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THE CHANGING NATURE OF WARFARE: RUSSIAN HYBRID WARFARE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Abstract

The nature and means of conducting warfare have always been changing. Technology, political realities and ideologies continue to play crucial role in this transformation as witnessed in the two world wars, the Cold War, and in following decades. Non-state actors became more visible and important. Nowadays, many wars involve such actors against state parties, for example, the US global war on terror, Israel-Hezbollah War (2006) and the current war against the Islamic State (ISIL). The term hybrid war involves a combination of traditional and nonconventional means, has become a common subject of discussion. But hybrid war is nothing new and has been practiced since ancient times. Several countries have now resorted to hybrid war: one such country is Russia, who has been blamed by western countries in this regard, e.g., in Georgian War (2008), Crimea (2014), ongoing conflict in eastern and south Ukraine, disinformation campaign against the West and interference in their governance process. Russia similarly, blames them for its destabilization by increased military presence on its borders and inciting revolutions in neighbour countries. Meanwhile, countries are developing hybrid warfare capacities, including plans for deploying military robots. Non-state actors now also use hybrid means like the Hezbollah or ISIL and several ongoing wars are becoming growingly hybrid; besides, the clash of ideologies, i.e., religious radicalism vs. white supremacism can create conflicts, indicating future wars may be even more so. Yet, some old mechanisms and strategies are likely to remain relevant and useful in future wars as well, suggesting their true ever-evolving and hybrid character.

Keywords: Russian Resurgence, Hybrid Warfare, Covert Operations, Gersimov Doctrine

1.   Introduction

Warfare has been an integral part of human history. The nature of war has also been constantly changing, from the ancient era to present day: world wars, proxy wars, limited wars, wars between state parties and non-state actors, etc. The last element, like the al-Qaeda, the Taliban, the Islamic State (ISIL), al-Shabab, Boko Haram, now

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fight states on more than one battlefield, even globally, and commit acts of random violence against civilians. Before, they did not usually kill civilians in foreign territories, but they now do. Rapid spread and easy availability of information technology have added new dimensions to the changing nature of warfare, e.g., easier acquisition of hi-tech weapons, logistics and countermeasures, indoctrination and recruitment of new combatants, launching vicious attacks through cyberspace and inflicting grave damages equal to battlefield ones are some instances.

The way of conducting warfare has been changing too. Massive manpower, siege, mining, trenching are quite old-fashioned now. New eras began with the advent of firearms and mechanized devices; nuclear weapons brought a quick end to the Second World War, but were limited within verbal threats of use by the United State (US) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during the Cold War. Several countries have notably decreased their former huge armed forces and arsenals nowadays, and instead, often use hybrid/irregular warfare, combining conventional and unconventional tools—cyber-attacks, disinformation, misinformation, propaganda, espionage, diplomacy, subversion etc, e.g., the Israel-Hezbollah Conflict (2006),[1] the US and Israel's alleged cyber-attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities with the Stuxnet virus (2010).[2] Many countries, besides their regular government agencies, have cyber security/warfare divisions,[3] and groups work to purposely spread confusion, disorder and panic capitalizing on fault-lines in societies.[4]

Russia has in recent times, been accused by the US and its western allies of waging hybrid/irregular warfare. For example, cyber-attacks in Estonia (2007), the Russo-Georgian War (2008), intervention in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea (2014), meddling in US presidential election (2016) and midterm election (2018), in Brexit referendum (2016), supposed linkages with several Trump administration officials and influential people in the US, unidentified poisoning cases (2006, 2018) in Britain, German Bundestag investigation of the US National Security Agency/NSA spying scandal (2014), French President Emmanuel Macron's email leaks (2017) etc. They say Russia is trying to undermine Western democracies, create split among the EU members and destabilize them by these activities.[5] By contrast, Russia also accuses the West of using nonconventional tactics for endangering it. What turned hybrid warfare into a lucrative topic for discussion among academics and policy analysts is

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[1] Timothy McCulloch and Richard Johnson, *Hybrid Warfare*, Joint Special Operations University, MacDill Air Force Base, Tampa, Florida, USA, August 2013, p. 19.

[2] David E. Sanger, "Obama order sped up wave of cyber attacks against Iran", *The New York Times*, 01 June, 2012.

[3] Jenny Jun, Scott LaFoy, Ethan Sohn, *North Korea's Cyber Operations: Strategy and Responses*, Washington D.C., USA: Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), December 2015, pp. 4-6.

[4] *Deliberate Online Falsehoods*: *Challenges and Implications*, Ministry of Communication and Information, Ministry of Law, Singapore, January 2018, pp. 1-3.

[5] Kristina Potapova, "How We Have Become an Enemy in the Eyes of Russia", *In Focus*, Rue du Commerce, Brussels, Belgium: Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, March 2017, p. 1.

not the novelty of the idea, rather the potential threat it poses towards conventional wisdom of state and warcraft. For example, if increasingly hybrid warfare is to gain traction among state and non-state actors who are at feud and asymmetrical relationships with a dominant conventional military power and wish to deflect the overwhelming conventional military superiority, then the modelling and the study of these unconventional tools of warfare are an imperative as they may have important implications for the concept of deterrence, estimations of power, and the significance of defencive military alliances. Based upon these premises, the paper intends to investigate following questions. How has the nature of warfare been changing over time, especially since the First World War? When did hybrid warfare emerge and why do some countries, e.g., Russia, now use it? Will ongoing and future wars be hybrid?

This paper seeks answers to such questions. It is a qualitative research, using different books, newspapers, journals, and online sources, focusing on military conflicts solely, not nonmilitary ones. It has six sections. First is the introduction. The second section focuses on conceptualizing the idea of hybrid war based on current literature; third section discusses the changing nature of warfare since the First World War to limit the scope. The fourth focuses on the emergence of hybrid war and why some countries are nowadays opting for this; it also emphasizes why Russia goes for hybrid war. The fifth tries to examine if present and future wars will be hybrid. The sixth section ends the paper with some remarks.

