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**EVOLUTION OF WAR.  
ISSUES OF VARIABILITY OR INVARIANCE OF NATURE  
AND CHARACTER OF WAR**

***Abstract:***

*The study of the nature and character of the war has probably been the subject of research since the first organized clash between the two opposing groups. My purpose in this paper is to elaborate on specific aspects of evolution of nature and character of war. First, based on the analysis of different theories of study of war and warfare, which includes examination of how warfare has evolved over a long history, analyzing important issues related to evolution of war, consider different considerations specifically what was and is the catalyst for changes in the character of war vs. unchanging nature of war. It is important to analyze the evolution of warfare, regard to revolutions in military affairs and the analysis of four generations of war. Revolutions in the military affairs have analyzed the issue in three directions: technological development, doctrinal innovations, and organizational adaptations, which have been an essential process in light of developments taking place in chronological order throughout the world. Four Generations War Analysis is catalysts for change to understand the real drivers of the generational shift. The discussion of the fourth generation of war leads to the important issue what we today call the dilemmas posed by modern warfare, which brought war into the abstract dimension. Military theorists such as Martin van Creveld, Mary Kaldor, and Max Boot, have analyzed and saw the nature and character of war from a new prism, but to this day abstract nature of war “fog of war” remain unexplained, unresolved issue for modern military theorist.*

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### **Problems of changing or unchanging nature or character of war**

Before I start discussion of dilemmas relate to changing or unchanging nature or character of war, it's appropriate to discussing the theoretical foundations of evolution nature and character of war with an analysis of some of the assumptions in the first chapter of the Prussian strategist Carl von Clausewitz's book "On War", in which he explains the nature and character of war.

Clausewitz says: "War is an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will; the aim is to disarm the enemy." According to Clausewitz, this is the most important issue, because if the opponent is disarmed, he will not be able to interfere with your ultimate goals<sup>2</sup>.

"War is never an isolated act". States are interconnected in many ways – diplomacy, trade, movement, etc. After the outbreak of war, activities in these areas do not cease and it is necessary to consider them during the war<sup>3</sup>.

"War is not a single short blow". Because of the effects of all the various events of war, it is not possible to predict at the outset how it will end. The commander should be able to present the outcome of events in the distant future and update or adjust plans according to the circumstances of the case<sup>4</sup>.

"In war the result is never final" It is very possible that the effects of one war will be rejected by the second war, and in this case being ready is a necessary condition for the future war<sup>5</sup>.

"War is an act of policy; on its own it would drive policy out of office and rule by the laws of its own nature". This is one of Clausewitz's most important insights. The war must be waged by competent powers. War only for the sake of war, which is not aimed at just political ends, is divisive and usually devastating, just as antiquity was pointed out in antiquity<sup>6</sup>.

Clausewitz was a philosopher of early war, never limited to explanations. The papers analyzed in detail and exemplary his particular views on the nature of war or the character of war. To sum up, for Clausewitz, war is eternal and ever-changing. The basic nature of war remains unchanged, but methods

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<sup>2</sup> C. Von Clausewitz, *On War*, Princeton 1976/1984, pp. 75-77.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 79.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 80.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 87.

and means are constantly evolving and changing<sup>7</sup>. In the Clausewitz era, the cardinal changes in the character of the war were caused by events such as the new weapons, massive recruitment of people, and the use of railroads to move massive armies. One of the major catalysts for change was technology development. According to technology, tactical, operational and strategic approaches to modern technology must also be adapted, which is an important part of the evolution of war.

Classical theories have established certain point of view about aspects of evolution of nature and character of war, following which it is appropriate to discuss aspects of war nature and character variability or stability, which are still controversial to modern military researchers.

New America Foundation's "Future War" program disagrees with Clausewitz's classic approach to the stability of war and character variability. In their view, "technological achievements triggers changes in the nature of warfare"<sup>8</sup>.

In my point of view, in this case we are dealing with the misuse of the terms "the nature of war" and "the character of war" and the widespread misrepresentation of the term over the years. Particularly, if here it is meant the nature of war, of course as a Clausewitz's adherent I disagree with it, because nature of war is always unchanged and the capabilities, methods and techniques used to wage war change over time. In the second case, the term can be understood as it is written in the modified form "nature of warfare" and in this case if we go-by the word "nature" for a little while, "warfare" will remain, which is directly related to the character of war. War has a changing character and depends on the context of the historical period and context in which the war was fought using the methods of that time warfare. War and warfare are different terms and they have different meanings. Therefore, we should exercise caution while using them. Certainly, warfare doesn't have a permanent, irreplaceable phenomenal "nature", as it is simply a method of how war is waged<sup>9</sup>.

