

# Development of a Theoretical and Conceptual Framework for the Transformation of Military Conflicts

## Розвиток теоретичної та концептуальної бази для трансформації військових конфліктів

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Received: June 16, 2025 | Revised: June 21, 2025 | Accepted: June 30, 2025

DOI: 10.33445/sds.2025.15.3.5

**Purpose:** to identify transformational trends that define the development of modern military thought and practice.

**Method:** historical, comparative analysis, systematic approach, and structural analysis methods.

**Findings:** Since the late 20th and early 21st centuries, radical changes in the development of military thought and military-political practice have significantly impacted evolving perspectives on the use of military force.

**Theoretical implications:** Classical theories of war lack contemporary dynamism. The emergence of the 4th and 5th generations of warfare in the last 30 years, and predictions about a 6th, suggest this. A key theme in modern theories is the shift in the philosophy of applying force. The distortion of the classical threat model, the decentralization of military violence, and the emergence of new methods and forms of conflict undermine classical theories and further refine modern perspectives.

**Practical implications:** Classical theories of war lack contemporary dynamism. The emergence of the 4th and 5th generations of warfare in the last 30 years, and predictions about a 6th, suggest this. A key theme in modern theories is the shift in the philosophy of applying force. The distortion of the classical threat model, the decentralization of military violence, and the emergence of new methods and forms of conflict undermine classical theories and further refine modern perspectives.

**Value:** This article allows practitioners to examine the evolving dynamics of warfare from ancient times to the present, focusing on the key determinants of radical shifts in perspectives on the use of force at the beginning of the 21st century.

**Paper type:** theoretical.

**Мета дослідження:** виявлення трансформаційних тенденцій, що визначають розвиток сучасного військового мислення та практики.

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

**Результати дослідження:** Від кінця 20-го та початку 21-го століть, докорінні зміни у військовій думці та військово-політичній практиці значно вплинули на формування нових поглядів щодо застосування військової сили.

**Теоретична цінність дослідження:** Класичним теоріям війни бракує сучасного динамізму. Про це свідчить поява 4-го та 5-го поколінь війн за останні 30 років, а також прогнози щодо 6-го. Ключовою темою сучасних теорій є зміна філософії застосування сили. Деформація класичної моделі загроз, децентралізація військового насильства та поява нових методів і форм боротьби підбивають класичні теорії та сприяють подальшому розвитку сучасних поглядів.

**Практична цінність дослідження:** Класичним теоріям війни бракує сучасного динамізму. Про це свідчить поява 4-го та 5-го поколінь війн за останні 30 років, а також прогнози щодо 6-го. Ключовою темою сучасних теорій є зміна філософії застосування сили. Деформація класичної моделі загроз, децентралізація військового насильства та поява нових методів і форм боротьби підбивають класичні теорії та сприяють подальшому розвитку сучасних поглядів.

**Цінність дослідження:** У цій статті фахівці зможуть вивчити динаміку змін у трансформації війн від давніх часів до сьогодення, особливо детермінанти радикальних змін у світоглядних тенденціях щодо застосування сили на початку 21 століття.

**Тип статті:** теоретичний.

**Key words:** military conflicts, transformation, Clausewitzian paradigm, indirect action strategy, non-trinitarian wars.

**Ключові слова:** військові конфлікти, трансформація, клаузевіцька парадигма, стратегія непрямих дій, нетринітарні війни.

### Introduction

War is a socio-political, geopolitical, psychological and economic process that can have a multifaceted, multi-planned, radical impact and consequences, create the basis for new alternatives for development, gain the opportunity to revise the balance of power, and breathe new life into bilateral and multilateral relations. Thus, war, which is a means of resolving conflicting interests and positions by force, is a special form of social relations.

Since war is a part of human history, it has not remained outside of radical transformations. This tendency can be seen in the works of philosophers and politicians who lived and created in different periods. The main point that makes us think in this article is to analyze the scientific-

theoretical views and practical aspects of the transformation of military conflicts and to summarize the results and achievements of the work done in this field to the present day.

### ***Theoretical Background***

Classical war concepts cannot keep up with the modern era. Conventional wars have given way to new generation wars. New generation wars are rapidly transforming. It is proposed to examine the characteristics of these wars in the context of three groups of theoretical views. These theories aim to study the activities of new actors in modern wars, the methods and means of military conflict, which are experiencing a period of rapid development.