2.   Conceptualizing Hybrid Warfare

Following the invasion and annexation of Crimea in 2014, hybrid warfare gained significant traction among academics, military strategists and government policy papers. The term has been representative of the complexities that 21st century warfare poses. By ruining the monopoly of the state, emergence of non-state actors as warring parties means the blurring lines among types of war, armed conflicts and even peace require a new terminology to understand the complexities and gamut of present-day warfare. However, there has been a plethora of definitions and approaches to define and understand hybrid warfare which underlines disagreement among scholars in tackling the term. Besides, as states have divergences in their perception and approaches to deal with hybrid threats, this has added another dimension to the discourse of hybrid warfare. In one approach, hybrid warfare can be seen from a historical perspective. Usage of both conventional and irregular forces in the same military war has been identified as hybrid warfare as Peter R. Mansoor explained, "conflict involving a combination of conventional military forces and irregulars (guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists), which could include both state and non-state actors, aimed at achieving a common political purpose".[6] This perspective

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[6] Peter R. Mansoor, "Hybrid War in History," in Williamson Murray and Peter R. Mansoor (eds.), *Hybrid Warfare: Fighting Complex Opponents from the Ancient World to the Present*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p. 2.

questions the novelty of the term and suggests, on numerous occasions, hybrid tactics and approaches have been used at the tactical, operational and strategic levels and the evidences can be found as far as the Peloponnesian War and the writings of the fifth century BC, Chinese strategist, Sun Tzu. Side by side with regular forces, irregular forces have been fighting wars. Under asymmetric condition, huge armies such as Napoleon's *Grande Armée* and Hitler's *Wehrmacht* struggled in response to irregular fighters. These irregular forces exploited their upper hand over the invading armies in local knowledge regarding human geographical terrain and attacked vulnerable logistic bases and lines of communication. As a result over the years, conventional forces and warfare were significantly shaped and evolved by this guerrilla warfare. The recent counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have been glaring examples of how difficult it is to defeat determined irregular forces without committing human rights violations, when they get support and shelter from the local population.

Since the 2000s, especially following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, use of the term "hybrid" became fashionable and convenient to explain the contemporary complexities of modern threats and warfare, in particular, because of the rapid evolution and lethality of violent non-state actors and the growing potential of cyber warfare. However, there is no consensus whether these shifts demand a new definition or even constitute one.[7] Despite that, recent attempts to define hybrid warfare stressed on blending conventional and irregular approaches across the full spectrum of conflict. In one such attempt, in 2007, Frank G. Hoffman defined hybrid warfare as "threats that incorporate a full range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder, conducted by both sides and a variety of non-state actors."[8] The Russo-Georgian War in 2008 is one of the instances where 'hybrid warfare' made a departure from its previous historical forms in terms of mixing conventional and irregular methods. During this war, Russia used a combination of regular armed forces when South Ossetian and Abkhazian militias fought covertly alongside Russian special operations forces (SOF) as "local defence" troops. Previously, conventional and irregular operations tended to take place concurrently but separately, rather than being integrated. In addition to that, military campaigns used irregular fighters as auxiliaries and their role used to take a secondary form to the conventional and regular armed forces.

On the other hand, conflict between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006 was the most frequently used example for contemporary definitions of hybrid warfare. In that conflict, Hezbollah surprised Israel by combining guerrilla and conventional military

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[7] U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), Hybrid Warfare, GAO-10-136R, Washington, DC, 2010, available at http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-1036R, accessed on 25 September 2018.
[8] Frank G. Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Arlington, Virginia, USA : Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007, p. 8.

tactics, used weaponry and communication systems that normally are associated with professional armies. They exploited cyberspace and other media for information war and propaganda to attain strategic objectives. Such warfare proved more successful in comparison to Israel's attempt in influencing global opinion from the start of the conflict. Although hybrid warfare has its lineage in the modern and pre-modern history of warfare, in the cases of Hezbollah, Chechen guerrillas and most recently the Islamic State (ISIL), development and sophistication of modern weapon systems have greatly increased the lethality of non-state actors. The added dimension of these non-state actors is the leverage they get from the unprecedented development of information technology. This has given them the chance not only to preach their ideology and recruit potential financiers, fighters and extend their support base, they are in information warfare with 'state' actors in shaping public opinion as well.

The rise of non-state actors such as Hezbollah, ISIL or the al-Qaeda, their innovative ways to fight the disproportionately superior power (usually states) have substantially influenced current warfare research. However, a closer look into the existing research on hybrid warfare indicates that, there is a disconnect among the present day thinking and the traditional understanding of strategy, warfare, and state power. Mainstream academic definitions of hybrid warfare have a narrow lens which highlights the blending of conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal organizations and tactics as well as often include supporting (dis)information campaign and cyber warfare. Hybrid warfare has also taken into cognizance both state and non-state actors without considering their position in the global power structure. This simplified inclusion and attribution of actors can be misleading in blurring the obvious differences between a powerful actor who employs select methods in warfare as a matter of choice, whereas a weaker power chooses particular means due to its power limitation. Despite this major disconnect, based on the earlier discussion, those who believe in the vitality of the concept of hybrid warfare, can be divided into two broad schools of thought. The first school maintains that hybrid warfare is a useful concept, although they question the novelty of the concept. They argue that hybrid warfare is simply the combination of regular and irregular forces on the battlefield, whereas they define "irregulars" as militia, guerrillas, insurgents, and terrorists. This perspective on hybrid warfare, perceives only the combinations of the military forms of war along with criminal elements and cyber-warfare. Therefore, this perspective can be an interesting tool to the historical study of battles and military campaigns but it has little explanatory value when it comes to explaining the combination of military and non-military tools of power in achieving objectives that were once the exclusive role of the military.[9] Consequently, it has also failed to take into account the nature of an actor and the kind of circumstances where the actor avoids overt hostilities or confrontation and chooses criminal networks or cyber-attacks. Like the first school, the second

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[9] Peter R. Mansoor, op. cit., pp. 1–17.