Character of war describes the changing way, in which war as a phenomenon is demonstrated in a real world. Since war, as Clausewitz writes, is a political act taking place in societies and among themselves, the specific character of war will be shaped specifically by these policies and societies, which Carl von Clausewitz calls the "spirit of the age"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> O. Pappila, *The nature of war today*, "Kungl Krigsvetenskapsakademiens Handlingar och Tidskrift", No 4/2008, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> Ch. Mewett, *Understanding War's Enduring Nature alongside Its Changing Character*, War on the Rocks, 21.01.2014 <<https://warontherocks.com/2014/01/understanding-wars-enduring-nature-alongside-its-changing-character/>> (12.05.2019).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> C. Von Clausewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 594.

Clausewitz has an opposite opinion on the character of war in the US National Intelligence Council's publication "Global Trends: Paradox of Progress". According to their point of view, nature of conflict is changing. The risk of conflict will increase for the following reasons: Different interests between powerful states, increasing threat of terrorism, continuous instability in weak states, and proliferation of lethal, devastating technologies. Destruction of societies will be simplified by high-precision weapons, cyber and robotic systems, by which it will be able to target infrastructure at a distance and technology will be more easily available to create weapons of mass destruction<sup>11</sup>.

In this case, I cannot agree with the above mentioned, because as we discussed above, the nature of war doesn't change and is unlikely to change ever. In this case also, the word "nature" is misused and the authors may have meant "the character of war" here.

As U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Rob Taber mentions, the nature of something is the basic structure of it. The nature is essentially this "something". The character of something is a combination of all the different parts and details that make up this "something". In the context of warfare, it is more appropriate to ask Carl von Clausewitz, the hero of all military doctrines developers and find out his standpoints about this issue<sup>12</sup>.

### **Comparison of nature and character of war with war and warfare**

The purpose of this section is to compare the nature of war and character of war with war and warfare. According to Christopher Mewett, US Army Department Supporting Contractor, military analyst and strategist, nature of war describes its unchanging essence: it implies what distinguishes war (as a type of phenomenon) from other things. The nature of war is forceful (brutal, violent), interactive and fundamentally political. In case of absence of one of these elements you are talking not about war, but about something else<sup>13</sup>.

While discussing war and the nature of war, it is clear that we are talking about a phenomenon that is war and that it has its own nature as a whole, which in itself is composed of constituents that vary in the context of a particular historical era. It is a war and the nature of war that constitute the character of war and warfare.

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<sup>11</sup> *Global Trends, Paradox of Progress*, Publication of the National Intelligence Council, January 2017, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> R. Taber, *Character vs. Nature of warfare: what we can Learn (Again) from Clausewitz*, MAD Scientist Laboratory Forecasting the Future warfare, 27.08.2018, p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ch. Mewett, *op. cit.*

Since war is a political act (action) that takes place within and between societies itself, its specific character will be shaped exactly by these policies and societies. There is no doubt that warfare is influenced by technology, law, ethics, culture, methods of social, political and military organization and other factors that change over time.

Warfare is a technology (technique) of conducting wars. The warfare was developed as the weapons used over time became more and more sophisticated: from cudgel – to spear, bow – to arrow, castle – to cannon, machine gun, tanks, sea-crafts and aviation.

The technique of warfare has changed as new weapons have developed. Tactics have been developed and refined to maximize the impact of technological advances on weapons.

While talking about the nature of war and warfare the following concept is formed: The character of war is conditioned by the technological, doctrinal and organizational development of warfare in a particular historical era. Because of it, it is possible to use these two terms “the character of war” and “warfare” in one context.

### **Impact of Revolutions in Military Affairs and Four Generations of War on nature and character of war**

I think that theories speaking about the changing the nature of war are controversial. When we analyze them in detail, it only deals with the issues of nature in a strategic context, and in other cases, if they talk about one battle or engagement, about the methods and techniques of warfare in general, here we talk about the change in the character of war. And this, as we discussed above, is already axiomatic. The character of war is truly changing, and has to be taken into account in relation to a particular historical period and context

In the context of warfare and the evolution of the character of war, it is important to consider the revolutions in the military affair, which, as mentioned above, studies the development of warfare in three directions: technological development, doctrinal innovations and organizational adaptation

Technological development. Since the Industrial Revolution, there has been a stream of new technologies that were intended or otherwise used militarily. For example, the development of a robust and reliable internal combustion engine has made it possible to design self-propelled cars and aircraft. Of course, mere invention is not enough; new technologies must also be developed in practical military systems (or systems of systems – such as technologies must become more complex). Nonetheless, that tanks appeared in

World War I around Cambrai in 1917, years before they were sufficiently reliable and robust to lead rapidly onshore<sup>14</sup>.