### ***Problem Statement***

It is impossible to give a final definition of military conflicts and their types, such as war and armed conflicts, even in the present day. The rapid transformation of wars leads to a radical change in its conceptual apparatus, methods and means. Modern military-theoretical views on the use of military force have not been sufficiently studied and systematized. There is a serious scientific need to clarify ideas about the concepts of war as a form of resolving social contradictions. To this day, controversial issues remain regarding nature and the essence of war, as well as the content of the main definitions that determine the characteristics of this phenomenon in a specific historical period, including modern political reality.

### ***Results***

In the modern era, the conceptual apparatus, methods and means of military conflicts have undergone a serious transformation and this process continues. Modern wars are being reduced to the level of armed conflicts. Modern wars are about to lose their connection to armed struggle. Modern wars are moving away from political goals.

Until the end of the 20th century, military conflicts were explained within the framework of the “Clausewitzian paradigm”. However, the post-Cold War system not only created the ground for new violence and new wars, but also made their study inevitable. In the conditions of globalization, a large-scale transformation of conflicts is taking place – instead of conflicts of interstate interests, a new generation of conflicts has come that affect the interests of all mankind, not individual states. We are witnessing conflicts that affect the field of international relations to one degree or another, claiming a “parallel” role and being able to have a radical impact on the international atmosphere. We can include the phenomenon of terrorism, which is characterized as a growing threat to stability on a global scale, conditioned by the transparency of borders in connection with the globalization process, the dynamic development of communication technologies that go beyond the borders of individual states and acquire international status.

The roots of views on the transformation of military conflicts go back to before our era. The first source is the works of the Chinese general and military theorist Sun Tzu, who lived in the late 6th – early 5th centuries BC. His dualistic approach to strategy, which is closely related to the military sphere, gives reason to think so. In his work “The Art of War”, the Chinese thinker characterized strategy as a synonym for achieving the goal of war. However, his revolutionary idea is considered to be “To win all wars by fighting is not the highest achievement; the greatest success is to break the enemy’s resistance without fighting” [1].

It cannot be considered accidental that Sun Tzu voiced such an idea during his lifetime. Because it was during that period that the first attempt to renounce war was encountered in China. For this purpose, a general congress of princes was convened in 546 BC. It was in ancient China that the first agreements on the neutralization of certain territories and the formation of the principle of non-harming the territory of another state were encountered. The basis of this principle,

announced at a conference held in 657 BC, is the principle of “jen” – “do not do to others what you do not want done to yourself” [2, p.16].

As it turns out, the revolutionary idea of the brilliant Chinese thinker, who put forward several thousand years ago that strategy does not consist only of fighting on the front, remains relevant for modern military skill, and even continues to strengthen its position, unlike the “Clausewitz’s legacy”. His ideas coincide with the information war, cognitive war, contactless war, the role of artificial intelligence, etc., which are taking place on the battlefield today and are not inferior to physical confrontation in terms of real results. If we can say so, the demilitarization of wars does not prevent the seizure of strategic advantage by non-kinetic capabilities. Autonomous weapons are trying to take the fate of wars into their own hands in all physical parameters and gradually create the basis for the marginalization of living forces from the process of military management.

The next trend in the transformation of conflicts is considered to be the dismantling of Clausewitz’s legacy. The German military theorist called war a chameleon, emphasizing its multi-digit (chameleon) nature. In particular, his definition of war, “war is the continuation of politics by one means or another”, [3] will never go out of fashion. Because the replacement of classical wars by asymmetric and hybrid violence emphasizes the synthesis of “hard power” and “soft power” in the approach to military operations. The integrative application of both powers allows for better results, even if it is the object of criticism and public condemnation in the international community.

The “Clausewitzian paradigm”, which has glorified large-scale wars between leading states for many years, is losing its relevance in the modern era. The loss of the classical image of war, the replacement of traditional players with new ones, the dominance of non-kinetic capabilities in many parameters, the realization of the era of contactless wars, the disappearance of the battle line, etc. innovations show that Clausewitz’s views are not sufficient for modern military-political conditions.