school of thought includes both conventional and irregular forces, but unlike the first, gives special priority to the operational reach of terrorism, and then includes a wide variety of innovative approaches to applying technology and resourcefulness to offset opponent's military superiority in an asymmetric warfare.[10]

To sum up, the discussion on the literature shows that the components of hybrid warfare are nothing new. Rather, hybrid warfare is a new perspective for an old way of warfare, and its numerous forms have gained recent currency due to globalization, mass communications, and the speed of technological innovation. It is distinct and bigger than the limited means available to a stateless terrorist organization in an asymmetric warfare. Rather, hybrid warfare entails the deliberate choice of a state or non-state actor which can unleash larger degrees of conventional force, but instead attempts to gain some of the objectives of limited war through other than purely conventional military means. Hence, in a hybrid war, there is a significant role for traditional military forces but that may be invisible. Consequently, while the threat and weight of overwhelming conventional force are vital components, traditional military force remains as a subordinate in a hybrid campaign.

3.   Changing Nature of Warfare: Since the First World War to Present Day

Although hybrid warfare has been an integral part of the historical landscape since wars in ancient world, only recently many commentators started to categorize these conflicts as unique. Throughout human history, great powers have to contend with weaker opponents who would use conventional and irregular forces to offset the advantage great powers enjoy due to their superior conventional military strength. However, as war in the 21st century evolved into seemingly unfamiliar forms which combine regular and irregular forces on the same battlefields, many defense analysts were rushed to announce the emergence of a new type of war – hybrid war. Hence, this section will engage in a discussion which will try to look into hybrid war from an evolutionary perspective and thereby try to discern the presence of hybrid elements starting from the First World War to present day warfare.

3.1   *The First World War*

The first global conflict, involved several powerful countries, empires, was fought over land, seas and air, witnessed the introduction of tanks, aircrafts, and aircraft carriers for the first time in history of warfare. The arrival of these three, changed the

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[10] Timothy McCulloch and Richard Johnson, "Hybrid Warfare," *JSOU Report 13-4*, August, 2013; also see, Nathan P. Freier, *Strategic Competition and Resistance in the 21st Century: Irregular, Catastrophic, Traditional, and Hybrid Challenges in Context*, Carlisle Barracks, PA, USA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2007, pp. 8-10.

nature of and the way warfare would be conducted from then on; the war would also heighten arms race that continues to date.

Tanks and military aircrafts helped soldiers overcome rough terrains, fortifications and long distances, made land warfare more mobile (contrasting the prolonged and bloodier siege/trench wars), aerial firing and scouting with reduced risks to tasked personnel. Belligerents used aircrafts in strategic bombing on each other. Germany launched the first successful chemical attack on 22 April 1915 with 150 tons of chlorine on French forces in Ypres (Belgium).[11] Britain launched a similar attack in September 1915 on Germans in France.[12] Navies received sonar (*Asdic*), *dreadnought*-class warships, destroyers and submarines. But the sonar and depth-charges curtailed submarines' advantages of surprise attacks. Early aircraft carriers mostly carried seaplanes, biplane fighters or similar torpedo bombers, added ship-borne aerial attacks; naval aircrafts could now strike enemy ships; Japan, then Allied Powers member, from its seaplane carrier *Wakamiya,* in 1914 in Siege of Qingdao (China), bombed German and Austro-Hungarian bases, and sank a German military ship.[13] The Central Powers lacked carriers.

The war was hybrid and first total war of the 20th century. As hybrid war, the combination of new strategies, tactics and equipment with older ones redefined warfare. Warring parties deciphered and interrupted each other's electronic messages for espionage. European powers assembled massive manpower and logistics from their homelands and colonies; both sides had associates, co-belligerents, and utilized propaganda heavily. As total war, they tried by all means to fully obliterate the other. Besides warfronts, they provoked tensions in enemy territories, e.g., Britain and France in Ottoman Middle East, where the Arab revolt hastened the Ottomans' fall.[14] Germany tried to use pan-Islamism and Indian nationalism against Britain,[15] Russia and France.[16] Allied Powers blocked German seaports throughout the war, depriving Central Powers including their civilians of essential supplies. Several enemies and allies intervened in the Russian Civil War (1917) for the White Army (monarchists) against Bolsheviks who won and the USSR/Soviet Union emerged; the country would

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[11] Thomas A. Bundt, "Gas, Mud and Blood at Ypres: The Painful Lessons of Chemical Warfare", *Military Review*, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA, Vol. 84, No. 5, July-August 2004, p. 81.

[12] Edgar Jones, "Terror Weapons: the British Experience of Gas and its Treatment in the First World War", *War in History*, Vol. 21, Issue. 3, July 2014, p. 356.

[13] Timothy D. Saxton, "Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation 1914-1918", *Naval War College Review,* Vol. 53, No. 1, Winter 2000, p. 06.

[14] Robert Johnson, "The Evolution of Hybrid Threats Through History" in Yücel Özel and Ertan Inaltekin (eds.), *Shifting Paradigm of War: Hybrid Warfare*, Istanbul, Turkey:Turkish National Defense University, 2017, pp. 4-5.

[15] Farish A. Noor, "From Empire to the War on Terror: The 1915 Indian Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore", *Working Paper No. 206*, Nanyang, Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, July 2010, pp. 9-11.

[16] Eugene Rogan, "Rival Jihads: Islam and the Great War in the Middle East", *Journal of the British Academy*, Vol. 4, January 2016, pp. 1-3.

be a major enemy of the Axis Powers in the next World War (from June 1941) and after 1945, the main enemy to the entire West, prompting more monumental changes in the nature and means of warfare in the days to come.