Doctrinal Innovation. In order to fully exploit the potential of new systems, operational concepts which combine and integrate new technologies, must be developed in logically consistent doctrines. Military organizations should also be trained in their use and interoperability. After the advent of a tank in World War I, it took more than a decade to develop and conduct doctrinal experiments to create the “Blitzkrieg” rather than the invention of a tank.<sup>15</sup>

Organizational adaptation. The most profound changes require significant bureaucratic recognition and institutional (elementary) change. The success of Blitzkrieg required not only the technology of a tank and the logically consistent doctrine of battles using tanks, but also the key organizational and cultural changes which were reflected in the new combined arms operations, which was concentrated on the German armoured division<sup>16</sup>.

Revolutions in military affairs work well across the four generations of wars and are actually synthesized using all three of its elements. From the above mentioned examples, if technology was developed in one generation of war, doctrinal innovation and organizational adaptation would take some time to develop accordingly. For example, Blitzkrieg’s theoretical foundation was underpinned during World War I as a doctrinal innovation which was conducive to the technological development but found organizational adaptation and use in the Third Generation of War.

To better understand the character of war and the essence of warfare at this point, it is important to evaluate the four generations of war chronologically and consider how it developed within specific historical contexts.

In the history of modern warfare, the concept of “four generations” of war was developed by a team of US analysts, including William Lind.

Generally dividing into four generations begins in the Peace of Westphalia from 1648, when the Thirty Years' War ended. By the Peace of Westphalia, the state established a monopoly on hostilities. Prior to it, many different entities or groups of organizations could wage a war. For example, families, tribes, religious groups, cities, commercial associations, and others. They could use not only the armies and navy, but many different capabilities, and now the military forces of a state cannot imagine a war otherwise than armed forces with their own opposing armed forces<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> J. R. Fitzsimonds, J. M. van Tol, *Revolutions in Military Affairs*, “Joint Force Quarterly”, Spring 1994, p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> W. S. Lind, *Understanding Fourth Generation War*, „Military Review” September-October 2004, p. 12.

The first generation of modern war, by rough calculations, lasts from 1648 to 1860. These were military operations using linear and colonial formation tactics, where battles had an official character and the battlefield was orderly. The value of the first generation wars comes from the fact that the established order and battlefield created order and military culture. Most of the factors which differentiate the “military” from the “civilian” – military uniform, salute, thoroughly keep hierarchy or rank, etc. – were exactly the products of the first generation designed to enhance the culture of order. The problem is that around the middle of the 19th century, the orderly battlefield began to break. There were still mass armies, soldiers who really wanted to fight, gradually rolled-up muskets being to introduce, and then muzzle-loaded rifles and machine guns – all of which led to earlier linear and colonial formation tactics becoming obsolete and later suicidal.

During the second generation war, they still kept the battle line, but were more focused on using technologies. Technological developments such as Maxim machine gun enabled smaller units to operate more independently.

In the second generation war, small units moved quickly, tactically, without mass casualties and took advantage of cover and concealment, unlike the first generation war. Examples of the second generation war are: the American Civil War, the English-Boer War, World War I, the Spanish Civil War.

During and after World War I great importance was given to firepower, which was mostly an indirect artillery fire. Its purpose was to defeat an enemy, whose doctrine was formulated as follows: “Artillery conquers, infantry occupies”<sup>18</sup>. Through centralized control, the actions of firepower were highly synchronized, where detailed, specific plans and orders were applied for infantry, tanks and artillery assets.

The third generation war, like the second one, was the product of World War I. It was developed by the German army and is known as the “Blitzkrieg” or the Manoeuvre Warfare.

The basis of the third generation war is not the firepower and defeat of the enemy, but the agility, the unexpectedness, and the disorganization of the enemy both physically and spiritually. From a tactical point of view, the third-generation military forces during attack are trying to penetrate the enemy's rear area and cause its overall collapse from the rear to the front line. Instead of the motto: “Get closer and destroy”, the motto here may be “Bypass and disrupt”<sup>19</sup>. In the defence, the military force tried to trick the enemy and then cut him off. War is no longer a clash in which opposing forces try to maintain or advance

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 13.

the battle line (positions); The Third Generation War, unlike the First World War, was no longer a linear combat.