Among the attempts made to study the transformation of wars, the “Indirect Actions Strategy” authored by Basil H.Liddell Hart occupies an important place. The goal of this strategy is to achieve a quick victory over the enemy during the war, considering the destruction of the rear-line potential and logistical capabilities of his army as a more important factor. This deprives the army of the “enemy” state of the ability to fight effectively and resist for a long time [4]. Basil H. Liddell Hart believes that the main goal of war is not the complete destruction of the armed forces and economic potential of the enemy state, nor the seizure of its territory, but rather the forcing of the ruling circles of the “enemy” country (even several enemy states) to accept conditions that will fully meet the political, economic and military interests of the side gaining the upper hand, and the transformation of its political regime into a more loyal and manageable regime.

Loss of control over the rear, which plays an important role in the supply of the front, is considered one of the most important conditions for deciding the fate of the war. In general, the strategy of indirect actions aims to blockade the enemy, exert psychological influence, disrupt its communications and supply.

Such activities are not new in the history of wars, they have been encountered in most armed conflicts. It is simply that some have associated this theory with military operations, while others have associated it with activities outside military operations. Thus, such activities can be implemented both in wartime and in peacetime. From the point of view of modern wars, it can be said that the strategy of indirect actions acts as a set of complex means of influence against the enemy. It is considered possible to implement it without the use of direct military force. In this case, economic, psychological, information and political means act as a pressure mechanism.

Representatives of the Anglo-Saxon school have succeeded in perfecting the innovative image of the strategy of indirect actions in their research, in the form of Gene Sharp’s strategy of non-violent political struggle (QSMS), Joseph Nye’s “Soft power”, Steven Mann's theory of

“Managed chaos” and the technology of color revolution. The mentioned theories are perceived as modern forms of geopolitical competition and power struggle.

The dynamics of modern international relations and the global challenges facing humanity require the study of new explanatory models of armed conflicts. The analysis of the most general concepts of modern wars allows us to distinguish three main groups of military-theoretical approaches [5, p.53]. The first group of military-political approaches studies the features of modern wars and armed conflicts as a result of the emergence of new actors (participants, subjects), as well as the transformation of planned goals during armed conflict.

The main determinants of the military-political approach included in the first group are considered to be:

change in the specifics of modern wars and armed conflicts as a result of the emergence of new actors, as well as the planned goals in the course of armed conflict;

change in the status of actors of military violence (who decide on the goals, means and methods of war) as one of the main trends in the modern transformation of wars;

revision of Clausewitz's classic formula (trinitarian wars);

the breakdown of the state's monopoly on the use of military force, the abandonment of old wars, the emergence of new types of wars – guerrilla warfare, terrorism or asymmetric warfare;

the close connection of the emergence of new war actors with the military-theoretical concept of “guerrilla warfare”, the definition of the difference between “guerrilla activities” and “guerrilla warfare”.

According to the military-theoretical views of the representatives of this direction (M. van Creveld, H.Cise and others), the dominant factor determining the trend of the modern transformation of war is the change in the status of the subject of military violence, which decides on the goals, means and methods of war. Thus, in particular, Martin van Creveld reconsiders the classical formula of Carl von Clausewitz – the triad of the main participants in the war “government – army – people” (trinitarian war). Trinitarian war includes at least three actors: the government leading the military campaign, the army waging war and dying on the battlefield, and the people paying for it and suffering. This formula, according to Martin van Creveld, does not work in modern times, since its main participants, as a rule, are separated from each other and have different duties and rights. The author presents modern military conflicts under the name “non-trinitarian war” [6, pp. 60-67].

He believes that “the state's attempts to make the use of violence its exclusive prerogative face great difficulties” and that therefore old types of wars are becoming a thing of the past, and new types of wars are beginning to gain the upper hand. The author classifies “guerrilla wars”, terrorism or asymmetric wars as new types of wars.

The definition of new actors of war is also associated with military-theoretical concepts called “guerrilla wars”. Without going into purely military issues, it should be noted that there is a fundamental difference between “guerrilla actions” and “guerrilla warfare”. The army waging a regular war has resorted to the former and continues to do so. “Guerrilla warfare” is literally carried out by autonomous and relatively small detachments (militants) against the enemy army.

The guerrilla theory was developed and enriched with new ideas by the American researcher J.Nagle (the founder of the counter-guerrilla doctrine of the US armed forces). In his opinion, “The guerrilla strategy is to avoid direct confrontation. Therefore, armies preparing to fight traditional opponents must be reorganized and learn to wage wars of a completely different type” [5, p.56].