3.2   *The Interwar Years*

The League of Nations founded as a body to oversee world affairs and prevent further conflicts, seemed ineffective due to ever-growing hostility and aggression among nations. The institution ultimately failed when the Second World War began. Britain and France divided former Ottoman Middle East and new territories were appearing elsewhere as well. In British Mandated Palestine, Jewish migration grew noticeably and created a number of Jewish-Arab riots, laying the basis for modern-day Israel, the Palestinian conflict and Israel-Arab enmity. The Communist USSR, fascist Italy, and Nazi Germany/Third Reich, all wanted to spread their own mode of governance, restore former glory, and possessed ultra-racism, e.g., Italy planned a new Roman Empire,[17] Germany sought *Lebensraum* (expanding into East and Central Europe),[18] Aryan/Nordic race theory, virulent anti-Semitism,[19] and the USSR propagated global communism. Italy and Germany waged expansionist wars in the Balkans and North Africa, occupied Austria and Czechoslovakia, backed nationalists in the Spanish and Chinese Civil Wars, whereas the USSR backed republicans and communists there. Amid pervasive ruin in the First World War and the Great Depression, European powers developed weapons on large scales. Diverse types of military aircrafts arose during this period: fighters (heavy, light, night, carrier-based, escort etc), bombers (light, medium, heavy, dive, night), fighter-bombers and reconnaissance aircrafts including for maritime patrol. The US and Japan were rising as major naval powers surpassing Britain and France. All these would gravely impact the upcoming world war in all aspects.

3.3   *The Second World War*

The deadliest military conflict so far that claimed about 65-75 million lives,[20] changed warfare to a much greater degree: lightning fast war (German *Blitzkrieg*) by lead role of armoured and aerial wings, obsolescence of fortification/static combat, indication for future dominance of air power aided by aircraft carriers in wars, systematic carnage of Jews (the Holocaust), Slavs, gypsies, communists (forced labour

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[17] Andrea Giardina, "The Fascist Myth of Romanity", *Estudos Avançados*, Vol. 22, No. 62, January/April 2008, Institute of Advanced Studies, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, p. 57.

[18] André Mineau, *SS Thinking and the Holocaust*, Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Rodopi Publishers, April 2012, pp. 64-66.

[19] Gerhard L. Weinberg (ed.), *Hitler's Second Book: the Unpublished Sequel to Mein Kampf*, New York, USA: Enigma Books, 2006, pp. 108-234.

[20] Milton Leitenberg, "Deaths in Wars and Conflicts in the 20th Century", *Occasional Papers*, No. 29, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA, August 2006, p. 9.

and cruel experiments in concentration camps), wide use of various types of military aircrafts described earlier, the Enigma coding machine and pocket battleships (Germany); nuclear weapons were the decisive instrument invented during this war, which would usher in the eponymous era when the war ended.

Blitzkrieg's speed, ferocity and efficiency caught most opponents by utter shock. Coordinated land-air onslaughts crushed tough fortifications, rendering fortress warfare useless. But after late-1941, Soviet counterstrikes and harsh winter held Axis members in static/attrition wars, e.g., Battle of Stalingrad,[21] the Siege of Leningrad heralding their eventual fall. Axis powers were fighting on multiple fronts: Western, Eastern, Africa, Asia, even in Poles, with much lesser resources than the Allies. In this hybrid and total war, aircrafts often decided victory or defeat. Aircraft carriers now carried more planes. Japan's capture of vast areas in the Asia-Pacific by successful blend of aerial-naval assaults, can be compared with German feats on land. Germany and Italy lacked aircraft carriers and naval aviation; Japan had both yet lacked industrial ability to replace lost equipment, thus failed in retaining early gains and finally, lost. Ideological clashes, e.g., national socialism/Nazism vs. communism, western vs. eastern imperialism, use of colonial subjects by both parties were common: while Britain and France brought soldiers and logistics from Asian and African colonies, Germany and Japan were actively instigating citizens of some colonies against them. Battles became growingly accompanied by air-navy-army joint operations, unbarred espionage, propaganda and methodical slaughter of certain communities, strategic bombing on Axis powers, especially nuclear bombings on Japan claimed not only military-industrial installations but also numerous civilians, show how warfare was changing.

3.4   *The Cold War*

It is a watershed in affecting warfare, as proxy wars were fought worldwide based on two rival ideologies upheld by two superpowers—the US-led Western bloc and the USSR-led communist/Eastern bloc.[22] Also, two military alliances, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact were formed, respectively. United Nations (UN) peacekeeping helped lessen intensity of wars somewhat, enforce ceasefires, thus influenced their nature and outcome. Most third world countries belonged to either bloc. In ex-European colonies, wars commonly involved overt or covert presence of both powers. NATO and the US Marshall Plan offered some security to Western Europe against any probable Soviet military aggression.

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[21] Andrei A. Kokoshin, "The German Blitzkrieg against the USSR", *Belfer Center Paper*, Harvard, Massachusetts, USA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard University, June 2016, p. 12.

[22] Andrew Mumford, *Proxy Warfare*, Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, June 2013, p. 3.

The arms race contained conventional and nuclear weapons. Multirole Combat Aircrafts (MCAs) and strategic/heavy bombers (nuclear-armed), nuclear-powered aircraft carriers, submarines and missiles proved critical in demonstration of force by major powers, determining the result of wars and decrease further belligerence in many cases; combat helicopters were brought in for attacks and rescue/evacuation, notably in counterinsurgency/anti-guerrilla wars, like in Vietnam. Spy/reconnaissance satellites were sent to the outer space. The US' proposed Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) for space-based missile defence aroused fear of nuclear war out there.[23]

All the permanent members of the UN Security Council had nuclear weapons, but never used those in reality except for test-explosions. The two opposing sides did not fight openly, but were behind most proxy wars.[24] Arms trade was omnipresent deeply involving the US, USSR and their allies; developing/third world nations in Asia, Africa and South America relied on arms and embargoes or sanctions from either side on any party affected wars severely. Wars mostly were guerrilla or insurgency type where one party tried to topple the other with assistance from any of the two sides for seizing state power, thus causing prolonged, gory wars. Despite regular threats of nuclear violence and constant fear of war erupting between the two blocs, the era did not see global wars, as both sides were virtually equal in strength. Moreover, confidence building measures such as, Moscow-Washington Hotline, Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD), first strike, nuclear deterrence and Massive Retaliation etc, were put into place to prevent such a calamity.

