

The Generational Division of Warfare and Controversial Issues

Класифікація воєн за поколіннями та дискусійні аспекти

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Purpose. To identify the transformational trends and controversial points of the changing face of military violence in the context of the concept of “Generations of warfare”.

Method. Historical, comparative analysis, systematic approach, and structural analysis methods.

Findings. Although the concept of “Generations of warfare” allows for a systematic study of the transformations from the classical to the hybrid form of military violence, and for the identification of the specific developmental determinants of different conflict generations, it should not be considered perfect. The incompleteness of generations of warfare, the lack of fundamental differences between some generations, is considered a new challenge to this concept.

Theoretical implications. The concept of “Generations of warfare”, put forward by Lind in 1989, does not keep pace with modern military developments and armed conflicts, the concept of “generations of warfare” is not defined by clear boundaries. This theory is unable to explain the subsequent transformation of methods and means of military operations, the decisive impact of non-kinetic means – drones, artificial intelligence and cyberattacks – on military skill, as well as the essence of technology-based cyberwarfare and hybrid wars. This gap has been filled in the study of 5th generation warfare.

Practical implications. The concept of “Generations of warfare” has had a significant impact on the improvement of combat equipment, the emergence of new tactics, and the transformation of military skills. With the help of the concept of “Generations of warfare”, practitioners can study the dynamics of military and military-practical transformations that have marked a huge period in human history, from the classical form of military violence to the hybrid form and become familiar with the shortcomings in this direction.

Value. This article aims to study the dominant strategies and technologies of each generation of warfare in the context of the concept of “Generations of Warfare”, to explain the problematic aspects and to improve it in accordance with the requirements of new transformations.

Paper type. theoretical.

Мета дослідження. Визначити трансформаційні тенденції та дискусійні аспекти змінюваного обличчя воєнного насильства в контексті концепції “поколінь війни”.

Метод дослідження. методи історичного, порівняльного аналізу, системного підходу та структурного аналізу.

Результати дослідження. Хоча концепція “поколінь війни” дозволяє системно досліджувати трансформації від класичної до гібридної форми воєнного насильства та виявляти специфічні детермінанти розвитку різних поколінь конфліктів, її не слід вважати досконалою. Незавершеність теорії поколінь війни, відсутність фундаментальних відмінностей між деякими поколіннями розглядається як новий виклик цій концепції.

Теоретична цінність дослідження. Концепція “поколінь війни”, висунута Ліндом у 1989 році, не встигає за сучасними військовими трансформаціями та збройними конфліктами, оскільки не визначена чіткими межами. Ця теорія не здатна пояснити подальшу еволюцію методів і засобів воєнних дій, вирішальний вплив некінетичних засобів — дронів, штучного інтелекту та кібератак — на військову майстерність, а також сутність технологічно обумовленої кібер- та гібридної війни. Цю прогалину частково заповнює вивчення війни п'ятого покоління.

Практична цінність дослідження. Концепція “поколінь війни” суттєво вплинула на вдосконалення бойового оснащення, появу нових тактик та трансформацію військової майстерності. За її допомогою практики можуть досліджувати динаміку воєнних і воєнно-практичних трансформацій, що охопили значний період в історії людства — від класичної форми воєнного насильства до гібридної, — а також ознайомитися з її недоліками у цьому напрямі.

Цінність дослідження. Стаття має на меті дослідити домінантні стратегії та технології кожного покоління війни в контексті концепції “поколінь війни”, пояснити проблемні аспекти та вдосконалити її відповідно до вимог нових трансформацій.

Тип статті. теоретичний.

Key words: generations of warfare, transformation, linear strategy, hybrid warfare, blitzkrieg.

Ключові слова: покоління війни, трансформація, лінійна стратегія, гібридна війна, блицкриг.

Introduction

Human history is the history of warfares. Military violence has played a unique role in the formation of this history. On the one hand, war is associated with bloody events – mass murder of people as a result of the collapse of states, enslavement, the spread of infectious diseases, on the other hand,

it is marked by the emergence of new states and empires, new rules of governance, anti-violent theories and views, a set of laws aimed at saving civilians from the pain and suffering of war.

Thus, in the history of mankind, warfare has both a negative image and positive consequences. The study of the paradoxical image and dynamics of military conflicts is extremely important in terms of studying the changing faces of wars.