According to M.Eliot-Bateman, a lecturer at the University of Manchester, the beginning of each new military era is usually accompanied by the emergence of more advanced weapons capable of ensuring victory in war, for example, the English longbow, the tank, the atomic bomb. According to his argument, people's war marks a new era in military doctrine, because the long-standing doctrine of people's war gives more importance to people than to military equipment [5, p.56].

In the second group of concepts, the modern features of wars are associated with the emergence of new means of armed conflict.

In general, in relation to the second group of concepts, conflictology identifies three revolutions that have led to a radical transformation in the military sphere [7]:

the first is the emergence of gunpowder and firearms;

the second, the production and mass use of mechanized combat equipment and automatic weapons;

the third – the introduction of nuclear-missile weapons and other latest means of armed warfare by armies. However, the role of the three mentioned revolutions in the emergence of new methods of armed conflict cannot be denied. Information, consietal and network wars are considered the product of these revolutionary transformations.

Currently, we are witnessing the fourth revolution, which is associated with the widespread application of information and computer technologies in military affairs.

This group of concepts emphasizes the priority role of high technologies in the transformation of war, the rapid development of which, according to representatives of this direction (A. Toffler, Z. Brzezinski, etc.), revolutionizes the means of military violence and changes the form of war. In this regard, the ideas of Alvin Toffler, one of the most important modern theorists of social liberalism, deserve special attention. His work "War and Antiwar", devoted to the problem of war, considered in the context of the "Concept of Waves of Social Development", is of particular interest. The author concludes that the main antagonists of the coming century will be divided according to the level of technical development, and the social, ecological and other consequences of this difference will become the cause of wars between industrial and post-industrial countries [8].

It seems that Alvin Toffler is partly right in noting the level of technical development of the main actors of modern military policy as a dominant feature. As the events of recent decades have shown, it is not the technical advantage itself that has motivated the continued participation of the United States in wars and conflicts in the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century, but the opportunity to use this technical advantage without "punishment", without experiencing appropriate and adequate counter-reactions.

A group of military-theoretical concepts related to this direction is the automated control of objects (troops), characterized by the fruits of the scientific and technological revolution in the 70s of the 20th century. The emergence of such ideas gave impetus to the reduction of the essence of war in the West to the level of exclusively armed struggle. Thus, back in the 70s of the 20th century, the English professor M. Tring, referring to the power and perfection of modern weapons, argued that in future wars people will become helpless spectators of the struggle between the robots of the army and navy, aviation and missile forces, which have nothing to do with politics [5, p.59]. According to many experts, the world is approaching the beginning of an arms race in the use of robots. The motivation to increase the use of unmanned systems and complexes, which allow reducing possible losses and increasing secrecy during the execution of tasks, has increased significantly at the end of the 20th century.

In this regard, the position of the author of the book "Sixth Generation Wars. Weapons and the Military Art of the Future," the Russian military scientist V. Slipchenko, is noteworthy. In this work, the author presented his concept of "contactless warfare" or "sixth generation warfare." Its essence is that victory in the war of the future will be determined by the presence of high-precision weapons and systems ensuring their successful use in the arsenal of the parties [9].

The leitmotif of the second group of concepts is undoubtedly the "revolution in military affairs". In particular, this is expressed in the following: a) changing the forms of violence (through special operations of mobile groups); b) the introduction of unconventional means of strike, for example, high-precision, as well as means of moral and psychological pressure on the enemy. The

emergence of new forms of warfare, new weapons and equipment systems, new military equipment and technologies requires constant re-improvement and evaluation of military doctrines and operational concepts.

Thus, the main determinants of the second group of approaches are considered to be the following:

- the role of high technologies in the transformation of wars;

- the fact that future wars will be fought between robots that have nothing to do with politics.

This is evidenced by the fact that the intense armament in the field of using robots continues at a high pace. The reason for the increased use of unmanned aerial systems and complexes is considered to be the reduction of possible losses and increased confidentiality in the implementation of tasks;

- the replacement of suicide bombers by robots;

- contactless warfare or 6th generation warfare (the presence of high-precision weapons).

