

Essay on the character and nature of war

[Society](#), [Terrorism](#)



The Changing Nature of War

The leading theorist on warfare, Clausewitz, once stated that the nature of war is never altered; only the character that distinguishes it can be. Before this statement is discussed in the current context, it is imperative to state what Clausewitz meant with the two phrases. First, the nature of war refers to the four fundamental ingredients that make all wars the same; a contest of wills between parties, the human factor, the political dimension and the uncertainty that it brings (Antulio, 2013). Conversely, the character of a war simply means the means that a war has to be or is fought, meaning that every war would have its character depending on the nations fighting, the time, reason and many other factors. With these definitions, I support Clausewitz's stating that, since the first wars, the nature of war has never changed, whilst the character of war has drastically altered.

Every war contains the human factor, no matter how advanced or technologically capable a nation is, meaning that humans will always be the biggest forms of war (Collin, 2012). Additionally, some people will argue that these days, wars are more religiously motivated than politically. However, it should be noted that the political motivation for war defines even the religious shifts that cause the war. With different technological advancements, war will always mean a clash of wills, the imposition of ideologies on the opposing party and the uncertainty caused by the war itself. These four factors will never change for any given war.

However, in the twenty first century, it is a fact that technological advancement and globalization are at a new level that has changed how a war would be fought. In the First and Second World Wars, the use of human

force triumphed, where the turning points were the introduction of the atomic bomb that changed the tide of war (Giorra, 2007). This means that the character of war was completely different. Globalization can be defined in this context as the spread of information and technology, greater access and mobility of information, and public interest in political and economic factors. The advent of globalization has caused many factors, least being travel and transportation. Between 1980 and 2000, the percentage of people worldwide that travels regularly around the world increased from 6% to 20%, and the number of people connected to Internet continues to increase exponentially every year.

Because of globalization, nations and their economies are also being affected, continually improved and bettered. One of these impacts is in the creation of an increasing number of democracies, all sovereign and that demand recognition and political respect (Jean-Marc, 2009). To foster a culture of political respect, many of these countries use available resources to create weapons of defense, all in a sense to remain relevant in power relationships. At the moment, more than 20 countries in the world have active ballistic missiles, nearly 100, 000 cruise missiles are in existence, nuclear weaponry is evident, and some of the most powerful countries have dangerous biological and chemical weapons (Jean-Marc, 2009). The presence of these weapons is defined by the political will of every country, that factor that would define every war, but the technological advancement changes all. In all the current conflicts, these weapons and advanced technologies have completely changed the character of war. No longer do nations engage in man-to-man warfare, instead refer to the use of technology. The best

example of this is the war on terror in the Middle East, where the United States used unmanned drones to down enemy combatants.

The character of war in the twenty first century is continually leaning towards the war on terror (Collin, 2012). Most of the wars being fought in the current age is focused on eliminating the terrorist threat, which most would say are religiously motivated. However, a close examination of terrorism reveals that it is not religiously motivated; instead, it is simply an expression of different political beliefs. With the advanced technology, terrorism has also advanced, fundamentally changing the way the war is fought. With the increasing globalization, world travel has increased, so terrorism is able to spread quickly. The proliferation of the Internet has also increased the spread of terror groups, so the war on terrorism has spread to even small countries (Collin, 2012). Over a third of current terrorist groups have the ability to work globally, and they have studied previous terror groups and improved their methods of warfare. With changing anti-terror policies and defenses, the terrorists are also adapting and changing their ways.

One of the most important and changed character of war in the current period is the ability of different countries to launch cyber warfare (Giorra, 2007). With the current advancement in connective technology, the world has come to depend on the Internet, and many countries, including the USA, China and Russia have the ability to launch strategic cyber-attacks. In fact, in the near past, cyber-attacks have already been seen in action. The interconnections of many nations and economies through information technology increases the possible vulnerability to cyber warfare and the economic effects would be in a ripple effect that affects many nations.

Consider the banking systems in the world, a strategic cyber-attack targeting this would affect the economies of a lot of countries.

With the factors mentioned above, can it be said that the nature of war has changed? Or simply that the character of war has altered. Looking back at Clausewitz's definition of the nature and character of war, it is evident to say that his definition of the nature of war has not changed since the days of World War One. The political motivation still exists, the human factor will never cease, and the friction that is the contest of wills and the uncertainty of war will never change. However, the character of war has drastically changed, with globalization and technology changing how wars are fought or even avoided. The cold war was a classic difference from the Second World War, where the United States and its enemies engaged in a war to prevent the outbreak of another big war. Espionage, as opposed to the use of force was a dominant factor, and intelligence dictated the war. In the current period, it can be said that war, and the way it is fought, has completely changed. Technology increases surveillance and the presence of dangerous weapons, and all the political players know this, hence the avoidance of all out political contests that could trigger another war. In conclusion, it is safe to say that the nature of war has never, and will never change, but the character of war has changed drastically from the First World War to the current period of war against terrorism.

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