Theoretical Background

The concept of “Four generations of war” was developed in the 1980s by authors such as historian William S. Lind and Lieutenant Colonel Thomas H. Hammes. According to these authors, the four generations of war began with the Peace Treaty of Westphalia (1648), which established the state’s monopoly on warfare. The qualitative evolution of warfare, described as “generations,” is largely due to technological factors, as well as political, social, and economic factors that shape society both domestically and internationally [1].

Although the concept of “generations of war” was introduced into science in 1989, it is still a subject of scholarly debate. Some researchers describe this process as the transformation of military conflicts, while others describe it as the “history of a revolution in military affairs”. In general, this is a broad issue. “The concept of generations of warfare reflects the evolution of humanity’s approach to conflict. From the mass armies of the first generation to the industrial weapons of the second generation, war has continuously adapted to technological and social changes. Today, war blurs the boundaries between traditional warfare, asymmetric strategies, cyber tactics, and information warfare. As conflicts become more complex, countries are forced to rethink traditional methods [2].

Problem Statement

The study of generations of war, the place of military violence in human society and the system of interstate relations, its formalization as a tool for ensuring national interests, its negative and positive function, the improvement of the rules and tools for conducting military operations, the reaction of the international community, and other issues have played an important role in the evolution of this concept. Today, this concept is still relevant and has a questionable fate. On the one hand, questions about the exact historical cycle of generations of military violence await their answers, and on the other hand, there are not a few who are not satisfied with the number of generations of warfare, but rather voice the possibility of its decline. In addition, within each generation, there are disagreements regarding the perpetrators, the structure of the warfare and the means of conducting it. It is also extremely controversial to determine the exact time boundaries between some generations.

Results

An analysis of the history of wars and military conflicts shows that in the pre-nuclear era, the alternation of war and peace was a natural and initial state on Earth. Wars have never stopped, but have continued to develop: from ancient times to the present day, at least five generations of wars and military conflicts have undergone changes. The main stages of such generational change mainly coincide with historically significant qualitative leaps in the development of human society, which led to the emergence of fundamentally new means of destruction and laid the foundation for the emergence of new forms and methods of waging war [3, pp. 75-80].

First Generation Wars (1st GW)

Since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, the concept of war has moved from the mass use of manpower (1st GW), to the concentration of firepower (2nd GW), to maneuver warfare (3rd GW), to insurgency and terrorism (4th GW), and more recently to contactless and unrestricted warfare (5th GW).

History shows that 1st GW existed from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century. 1st GW was characterized by positional warfare between large centralized forces (referring to the early stages of organized warfare with armed forces under state control) and went down in history under the terms “massive warfare” or “warfare of lines and columns” (the emphasis in these periods was on linear and column tactics). The forms and methods of waging this generation of wars were determined by the revolution in military affairs inherent in the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The initial stage of this revolution is considered to be the emergence of gunpowder and smooth-bore weapons and cannons. At this stage, new methods of armed struggle on a tactical scale of divisions, units and formations appeared, and linear tactics were used [3, pp. 75-80].

Battles were usually fought on a single battlefield, which limited the mobility of forces and resources. Wars attributed to this period include the Anglo-Spanish War, the Seven Years’ War, the US War of Independence, the Napoleonic Wars, etc. The First War Generation reached its peak in 1914-1918, during the First World War.

The main features of this class of warfare are:

Historically, first-generation wars have acted as a way to resolve conflicts and have political (crown conflicts, territorial claims, and dynastic change, etc.) content.

These wars were fought at the tactical level by organized armed forces of states. Armed battles were conducted exclusively by manpower – infantry and cavalry equipped with cold weapons, and numerous forces were deployed in battle lines and columns;

In the final stages of the 1st generation of warfare, weapons of war – swords and shields, bows and arrows, spears and bayonets – were replaced by rifles, hand grenades, machine guns, cannons, and artillery.

Among the generations of warfare, the 1st GW has the longest history. During this period, the means of warfare and combat tactics did not undergo rapid transformation, but rather continued to develop very slowly. The war did not go beyond a specific and limited geographical space and was not prone to expansion. First-generation warfare can be described as “ancient and post-classical wars with a tendency to inertia.” However, this generation of warfare was characterized by a number of innovations in terms of theoretical and practical activities.