Not only tactics but also military culture changed during the third generation war. Third generation military forces have focused on the outside – on the situation, on the enemy and on the result the situation requires and not on the inside – on the process and method. An important achievement of this time was the leading of troops using mission-orders, mission command in the modern sense. Initiation is more important here than obedience (mistakes are more likely to be allowed if they come from excessive initiative rather than less) and it all depends on self-discipline, not coercion.

The use of the Blitzkrieg by the Germans during the French invasion demonstrated the speed and manoeuvrability against static artillery and trench defence for the first time.

Using tanks, mechanized infantry and close air support, Germans were able to quickly break through the defensive lines and capture the enemy's rear areas.

Features such as decentralization and initiative were transferred from the third to the fourth generation, but in other points of view. The fourth generation mentions the most radical change since the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. In the fourth generation war, the state loses its monopoly over hostilities. Very often worldwide, country military forces fight non-state actors such as al-Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, and the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces. Almost always, the state loses in such kind of war<sup>20</sup>.

The fourth generation war is also stands out by the conflict not only between states, but also between cultures, non-state actors and organizations.

Revolutions in military Affairs and Four Generations of war talk more about evolution of character of war and warfare and prove the main argument in this article that character of war changed over the historical period while nature remained unchanged. At this moment when we have discussed Revolutions in military affairs and generations of war, it will be appropriate to consider British historian Michael Howard's particular approach to the study of the nature and character of war, that summarizes above mentioned theories and give clear advice for analyzes of war and warfare. Interestingly, in his 1961 seminar essay on how military professionals should develop what Clausewitz described as his own "theory of war". A study of the width of this observation suggests how warfare has evolved over a long history. In-depth study is meant to: study and investigate war campaigns thoroughly, consider original sources, and apply various theories and interdisciplinary approaches. Finally, it must be studied in the context, which means that war and warfare must be studied in the social,

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem.*

cultural, economic, human, moral, political, and psychological contexts<sup>21</sup> Professor Howard's approach to the study of war and warfare will make it much easier for scholars of military history to reach their goals in analyzing complex nature and character of war.

### **Generational shift. Abstract character of modern warfare**

Recall one of Clausewitz's thoughts before discussing the abstract character of modern warfare: The first, most important, and most difficult decision of the commanders is to identify the type of war they should soon engage in; it is inadmissible here, as a mistaken choice (the wrong assumption about the type), to assign this war to a kind which is unknown to its nature<sup>22</sup>. This is Clausewitz's second most important point about the nature of war. He is concerned about the major problem that senior commanders are planning a war for which they are prepared rather than a war that will actually take place. In this thesis, Clausewitz emphasizes the most complex forms of warfare that we have seen even today.

Concerning this issue, in his work "Transformation of War" Martin van Creveld discusses issues which brought war into an abstract dimension that made it so difficult to understand the phenomenon of war.

M. van Creveld's work also has its message – particularly, modern "strategic" ideas about all of the problems above are fundamentally flawed, incomplete, and rely on the "Clausewitz" image of the whole world, which is either outdated or false. In this regard, Creveld contradicts Clausewitz's basic assumptions.

"We are standing today, not at the end of history but at a historic turning point. Just as Alexander's exploits only reached the Middle Ages as a dim, fantastic tale, so in the future people will probably look back upon the twentieth century as a period of mighty empires, vast armies, and incredible fighting machines that have crumbled into dust"<sup>23</sup>.

M. van Creveld's view is shared by Mary Kaldor (Professor of Global Governance at the London School of Economics). The thesis, which is clearly shown in his work, "New and Old War", eschews the classicist approach to war, formulated as follows:

"War between nation-states takes the form of anachronism (an old remnant that does not fit into modern life)." There is a new kind of war that can be

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<sup>21</sup> H. R. McMaster, *Studying War and Warfare*, Defense Entrepreneurial Forum, 13.01.2014 <<https://mwi.usma.edu/2014111studying-war-and-warfare-by-major-general-hr-mcmaster/>> (12.05.2019).

<sup>22</sup> C. von Clausewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> M. Van Creveld, *Transformation of war*, New York 1991, p. 224.

described as war a mixture of organized crime and massive human rights abuses.

Old-fashioned thinking about the war has greatly exacerbated the situation in the typical new Iraq war – with less attention being paid to rebels, chaos and occupation by other types of conflict<sup>24</sup>.

