve

⁶³ FREEDMAN, Lawrence. *The Future of War: A History*. New York: Public Affairs. 2017. ISBN 1610393058.

⁶⁴ MILEVSKI, ref. 6, pp. 77-83.

a specific type of war. Instead of carefully examining the nature and character of the ongoing war, statesmen may be too quick to use a prepared toolkit to manage the war as if they were dealing with a predictable phenomenon.⁶⁵

THE FLAME OF CLAUSEWITZ

War as a pulsation of violence

Contrary to the prevalent notions of how difficult it is to distinguish between war and peace, it is very easy when looked upon through the lenses provided by Clausewitz. For the Prussian, war revolves around violence. To emphasise this fact, he uses the metaphor that violence is to war what cash is to business.⁶⁶ While it may not be present everywhere and all the time, the potential of its imminent presence still influences the flow of events. Clausewitz thus really understood war to be the pulsation of violence, varying widely in intensity but always being the essence of war.⁶⁷

This emphasis on violence is most clearly visible when the Prussian speaks about the means of war. According to Clausewitz, combat constitutes the only real means of war.⁶⁸ Echoing the same sentiment, he asserts that war is the use of force to compel the enemy to bend to our will.⁶⁹ So his most famous utterance, that war is a continuation of politics or policy by other means, needs to be read in this context.⁷⁰ One could question this approach on the basis that there are more means to war than violence alone. That may well be true but the fact that Clausewitz ignores all the other instruments and only examines the military one, which alone is capable of inflicting violence, indicates that there is a difference in kind between the non-military and military instruments. For Clausewitz, the notion that wars can be waged without real or imminent employment of violence is nonsense.⁷¹

Thus, Clausewitz draws attention to the ever-present pulsation of violence as the essence of war. This offers us a useful tool to distinguish between war and peace in any given moment. Wherever and whenever the pulses of violence occur or are imminent to occur, that is where we should seek war. Subsequently, we should never consider the absence of real and imminent violence to constitute war, regardless of what other instruments of power are at play.

⁶⁵ SMITH, Michael. L.R. Strategy in an age of 'low-intensity' warfare: why Clausewitz is still more relevant than his critics. In: *Rethinking the nature of war*. Duyvesteyn, Isabelle and Ångstrom, Jan. (eds). London: Frank Cass, pp. 36-37, 2005. ISBN 0415354625.

⁶⁶ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 95.

⁶⁷ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 87.

⁶⁸ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 95.

⁶⁹ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 75.

⁷⁰ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 87.

⁷¹ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, pp. 75-76.

Novelty within continuity

Clausewitz resolves the issue of continuity versus novelty as related to war in a very elegant manner. He sees war as composed of two distinct but interlinked natures or set of elements.⁷² One is objective and the other one subjective. The objective nature stands for the eternal conditions of human existence, namely emotions, violence, reason, chance and uncertainty. Since these elements affect humans across history and cultures, they are present in every war. At the same time, these elements vary in intensity from war to war, they are not constant. The subjective nature of war encompasses the contextual variables of societies that wage the war. This includes specific political, social, military, technological and economic contexts of the belligerents.⁷³ In the end, the specific character of any war results from the constant interactions between both natures.⁷⁴

Clausewitz hence emphasises that there is a strong continuity present in every war, but he also leaves some space free to appreciate any novelty which might occur. But in order to appreciate the character of that novelty, the specific and potentially new context of the war, one must be aware of the eternal nature in the first place. This makes Clausewitzian framework a perfect tool to understand the tensions between continuity and novelty without retreating to some of the war categories which tend to bring more confusion than utility to the table.