Cardinal changes began to manifest themselves only towards the end of this generation of warfare. In particular, the idea of national state sovereignty, put forward after the Peace of Westphalia (1648), paved the way for the transfer of the army to state control, military culture began to develop, military training began to improve, a conscription system was created, and the pace of warfare increased. In the Napoleonic Wars, for the first time, control over the dissemination of information was applied, and the tactic of economic warfare – counterfeit banknotes were issued in order to weaken the enemy’s economy [4].

This generation of warfare is also remembered for its positive impact on the improvement and development of a number of progressive documents (Vigayet (1280), the Vienna Convention (1864) and the Liber Code (1863), etc.), which existed to improve preventive measures – to improve the rules of battle, to prevent the sick, wounded, children and women from becoming victims of war.

Second Generation of Warfare (2nd GW)

The period from the mid-19th century to the early 20th century (1840s to 1918) can be attributed to the second generation of warfare. During this period, warfare tactics changed dramatically with the advent of mass production, railroads, and the telegraph. This period is notable for the use of mass-produced weapons and their improvements. Machine guns and rapid-fire artillery are just a few examples of technological advances in this war, which contributed to the development of trench warfare, combat techniques, and strategies of attrition. This period can be broadly described as the era of industrial warfare, as for the first time it became easier than ever to attack a foreign country and inflict mass destruction.

Generally, 2nd GW is defined by the terms “trench warfare” or “linear fire and movement warfare” and benefited from the successes of the industrial age. New technological advances have increased the individual maneuverability of small groups, reduced the concentration of casualties, and developed cover and camouflage to gain an advantage.

This generation of warfare has responded to technological advances by developing “position warfare”, artillery support, more sophisticated reconnaissance methods, the widespread use of camouflage uniforms, radio communications, and fire team maneuvers.

World War I (1914–1918) was a war between coalitions of European states, which used a wide range of weapons and equipment, mainly artillery and machine guns, to destroy enemy forces and seize territory, establishing the dominance of more powerful states. The presence of armored fleets in technologically advanced states was an important tool in their struggle for world domination.

2nd GW can also be characterized as the emergence of “Blitzkrieg”. Within the framework of blitzkrieg tactics, the evolution and improvement of 2nd GW can be seen in its emphasis on speed, maneuverability, and the integration of air power on the battlefield. Although related to blitzkrieg, 2nd GW refers to a broader historical period characterized by the development of industrial warfare, including trench warfare, artillery support, and the use of reconnaissance and radio communications. The Civil War in the United States, the Crimean War, and World War I are included in this division.

2nd GW developed until World War II. The main characteristics of this type of warfare were: fighting continued by organized armed forces of nation states;

warfare increasingly relied on firepower and maneuver, coordinated movements from closed firing positions to ensure progress on the front, and cavalry maneuvers;

armored vehicles and aviation developed, which determined rapid movements in the theater of military operations and required mobile warfare;

industrial warfare paved the way for the formation and further development of the “Blitzkrieg” tactic and brought the end of linear strategies closer.

Third Generation of Warfare (3rd GW)

3rd GW is known as “maneuver warfare”, a continuation of the “Blitzkrieg” philosophy of World War II. This generation of warfare continued until the Korean and Vietnam wars.

3rd GW relied on the use of speed and surprise to overwhelm enemy positions and defeat their forces in the rear (rear line). It was essentially the end of linear warfare at the tactical level. In this, units sought to outmaneuver each other to gain maximum advantage rather than simply confronting each other.

The well-known characteristics of this theoretical class of warfare are maneuver warfare (aimed at destroying enemy manpower, military resources, and fighting spirit), adaptation to changing battlefield conditions, joint operations, and the use of indirect firepower.

This generation of warfare emphasizes the transition to mechanized warfare and the integration of air forces. This refers to rapid, joint operations and the concept of “Blitzkrieg”. These tactics were best exemplified by the “blitzkrieg” tactics of Nazi Germany in World War II. The main goal of this tactic was to neutralize the enemy with relatively small attacks before launching a decisive offensive.

Tanks, aircraft and highly mobile infantry allowed them to advance rapidly and encircle the enemy. As a result, the enemy suffered serious losses of resources, which undermined his will to continue the fight. One of the main advantages of this generation of tactics was the blurring of the front line.