For M. Kaldor, as for M. van Creveld, the new war was "irregular" – unconventional conflicts in which the participants used the tactics of the "rebels" and tried to avoid the battle, instead of engaging in it. The new war was fought with various combinations of state and non-state networks. War actors sought to achieve political, not physical, goals by controlling people through fear and terror. The war is no longer financed by the state, funded from various sources, and sought to continue the violence<sup>25</sup>.

As we discussed the contradictory views on Clausewitz's theories, we can also present neutral views by theorists and military historians who mention that Clausewitz's principles are logical and appropriate if they are adjusted at an appropriate time.

Max Boot, a representative of the US Foreign Relations Council, in his book of "Invisible Armies" writes that guerrillas and terrorists were a common story rather than an abstraction of today.

"Guerrilla warfare has been ubiquitous and important throughout history. Tribal warfare, pitting one guerrilla force against another, is as old as mankind and still exists in modified form in some parts of the world. A new form of warfare, pitting guerrillas against »conventional« forces, is of only slightly more recent vintage – It arose in Mesopotamia five thousand years ago. Therefore labelling guerrilla warfare as »irregular« has it backwards: it is the norm; interstate war is the exception"<sup>26</sup>.

In my opinion, this thesis of Max Boot is a reality and we must perceive it as to face to the truth, as we look at current events, the conventional classic has lost its power (Conventional methods of warfare produced by state actors against non-state actors and state actors).

According to the changing character of warfare, modern challenges are important aspects to be considered by commanders. Commanders, considering the changing character of war, must be adaptable to the modern environment and must be open to the issues of science, art of war, and dynamics of war.

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<sup>24</sup> Vide: M. Kaldor, *New and Old Wars*, Stanford 1999.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>26</sup> Vide: M. Boot, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, New York-London 2013.

Science includes many aspects of warfare, such as ballistics law, mechanics; Disciplines such as fires, weapon effects, troop movement and deployment methods and tempo<sup>27</sup>.

Since science cannot describe the full phenomenon of warfare, let us discuss another important aspect of war art that is the use of creative or intuitive skills that is a matter of the art of war. The art of war through discussion and experience makes creative use of the science of war according to the situation and takes into account science as a whole<sup>28</sup>.

The art and science of war still does not cover the full phenomenon of warfare. In this particular situation, it is important, according to the abstract nature and character of war, to consider the dynamics of war, which is primarily the competitive interaction of people, not the dynamics of war science and art. Generally, warfare is a dynamic process of human competition that requires knowledge of war science and the creative use of the arts but is ultimately governed by the human mind<sup>29</sup>.

Understanding science and art of war and applying it effectively in training or in real-world war situations is possible, but as far as the dynamics of what goes on in people's minds (in the minds of two opposing commanders), recognizing them is a big challenge.

Conclusion.

The nature and character of war, war and warfare issues are widely discussed in the works of many military theorists. There are many contradictory opinions and arguments. According to present work, we need to analyze contradictory theories, contemporary approaches, historical experience and context properly. It is necessary to identify the relevance of this difficult issue to the modern era.

From a theoretical analysis of the evolution of the nature and character of the war, we can clearly see that the basis of von Clausewitz's military theories were the wars waged by nation-states. We may or may not wage such wars in the future.

M. van Creveld allowed us to get to know and analyze the warfare and the changing nature of war during and post-World War II period and gave a chance to see a little bit of the future of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Exactly these challenges give us reasons for new discussions. By analyzing this challenge and adapting the thinking of war theorists, we can come to the solution of the dilemmas posed by the abstract form of war. It is important to rethink Clausewitz's principles in order to apply it logically in the 21st century, which is quite possible. Also

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<sup>27</sup> *Warfighting*, Department of the Navy, Headquarters United States Marine Corps Washington, D.C. 20380-1775 20.06.1997, pp. 17-20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*.

important is van Creveld's different detailed analysis techniques for intelligent analysis of modern war and the use of military force.

Based on the challenges of the modern era, it is necessary to use a wider range of considerations and methods of analysis, then the capabilities of national strengths, to achieve a relevant end state. Particular attention is paid to guerrillas, rebels, the war against terrorists, which in itself requires careful consideration of governmental, political and especially the broad areas of theories in order to succeed in warfare.

Certainly warfare is affected by technology, law, ethics, culture, methods of social, political and military organization and other factors that change over time and with which the techniques and methods of warfare are changing, but the nature of war remains unchanged.

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