Importance of non-state actors became more apparent in affecting warfare. In Vietnam, the proxy war had guerrilla, insurgency and attrition features; China, the USSR and other members of the Eastern bloc aided the Vietcong, but internal opposition and external pressures were almost just as crucial in forcing the withdrawal of the US, its allies and the peace process there. Pro-Islamic sentiments were on the rise; Muslim countries, particularly those of the Middle East, after the Six Day War (1967) with Israel and Al-Aqsa Fire (1969), founded the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). They introduced use of oil as a bargaining chip against Israel, its supporters and allies since the 1973 Arab-Israel War. As the Eastern bloc preached no religion and rather resorted to suppression, the US-led Western bloc, in the Soviet-Afghan War, competently utilized Muslim religious sentiments and rallied support from other Muslim nations across the globe. This war, like the Vietnam War, is an ideal example of proxy war, with guerrilla, attrition and insurgency characteristics being prevalent. The USSR fought there from December 1979-February 1989, suffered mammoth losses and lastly, pulled out. The US departure from Vietnam and Soviet defeat in Afghanistan show that even without open warfare, a much powerful enemy can also be taken down, giving the strategies, the nature and means various names and guises.

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[23] Benjamin S. Lambeth, *The Soviet Union and the Strategic Defense Initiative*, Santa Monica, California, USA: Rand Corporation, June 1986, pp. 04-07.
[24] Mark O. Yeisley, "Bipolarity, Proxy Wars and the Rise of China", *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 5, Issue. 4, Winter 2011, Air University, Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama, USA, p. 79.

3.5   *The Post-Cold War Era*

The USSR's demise in 1991 ended the Cold War, necessitating reduction of large forces, arsenals and bellicose rhetoric as there was no viable opponent for the West, and thus, no need for large-scale wars. But internal conflicts behind the Iron Curtain were surfacing. The First Yugoslav War (1991) and ensuing disintegration of Yugoslavia paved way for the Bosnian War, the first ethnic conflict in post-Second World War Europe. Vicious crimes, including genocide occurred in the war fuelled by ethno-religious sentiments; Greek volunteers assisted Serbia,[25] politicians and Orthodox Church of Russia supported their Orthodox Serbian brethren[26] while Muslim fighters from other countries came to fight beside Bosnians.[27] This war signalled the gradual return and prominence of jingoistic narratives. NATO ignored Russian opposition, condemnation and took strict actions on Serbia. Many former Soviet countries joined NATO and the European Union (EU) but Russia could not respond strongly to western presence or intervention in its former realm which would bring about new and incessant tensions in the future.

Compared to interstate conflicts of the earlier era, post-Cold War conflicts were more intra-state in nature. The lone superpower, the US and its NATO allies embarked upon promotion of democracy and human rights even through military interventions along with other members. The country's endeavours in Albania, East Timor, Haiti, Iraq, Kosovo and Somalia, etc, involved military intervention as well as civil society organizations. But all efforts were not received positively. The US military intervention in Somalia met violent repercussions, where not only Somali fighters, but also common people became hostile to US forces. Another important factor in affecting warfare was the growing revival of Muslim extremism. The Afghan Mujahedeen, who with Western assistance fought the Soviets previously, became divided in various factions and embroiled in a civil war (1992-96). The Taliban came out victorious and formed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on ultra-orthodox interpretations of Islam and even stricter implementation.[28] They maintained close relations with the far more radical Muslim group, al-Qaeda. These groups became models for future Muslim radicals against their own and Western countries alike. The end of the Cold War intensified longstanding animosities that would become more violent regardless of peace efforts. Various peace accords signed after 1991 could not end the Israel-Palestine conflict which rather increased. Nonmilitary armed groups like Hamas and Hezbollah were becoming influential in Palestine. Indo-Pak hostility also did not go away. Meanwhile, Pakistan had acquired nuclear weapons, through

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[25] Helena Smith, "Greece faces shame of role in Serb massacre", *The Guardian*, 05 January 2003.
[26] Gerard F. Powers, "Religion, Conflict and Prospects for Peace in Bosnia, Croatia and Yugoslavia", *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Newberg, Oregon, USA: George Fox University, Vol. 16, Issue 5, p. 5.
[27] Chris Hedges, "Muslims from afar Joining 'Holy War' in Bosnia", *The New York Times*, 05 December 1992.
[28] Joseph J. Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, Washington D.C., USA: National Defense University Press, 2011, pp. 37-40.

test-explosions in May 1998 against neighbour India who tested some days before Pakistan that same month which added nuclear dimension into their rivalry.

3.6   *The 21st Century*

The 9/11 attacks on the US soil began the global war on terror led by the US and its allies. Here, besides military/political reasons, objectives and strength, ideas, values, thought processes, ethnic, racial, religious components resurfaced to play prominent roles in impacting wars, their nature and methods. Technology assumed higher attention. Non-state actors became more engaged in full-scale war against state parties. Spread and ever-rising influence of print and electronic media, availability of the internet and social networks resulting in broader communications, access to information and carry out propaganda, brought new aspects to warfare.

Dependence on newer technologies has been a noticeable subject in wars, although older tactics still are valid. For example, the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Al-Shabab, Boko Haram use guerilla and insurgency widely in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, and Somalia besides improvised explosion devices (IEDs) that inflicted ample casualties to military and civilians alike. Growing use of unmanned vehicles in targeting and killing insurgents, sophisticated surveillance devices, detailed background check etc., have become commonplace.

Often, part of media incites and perpetuates hatred, mistrust and enmity among different communities. After the 9/11 attacks, Muslims in the US faced gross negative stereotypes and began to be viewed with increased suspicion.[29] This later reached other countries as well. Media bias in drawing attention to crimes committed by Muslims is a contentious issue compared to portrayal of those by people of other faiths. In addition, misinformation presented can bring debacle: the US invaded Iraq in 2003 under the pretext of destroying Iraqi stockpile of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and promoting democracy by removing the Saddam dictatorship. Media played largely negative role for instigating the war. The US, however, found nothing in Iraq, but this invasion opened the path for the more dangerous and infamous ISIL which has successfully used the internet for funding, propaganda and recruitment of combatants.