3rd GW is a concept in military theory that, rather than traditional tactics of attrition, uses maneuver warfare, speed and surprise to outmaneuver and change the enemy’s direction. It involves moving from linear frontline battles to more complex, non-linear operations, using

technology and new strategies to control and defeat enemy forces from the rear. Maneuver warfare, speed and surprise, non-linear operations, technological advances, and decentralized command are considered to be the hallmarks of this generation of warfare. In principle, Third Generation warfare represents a shift from static, outdated warfare to a more dynamic, maneuverable approach that uses technology and speed to achieve decisive results.

With the end of linear warfare, new methods of moving more quickly began to emerge, the development of helicopters allowed landings in enemy territory, and advanced missile technology allowed troops to bypass enemy defenses and strike targets from greater distances. The speed inherent in these methods required greater independence for units on the front line. Small units were given greater freedom and flexibility to make decisions in response to changing conditions on the ground, while also carrying out decisions made by commanders far from the front. This began to erode the culture of military command and discipline (subordination).

The main characteristics of this generation of warfare can be summarized as follows:

Fighting is carried out by organized armed forces of nation states;

Maneuverability at sea, on land, and in the air is further improved through mechanization and new technological capabilities: at sea – ships; on land – tanks, trucks, jeeps, etc.; in the air – airplanes, helicopters, jets, etc.;

Military doctrine develops in the direction of new tactics such as attacking the enemy from the rear and bypassing the front line.

Fourth Generation of Warfare (4th GW)

4th GW is defined by the terms “insurgency warfare”, “asymmetric warfare” or even “unconventional warfare”, are attributed to the era of information and high technology, are characterized by the disappearance of the distinction between war and politics, between combatants and civilians. They are presented as a return to a decentralized form of warfare. This type of generation marks the loss of the monopoly of nation-states over the Armed Forces, a return to the conflict regimes common in pre-modern times, and is becoming a war in which violent non-state actors (non-state actors such as terrorist groups, insurgents and transnational networks) are among the main participants. Classic examples of conflicts belonging to this generation are, for example, the slave revolt during the Spartacus era, and modern examples are the activities of ISIS and Al-Qaeda.

4th GW is characterized by the following elements: the nature of warfare as complex and long-term, highly decentralized, low-intensity, and non-hierarchical conflicts; the direct attack on the enemy's culture, including the commission of acts of genocide against civilians; the use of all available means of coercion – political, economic, social, and military; the use of insurgency tactics as subversion, terror, and guerrilla tactics; and so on. In 4th GW, the battlefield may be fragmented and there are no defined front lines; conflicts often occur in urban environments and in everyday life. Al-Qaeda is often cited as a prominent example of 4th GW practitioners who use advanced technology and media to spread their ideology and influence. This model of warfare reflects a shift toward protracted warfare in which success is measured not by military victories but by the ability to undermine the opponent's resolve and legitimacy [5].

The most important characteristics of this type of warfare are:

the decline in the participation of nation-states and the emergence of non-state actors for the first time, indicating that one of the warring parties does not include the organized armed forces of the state;

the use of asymmetric tactics, methods and procedures to reduce the advantage and power of the enemy so that he cannot win using traditional methods (increased low-intensity conflicts, the use of insurgency and terror tactics);

the use of cyberattacks to disrupt critical infrastructure, spread disinformation and undermine public trust;

influencing decision-makers to change their political positions in their favor and undermine the fighting spirit and morale of enemy troops. Experts believe that individual concepts of the 4th GW can be found in the 1930s, during the Chinese Civil War. The essence of Mao Zedong's strategy was to avoid military operations when the balance of forces was unfavorable and to choose forms of military operations that would lead to the defeat of enemy forces. According to some experts, 4th GW is the only type of war in which a major power has been defeated: the United States in the Vietnam War and the USSR in the Afghan campaign.

These wars challenge classical concepts, demonstrate the increasing role of information and influence, and indicate the need for a multifaceted approach to conflict resolution.

At the same time, 4th GW is developing in the context of the “technology-ideology conflict”. Thus, non-Western countries, such as Islamic and Asian countries, are playing the idea card against technology, which is a powerful weapon of the West, and are reflected in terrorism. Therefore, this type of warfare is considered a large and unlimited front opened against non-Western countries, in addition to being a product of non-Western countries [5]. ISIS's plan to create a Caliphate is the most successful example that meets this classification.

Scholarly debates around 4th GW continue. In his article “Fourth Generation Warfare and Other Myths,” Antulio J. Echevarria II, a writer at the Strategic Studies Institute and professor at the U.S. Army War College, criticized the “generational model” as an ineffective way to describe changes in warfare and dismissed the violence of that generation as mere insurgencies [6].