War as dynamic interaction

Clausewitz also offers us a useful framework to understand the dynamic character of any war. He uses his famous concept of trinity to understand how wars evolve in any given moment. He asserts that: “War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity - composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.”⁷⁵ The constant dynamic interaction between these elements makes any static picture of war implausible, as there is no stable relationship among the constituting elements. Reason may strive to control passions, guide the use of violence and try to eliminate chance but there is no guarantee of success. Passions, elicited by violence, may as well overcome reason and may in turn motivate actors to use violence with no regard to consequences. Or perhaps chance can exercise its influence through some unexpected event and elicit strong passions in the belligerents. There are countless possibilities for the interaction of these variables. Indeed, as the Prussian claims, any

⁷² This whole interpretation is largely based upon ECHEVARRIA, Antulio. *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*. 1st ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 70-78, 2007. ISBN 0199231915.

⁷³ For a great example of this in practice, see the historical excursus in CLAUSEWITZ, *On War*, Book VIII.

⁷⁴ ECHEVARRIA, ref. 6, pp. 73-78.

⁷⁵ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 89.

theory which would attempt to draw a stable relationship between the elements would be so incompatible with reality that it would be of no use whatsoever.⁷⁶

The dynamic character of war is further augmented by the presence of the enemy. The enemy is the crucial component of war, as war is literally impossible to emerge without one. This may sound as cliché to those educated in strategy, but it is one of the most important insights that Clausewitz offers us. The Prussian understands war to be a constant interaction between the belligerents and not a unilateral activity which is directed against a mindless target.⁷⁷ He explicitly rejects the notion that war is a quick decisive act, rather, he sees it as a long and messy process composed of countless actions and reactions.⁷⁸

The enemy is always there, trying to do the same to you as you try to do to him - to force you to bend to his will.⁷⁹ Using a particular category to describe the war as a whole often neglects or completely ignores the role of the adversary. For example, the category of hybrid or political war describes the activity of only one side. But in war, there are always at least two sides, many times even more. Furthermore, to call war a hybrid one implies that nothing can be done to change it. As long as the adversary is present, he influences the conduct of war, intentionally or not. Clausewitz thus emphasises the fact that all the actors can shape the war through their actions, although the results are not always what they desire.

CONCLUSION

Attempts to categorise wars have been occurring for several decades and they are unlikely to cease now. It has been argued here that many of the more fallacious categories tend to replicate in hydra-like fashion, making them hard to erase when dealt with one by one. Instead of trying to stop the attempts at categorisation, this paper aimed to provide some guidance for how to make the categories more useful and less fallacious. This in turn could burn the fertile but fallacious ground from which many of the less useful categories arise.

It has been argued that many of the categories share some common fallacious themes. This paper identified three of them: the confusion about differences between war and peace, the emphasis on novelty at the expense of continuity, and the desire to capture war as a static phenomenon. These themes are based on different kinds of fallacious reasoning, namely the prevalence of legalistic lenses over strategic lenses, the false equivalence between military and non-military instruments, the ignorance of the empirical evidence, the ignorance of the dynamic nature of war, and the neglect of the adversary as a crucial component of war.

The paper also offers some positive guidance on how to think about war and its categorisation, relying on several insights derived from Clausewitz. Wars should

⁷⁶ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 89.

⁷⁷ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 149.

⁷⁸ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 76.

⁷⁹ CLAUSEWITZ, ref. 5, p. 77.

always be understood as being complex interactive phenomena, revolving around violence, influenced by the societies that wage them and shaped by the eternal conditions of human existence. The more any category of war conveys this understanding, the better chance it has to be analytically beneficial.

The exposure of the fallacies and the remedy in the form of Clausewitzian insights may provide both scholars and practitioners with a good ground for orientation within the often too messy world of war categorisation. In academia, we have the precious luxury of time to evaluate each war in its own context and we should take advantage of this as often as possible. There is seldom need to employ popular but seriously flawed conceptual categories as we strive to increase our understanding of the phenomenon on its own terms. Politicians and military men in the real world may not have this luxury and they may be tempted to use the categories as shortcuts to think about the challenges at hand. Hopefully, this research will provide them with a tool to appreciate the complexity of the issue and to select the categories that are more useful than others.