Rise and spread of right-wing populism and white supremacism in Western nations in parallel with Muslim extremism are deeply impacting warlike discourses even in liberal countries. There are ultra-nationalist leaders and influential groups in many Western countries, e.g., Hungary, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, France, Belgium,

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[29] Caroline Mala Corbin, "Terrorists are Always Muslim but Never White: At the Intersection of Critical Race Theory and Propaganda", *Fordham Law Review*, Vol. 86, Issue. 2, New York, USA: Fordham University School of Law, 2017, pp. 458-459.

Britain and the Netherlands etc. US president Donald Trump's victory was vocally hailed by many of such groups and people at home and abroad. Before and after becoming president, he has been implied in racist rhetoric and acts. In India and Myanmar, Hindu and Buddhist radicalism and radical people have gained wider acceptance against Muslims and other communities. A sad reality is, radicals now target civilians randomly. Muslim as well as non-Muslim radicals have waged several brutal attacks on civilians in different countries merely on ethnic-racial-religious grounds.

Cyber/virtual warfare has become another preferred mode of combat. Types of attacks may vary in aims, but can impose heavy damage equal to or even greater than real-life attacks as countries depend on computers and internet with close mutual linkages these days. Many countries now possess cyber armies at government and private levels for attack and defence alike. Moreover, there are independent hacker groups for hire. On battlefields, Russia has used cyber warfare in the Russo-Georgian War, the annexation of the Crimea and the ongoing war in Ukraine; other countries that use cyber war are North Korea and China. This type of warfare is likely to attain broader utility by states and non-state actors in coming days.

4. The Emergence of Hybrid Warfare: The Russian Case

Russia's military campaign in Ukraine in 2014 can be identified as a watershed moment in terms of increased interest in the concept of hybrid warfare. Western strategists and academics found it convenient to describe the blending of various tactics and methods that was exploited and employed by Russia during the annexation of Crimea and support to insurgent groups in eastern Ukraine as 'hybrid'. On the hand, Russia used a typical combination of conventional and irregular combat operations, and on the other hand, supported and financed the political protests, economic coercion, cyber operations in the form of a disinformation propaganda. Russian tactics were described as 'hybrid warfare' by the former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen in a July 2014 interview where he defined it as "a combination of military action, covert operations and an aggressive program of disinformation."[30] The 2015 edition of the *Military Balance* provides a definition that is proved to be comprehensive in nature and which made a departure from the earlier understanding of hybrid war. The report highlights the methods employed in this warfare as it explains facets of hybrid warfare as "the use of military and non-military tools in an integrated campaign, designed to achieve surprise, seize the initiative and gain psychological as well as physical advantages utilizing diplomatic means; sophisticated and rapid information, electronic and cyber operations; covert and occasionally overt military and intelligence action; and economic pressure."[31]

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[30] Mark Landler and Michael R. Gordon, "NATO Chief Warns of Duplicity by Putin on Ukraine," *The New York Times*, 8 July 2014.
[31] "Complex Crises Call for Adaptable and Durable Capabilities," *The Military Balance*, Vol. 115, Issue 1, 2015, p. 5.

The substantive distinction that can be made between this particular definition of hybrid warfare from those discussed earlier is the emphasis on nonmilitary methods of war and, in particular, information warfare. The use of coercive information operations is the most glaring difference in the depicting the recent trend of hybrid warfare and enable academic discussion in drawing comparisons between IS' campaigns in the Middle East and the Russian military campaign in Ukraine. One was waged by a non-state actor and another by a state. Although IS has effectively blended conventional, urban guerrilla warfare and of terrorism, it has also exploited information warfare to an unprecedented level for a non-state actor. Sophisticated social media propaganda and use of pop culture have propagated and glorified its cause and contributed to the group's ability to recruit thousands of foreign fighters across the globe.

Similarly, in 2014, Russia successfully used information warfare in its military campaign in the Crimea at tactical level; electronic warfare (EW) and cyber attacks neutralized the ability of Ukrainian authorities to respond. While at the broader level, media exploitation techniques blurred the lines between truth and falsehood by constructing an alternative reality for observers who accepted Russian media's version of the events. Subsequently, Russia's strategic information campaign in Ukraine tried to exploit already existing societal vulnerabilities in Ukraine, weaken government and state institutions as well as undermining the perceived legitimacy of the Ukrainian state. Hence, similar to IS' attempt, Russia employed information warfare to influence and shape public opinion and turned information warfare into one of the key dimensions in contemporary armed conflict.

In their defence, many Russian academics and strategists claim that since the 1980s, Russia has been under sustained and effective information attack by the US. Historical events such as *perestroika,* Colour Revolutions" and Bretton Woods organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are all considered instruments of irregular warfare intended to destabilize and undermine Russian interests.[32] Therefore, from a Russian perspective, the annexation of Crimea and operations in eastern Ukraine are strategic defencive campaigns to counter US hybrid warfare in the post-Soviet space that Russia still considers as its sphere of influence.