Lieutenant General Kenneth F. McKenzie of the U.S. Marine Corps has stated that the methods of fourth generation warfare are unclear, its facts controversial, and its relevance questionable [7].

Fifth Generation of Warfare (5th GW)

This type of warfare conducted primarily through non-kinetic warfare, such as social engineering, disinformation, cyberattacks, artificial intelligence, and emerging technologies with fully autonomous systems. This generation of warfare has been described by Daniel Abbott as “information and perception” warfare [8], but has been criticized by William S. Linde, the author of the “4 Generations of Warfare” concept.

5th GW is characterized by the use of a “ubiquitous battlefield” or a mix of kinetic and non-kinetic forces rather than absolute military power. The book “Unrestricted Warfare” by People's Liberation Army Colonels Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui notes that while conventional military violence has declined in the years following the 1991 Gulf War, there has been a notable increase in “political, economic, and technological violence” that is no less destructive [9].

5th GW is a type of warfare unlike anything experienced before. In past wars, armies fought on identifiable battlefields. They fought in trenches, jungles, or in the skies with guns, tanks, and bombs. 5th GW, on the other hand, is a war of cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, and economic manipulations to destabilize societies. It seems that this war is not only being waged on the battlefield, but also in the digital world, in financial systems, and even in people's minds. It was not a war to conquer territory, but to break trust, destabilize, and create chaos [10].

Such type of warfare has serious global implications. First and foremost, it challenges the very concept of national sovereignty. 5th GW is a scenario in which a hacker from one country can damage infrastructure in another without crossing borders. A fully-organized fake news campaign could undermine a democracy halfway around the world.

This type of warfare refers to terms such as “unrestricted warfare”, “complex warfare”, or “unlawful warfare”.

Unrestricted warfare is a type of warfare in which one side uses all available means to compel an enemy to act in its own best interests.

Complex warfare is the simultaneous use of regular or main forces and irregular or guerrilla forces against the enemy. In other words, military effectiveness is enhanced by the simultaneous use of both conventional and unconventional forces.

Unlawful warfare is a relentless struggle between state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population. This type of warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, although it may use all military and other capabilities to undermine the power, influence, and will of the enemy. It presupposes the emergence of powerful individuals or groups with access to advanced knowledge, technology, and resources to wage such modern warfare. These actors prefer asymmetric and hybrid actions to advance their interests.

According to experts, the most important characteristics of 5th generation warfare are as follows:

It is a war against non-state actors, where there is no massed force or clear “center of gravity” to strike.

It represents a continuation of asymmetric and insurgent warfare, in which the adversary employs both conventional and unconventional means.

It is driven by political, religious, and social motives.

It involves spontaneous and anonymous terrorist attacks against random targets (both civilians and military personnel) with the aim of generating confusion and fear.

It includes non-lethal actions in the form of global strategic information operations (conducted via the Internet and continuous news broadcasts).

It can be conducted by either organized or unorganized groups.

It may be directed by a nation-state or a non-state entity seeking to undermine or neutralize the adversary’s advantages in order to advance its own interests.

This concept is not yet fully developed, but it is clearly a product of new technologies and the current stage of a revolution in military affairs.

Table – Generations of Warfare

Generation	Period	Key Determinants	Actors	Strategy, Tactics and Technology
1 GW	1648-mid 19th century	Classical, post-classical warfare (conventional)	State Army	Flank, column, straight line, Linear strategy
2 GW	mid 19th century – early 20th century	Trench warfare (conventional)	State Army	Revolution in military affairs and industrial warfare, Development of blitzkrieg, Positional warfare, Linear strategy
3 GW	mid 20th century – end of Cold war	Maneuver warfare (conventional)	State Army	Failure of linear strategy, Blitzkrieg
4 GW	Late 20th century – early 21st century	Insurgent warfare (non-conventional)	Non-state actor	Terror and insurgency tactics, guerrilla, psychological and low-intensity warfare
5 GW	Late 20th century – early 21st century	Unrestricted warfare (non-conventional)	State and non-state actors	Hybrid, asymmetric, network-centric warfare

Controversial points.

Although the concept of “generations of warfare” was first introduced in 1989, it is reasonable to assume that intense debates surrounding it will persist. These scholarly discussions can be justified by several factors:

1. It is quite difficult to determine the specific historical framework for the beginning and end of each war generation. There are contradictory views in this direction. For example, the question of how long the 1st generation of warfare lasted remains controversial. Some note that this date lasted until the middle of the 19th century, while others note that it lasted until 1914-1918.