According to experts, new wars are qualitatively different from old ones. The contribution of the American researcher A. Toffler to the study of the transformative features of military conflicts is undeniable. In his work "War and Antiwar" [8], he linked the cause of wars with the division of the modern world into opposing civilizational waves, and the fact that each wave has its own social, political and economic interests, views on the world order and value orientations.

The Dutch military historian M. van Creveld sees the reason for the transformation of war in the introduction of nuclear weapons into the arsenals of states and believes that armed conflict between great powers is meaningless, since nuclear weapons can both make them victorious in war and wipe them off the face of the earth [6]. Initially, only two countries – the USA and the USSR – were deprived of the possibility of a military clash. Gradually, some states acquired nuclear weapons, and the circle in which it was impossible to conduct military operations expanded. Therefore, after 1945, all armed conflicts took place against weak states or between weak states. Today, even a country like North Korea is trying to acquire nuclear weapons to protect itself from its nuclear-armed neighbors.

M. van Creveld does not say that wars will disappear, because war is rooted in human nature. But he does state that armed conflicts will take on a completely new character. Today, researchers who share M. van Creveld's views express the opinion that "until an effective missile defense system is developed, nuclear weapons will be an obstacle to war". In his work "The Transformation of Wars", modern wars (non-trinitarian wars) are characterized as conflicts that do not have a political essence and are of low intensity. According to the author, the current situation is associated with fundamental changes in the socio-cultural characteristics of conflicts [6, pp. 60-67]. These changes are mainly due to the inability of traditional troops to successfully fight against irregular armed formations in local conflicts. The inability to adapt to these changes can cost modern states dearly and threaten them with complete disintegration.

The contribution of the British researcher M. Kaldor to the study of the transformation of military conflicts is undeniable. In his work "New and Old Wars" [11], he analyzed how the nature of war has changed. The author, who believes that "a new type of organized violence" emerged after the collapse of multinational states such as Yugoslavia and the USSR, He argues that the "new wars" are related to identity politics, especially the forced separation of mixed ethnic groups and cultures. All of this, the researcher sees as a result of globalization.

He describes the "new war" as "commercialized and privatized violence". The state has lost its monopoly on control over violence. Non-governmental groups and organizations have taken over the right to use violence. This is expressed primarily in the growing popularity of private military companies, illegal armed groups and mercenaries. The political significance of armed conflict is shifting from the state level to the level of organizations, groups or even private individuals, and the

change in the subjects of conflict leads to the emergence of new forms of war: asymmetric wars, terrorism, etc.

According to the author, most states in which armed conflicts occur lose their legitimacy over physical violence and become “incapable”, “bankrupt” or “fragile” states. That is, control over the means of coercion is lost and these means are fragmented. As a result, the state and its institutions collapse.

The conducted research allows us to conclude that the transformation of military conflicts is a very complex and intricate process. The quantitative and qualitative changes that have occurred in military conflicts over the vast period of time from the time of Sun Tzu to the present day can be summarized as follows:

transformation of actors – the inclusion of unconventional participants in the ranks of classical actors.

transformation of goals – the replacement of political goals with non-political goals;

transformation of rules – the deformation of the norms and rules established in the conflict (conventional law of war);

transformation of structures – the devaluation of the global security system, the activities of international bodies regulating the conflict.

transformation of military management – the transformation of army construction and conceptual documents, etc.

## **Conclusion**

Conflict and violence have existed as an element of social struggle since the primitive community structure. The emergence of states laid the foundation for the gradual institutionalization of wars. War has become a tool for realizing the interests of states. Radical changes in human history have given a serious impetus to the improvement of the means of waging wars, the transformation of their goals and actors. All these transformations have been the main research questions of ancient and modern studies. However, the work carried out in this direction cannot be considered complete. The increasing impact of the rapid development of high technologies on conflict management gives rise to the renewal of scientific knowledge in this area and makes the study of these transformations inevitable.

1. In the modern era, the conceptual apparatus, methods and means of military conflicts have undergone a serious transformation and this process continues;

2. The “Clausewitz’s legacy” does not correspond to modern realities;

3. Modern wars are being reduced to the level of armed conflicts;

4. Modern wars are moving away from political goals;

5. The expansion of the theater of military operations into new domains and the decentralization of combat mission execution is taking place with the introduction of autonomous weapons.

## **Funding**

This study received no specific financial support.

## **Competing interests**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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