Another claim that has been made by Russian commentators is that hybrid warfare is a Western term, not a Russian one and they referred the term as "new generation warfare" or "non-linear war." The term "new generation warfare" was popularized among Western academics and policymakers through a paper published by General Valery Gerasimov, the Chief of the Russian General Staff, in February 2013. Hence, often the Russian approach to hybrid war started to be referred inaccurately as

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[32] Bret Perry, "Non-Linear Warfare in the Ukraine: The Critical Role of Information Operations and Special Operations," *Small Wars Journal*, available at http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/non-linear-warfare-in-ukraine-the-critical-role-of-information-operations-and-special-opera, accessed on 08 October 2018.

the "Gerasimov Doctrine." Gerasimov explains new generation warfare as, "the broad use of political, economic, informational, humanitarian and other non-military means … supplemented by civil disorder among the local population and concealed armed forces."[33] He recognizes that many of the methods he describes in his work are not part of traditional wartime procedure. However, these unconventional methods are typical of 21st century warfare and have considerable significance in achieving strategic goals in comparison to military means. These can seriously disrupt the fighting potential of an enemy by creating social unrest and promoting an environment of despair without the overt use of violence.[34] Besides, Gerasimov's concept confirms that the armed forces have an important supplementary role in 'new generation warfare'. This has been particularly visible in the case with Russian Special Operations Forces (SOF) that can be employed under the masquerade of "peacekeeping and crisis regulation" to join forces with the opposition/separatist groups inside a targeted territory.[35] Under cover of information operations, the use of SOF was clearly visible in Ukraine in 2014. Covert *Spetsnaz* (Russian Special Forces) units, the "little green men" were employed to seize government buildings and key infrastructure targets and armed separatist militia, while the Russian government spread doubt and confusion through repeated denials of Russian involvement. In addition to that, other techniques of hybrid or new generation warfare were employed to demoralize and intimidate opposition forces, including military exercises by Russian conventional forces in close proximity to the Ukrainian border, cyber attacks on Ukrainian government and a wider range of diplomatic and media offensive to undermine the legitimacy of the new government of Ukraine. The objective of this type of "warfare" is to put on psychological pressure on the enemy to trigger a collapse of the target country from within so that the political objectives of the conflict can be gained without fighting the war.

5.   Will Present and Future Wars be Hybrid?

Increasing reliance on and applications of technology, development of new weaponry, evolving strategies, doctrines and changing surroundings are some important factors that may drive present and future wars into assuming hybrid characteristics. This was true in the two world wars, the Cold War period, and also in the information age warfare in the 21st century. Technological progress has been a driving force behind such transformation since the First World War to present day.

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[33] General Gerasimov's article is available in English from Mark Galeotti, "The 'Gerasimov Doctrine' and Russian Non-Linear War," In *Moscow's Shadows*, 06 July 2014, available at https://inmoscowsshadows. wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war, accessed on 11 March 2018.
[34] Ibid. pp. 2-3.
[35] Ibid. pp. 3-4.

The US global war on terror saw wide-ranging use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) besides regular soldiers and equipment. The war has implicated and been heavily influenced by debates concerning ethno-racial-religious markers that have significantly impacted later conflicts. The Israel-Hezbollah War (2006) is a regularly cited example of hybrid warfare where the non-state actor Hezbollah fought the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) combining a political movement with social, diplomatic and informational elements in urban guerrilla war.[36] Both utilized media for psychological warfare and launched cyber-attacks on each other.[37] In the Syrian Civil War involving the ISIL and other numerous parties—from home and abroad, state and non-state actors, in response to the militant group's hybrid tactics, state parties are also resorting to similar methods for eliminating it and affiliated groups.

Russia's hybrid strategy in the Russo-Georgian War included pressuring Georgian policymaking, especially security and foreign policy, supporting secessionist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, persecuting Georgians living in Russia, using gas supplies as a weapon, espionage etc.[38] In the annexation of Crimea, ongoing conflict in eastern and southern Ukraine, accusations of hybrid war continue. Russia sent armed militia groups, organized public agitations, disinformation, and then sent its regular military forces under the excuse of protecting the rights of ethnic Russians living in Crimea etc.[39] The country has also been alleged in poisoning of its former spies inside Britain.[40] Conversely, it accuses the West of surrounding by admitting several former Soviet nations[41] and destabilizing it by provoking Colour Revolutions in those countries.[42] Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said the West was waging irregular warfare on Russia not only to change the country's policy but also the government.[43] The abovementioned wars facing the US and its allies, Russia and other countries, still go on; presence of hybrid features in them suggests they will progressively become more so.

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[36] Manon van Tienhoven, *Identifying Hybrid Warfare*, Leiden, the Netherlands: Leiden University, June 2016, p. 7.

[37] Ghaydaa Joseph Hdayed, *The Psychological Warfare of Hezbollah*, Beirut, Lebanon: Lebanese American University, December 2011, p. 20.

[38] Niklas Nilsson, *Russian Hybrid Tactics in Georgia*, Washington D.C., USA: American Foreign Policy Council, January 2018, pp. 5-33.

[39] András Rácz, *Russia's Hybrid War in Ukraine: Breaking the Enemy's Ability to Resist*, Helsinki, Finland: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), June 2015, pp. 11-50.

[40] Henry Fox, "Accused Litvinenko killers: Skripal case will be used to attack Russia", *The Financial Times*, 06 March 2018.

[41] Roland Oliphant, "Vladimir Putin blames NATO expansion for rising tension with Europe", *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 January 2016.

[42] Nicolas Bouchet, "Russia's 'Militarization' of Colour Revolutions", *Policy Perspectives*, Vol. 4, Issue. 2, Zurich, Switzerland: Center for Security Studies, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), p. 1.

[43] Andrew Monaghan, *Russian State Mobilization: Moving the Country on to a War Footing*, London, UK: Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House), May 2016, p. 18.

In addition, there are proposals for battlefield deployment of military robots, equipped with artificial intelligence and autonomous decision-making abilities. Such robots are confined so far to robotic vehicles and robot soldiers (as opposed to humans) are to be used on fronts yet.[44] Several UAVs operated by the US have robotic capabilities. Israel's army is scheduled to receive robot porters on warfronts.[45] Unmanned underwater vehicles (UUVs) are becoming a reality. It is speculated robot soldiers may outnumber their human counterparts in future.[46] With an arms race brewing based on artificial intelligence, countries and non-state actors may put human and robot soldiers together or solely robots to decrease personnel and equipment losses. That may push current and future warfare into assuming more hybrid character.