Although the concept of “Generations of warfare” in the West is associated with the concept of sovereignty, religious, territorial, power and dynastic wars took place before that, and various military strategies were implemented. In this case, it is not true to say that the concept of war generations has developed since the mid-17th century and creates a basis for the theoretical and practical activities related to armed violence that occurred in the centuries before that to be left out of the study.

In fact, if we take into account the similarity between the tactics used until the first generation of wars, the types of weapons, and the goals of the wars, the beginning of that generation of wars can be extended to the slavery period, or the first generation of wars can be classified into early, classical, and postclassical divisions. Early wars include wars between tribes and tribes, classical wars include wars between religious, territorial, dynastic, and knightly orders covering the slavery and feudalism periods, and postclassical wars include conflicts that arose after Westphalia and emerged between sovereign states.

2. There is polarization in views on the concept of generations of warfare. Currently, the Western-centered perspective is hegemonic in this direction and does not include non-Western countries. For example, while in Western scientific circles 5 generations of warfare are indicated, Russian scientists note 6 generations of military violence. In their periodization, generations of warfare is analyzed from ancient times – from the tribal, clan and family-patriarchal stage of human society, to the fifth generation of “hybrid warfare”.

3. While technology is indicated as the main determinant in the concept of generations of warfare, social, political and cultural factors are not given much serious attention. This division emphasizes the Western ideological approach more. It is as if generations of warfare are explained from the point of view of Westernization. But should conflicts that occurred in the non-Western, especially in the Islamic world, be excluded from the study?

4. The presentation of 5th generation of warfare as a separate category still raises questions. Academic research in this direction is weak.

5. Since some wars combine elements of several “generations”, this leads to inaccuracy in the generational division. As an example, we can cite the similarities between the 4th and 5th generations: the persistence of non-state actors and the tactics they implement (asymmetric), the use of cyberattacks to disrupt the functioning of critical infrastructures, and even the use of all means of pressure (kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities) as a means of struggle, the “delegation” of the use of military force to non-state actors (conducting military operations through proxies), etc.

Conclusion

1. The concept of “Generations of warfare” determined the dynamics of military-theoretical and military-practical transformations that marked a huge period in human history, from the classical form of military violence to the hybrid form. Each generation of warfare had its positive impact on the historical development of military conflictology in general.

2. The concept of “Generations of warfare”, considered the result of the continuous development of the “revolution in military affairs”, had a serious impact on the improvement of combat equipment, the emergence of new tactics and the transformation of military skill.

3. 3rd GW has led to fundamental changes in the military culture and society’s view of war, the culture of war has become more organized, the number of war victims has increased and the conditions of war have become more difficult, and anti-war sentiments have been strengthened in societies and internationally (humanization of military operations – Hague Convention 1899-1907).

4. Modern wars have become uncontrolled, autonomous, decentralized military-political processes, the Hague system (jus ad bellum) has been enriched and improved by new means and methods of armed struggle, and the Geneva system (jus in bello) has undergone a radical transformation due to new actors.

5. 4th GW is characterized as a “stateless/decentralized war” for the first time in human history. Its main participants are considered to be violent non-state actors who challenge national state institutions. These actors have put an end to the hegemony of the “Clausewitz’s legacy” that lasted for more than a century.

This type of warfare has further complicated legal and ethical issues. The laws of war and international law have become more difficult to apply outside traditional battlefields and in conflicts with non-state actors. This has also resulted in the disappearance of the distinction between combatants and civilians. Battlefields are now not only physical, but also virtual, and cyberattacks and information protection have played an important role. These types of warfares often took the form of internal conflicts, but later gave rise to the intervention of international coalitions.

6. 5th GW can be described as a continuation of the previous generation of wars in a more sophisticated form, or even as a “state takeover and development” of the tactics of war used by non-state actors. The absence of obvious actors in this type of warfare, the shift of direct military force to non-kinetic capabilities, are considered the main distinguishing determinants, and it has become the ideal blend of conventional and unconventional conflicts. This type of violence, which gives the impression of a “masked” and “borderless” generation of warfare, ensures victory over the enemy by capturing not the opponent’s territory, but public opinion, cyberspace and social media.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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