Racial supremacist ideologies may lead into hybrid warfare like they did in mass killings during the Second World War; the victims' different identities than their rulers and mainstream population, were first brought forth for establishing extreme dislike and then brutalities were directed against them. Nowadays, social media are used for spreading hateful thinking. There has been no real war up to now in this century based on ethnic, racial or religious affiliations, but these elements are frequently emphasized in discussions, debates or controversies which indicate their growing importance and there may be little wonder if they cause any upcoming war. If there is indeed a war centred on them, that will be hybrid as the means and objectives will be conventional and irregular, simultaneously.

6.   Conclusion

The nature and means of conducting warfare have continuously been changing over the centuries owing to diverse phenomena. Invention of technologies and their practical applications have always played a critical role in wars; tough barriers like trench, fortress and rough landscape were conquered with tanks, aircrafts and aircraft carriers in the First World War. Advancements in technology, weaponry, conflicting ideologies and failure of the world body to prevent conflicts in interwar years made the Second World War by far the bloodiest. Aircrafts, carriers and nuclear bombs were decisive weapons that retained importance in later times. Political transformations affect warfare too; from direct war between/among empires and countries, the Cold War period was characterized by the rise of two opposite blocs with their respective ideas and proxy wars being fought throughout the world. The UN nevertheless, helped reduce severity of wars through mediation and peacekeeping.

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[44] Alice Scarsi, "Russia's Robot Soldiers: Putin on developing deadly android army", *The Express*, 16 March, 2018.

[45] Gili Cohen, "Israeli army to use robots instead of llamas to carry equipment on battlefield", *The Daily Haaretz*, 10 July 2017.

[46] Jon Lockett, "Man vs. Machine: US military will have more robot soldiers than real ones by 2025, top British expert claims", *The Sun*, 15 June, 2017.

The two main players never faced each other physically on battlegrounds. After the USSR's demise, the US as the lone superpower, tried to resolve conflicts by upholding democratic governance and securing human rights, although did not always succeed.

Ideologies have played crucial role in the Second World War, the Cold War and wars in subsequent periods. An ideology driven war and genocide were unthinkable in post-Second World War Europe but happened in Bosnia. As non-state actors' involvement and influence have grown in decision making, they now question, even challenge states. This is visible in the power of media, civil society groups and extremist/terrorist groups. Social media also augment expansion of hatred and violence. The 9/11 attacks and following responses have placed faith, thoughts, races, cultures, ethnic identities, one against another and arguments over these issues go on nonstop. After the Al-Qaeda, another Muslim militant group, the ISIL has become a bigger global threat and the war on it involves state and non-state actors alike. Conversely, there has been for some years, a sharp rise of right-wing populism and white supremacy movements in the West which may become nearly as troublesome as Muslim extremism.

Some countries now go for hybrid warfare. But such wars are nothing new and have existed since antiquity. The two world wars were total as well as hybrid. Cold War era proxy conflicts were hybrid. In today's world, hybrid warfare is gradually gaining acceptance. There are reasons. Such a war can be waged under different covers than merely the military label. The war may seem vague and when opponents realize, that may be too late for adequate response. Tactics and strategies have comparatively high flexibility and adaptability.[47] Cyber attacks are a vital part of hybrid war; as reliance on computers and internet for almost all tasks including warfare is inseparable and most networks are interconnected now, a hybrid war can produce serious disasters, in real and virtual domains at the same time.

The West accuses Russia of using hybrid warfare in Georgia, Ukraine and against them in various ways. For Russia, the fall of the USSR resulted in considerable loss of area, manpower and influence with most members joining NATO and the EU. There is no Warsaw Pact now but Russia still considers them as its former provinces and threatens them over their joining these two groups. It also regularly blames NATO for encircling it through these new members. Although the country has a very strong armed force, it lacks a strong economy likewise to engage in full traditional warfare against enemies, in this case, the West or western allies. Russia lacks effective aircraft carriers; the country is also surrounded by seas that remain frigid for most of the year. Amid strict Western sanctions after the Crimean annexation, large-scale developments of newer and powerful weaponary face challenges. The country has immense strategic

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[47] Ralph D. Thiele, "The New Colour of War—Hybrid Warfare and Partnerships", *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, Issue 383, Berlin, Germany: Institute for Strategy, Political Security and Business Consulting (ISPSW), October 2015, p. 3.

depth but being surrounded by Western allies can be a major danger in case of a real war. These factors may have driven Russia to choose hybrid warfare.

Existing wars are showing a tendency of becoming hybrid in the future. The US war in Afghanistan, war on ISIL, ongoing war in southern and eastern Ukraine—all have significantly hybrid features in themselves. In addition to state parties, non-state actors make extensive use of these tactics. Nationalistic movements worldwide have not produced real wars in this century to date, but their growing stature has all potentials necessary in that regard, just like Muslim extremism has. Military robots used in wars currently include vehicles, but there are plans for their deployment alongside human soldiers, especially when countries are working towards artificial intelligence in weapons. Such deployment will make future wars really hybrid.

Once some valuable entities have created their mark in warfare, that legacy stays for long and influences future wars. Warfare today relies on technological advantages greatly. Even then, many old mechanisms and devices have not lost their utility or disappeared altogether. Despite the arrival of new fighting machines in the First World War signalling a paradigm shift, did not straightaway displace trench and fortress modes of warfare; rather, these were extensively used then and later, continued in the Second World War. The highly dynamic German Blitzkrieg became deeply stuck against static, attritional strategies of the USSR which brought its eventual failure. In the Cold War era, guerrilla and attrition warfare collapsed the US and the USSR in Vietnam and Afghanistan respectively. In recent times, the Al-Qaeda, Taliban, ISIL etc are also waging guerrilla and insurgency warfare against the US and its allies along with hybrid strategies used by all sides—state and non-state actors. Hamas uses tunnels for attacks in Israel.[48] These show strategies or tactics used previously, do not overnight become useless in warfare with the advent of modern ones. Though present wars are becoming increasingly hybrid and future wars are likely to have even more hybrid characteristics, several old methods or instruments will still preserve their relevance and application, thus will reflect the true hybrid nature of war.

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[48] UN country team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, *Gaza, Ten Years Later*, The Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, Gaza, July 2017, p. 7.