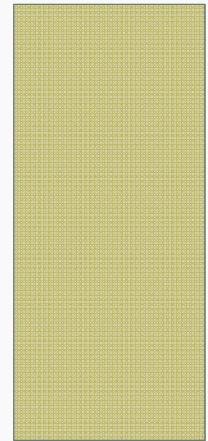


MARY KALDOR'S 'NEW WARS'

THE CASE OF SYRIA



NEW AND OLD WARS (1999)

- Kaldor attempts to characterise the changing nature of warfare
- 'Extraordinary intellectual impact'
– Rauta (2014)



'OLD WARS'

- Europe from late 18th – mid 20th century
- State versus state, army versus army
- Fought by decisive battles
- World War Two is the classic example of an 'old war'



'NEW WARS'

- Wars of globalisation, where states are weak
- Combination of state and non-state actors
- More violence against civilians
- Bosnia is a classic example



WHAT'S NEW ABOUT 'NEW WARS'?

- Different Actors
 - State *and* non-state
 - Paramilitaries, mercenaries, militias
- Different Goals
 - Wars of identity (ethnic, religious, sectarian), not ideology or geopolitical interest
- Different Methods
 - Fewer battles, and more use of political means
 - Civilians, not armies, are the target
- Different Finance
 - Predation, not production
 - Crime, looting, diaspora support rather than taxation

'NEW WARS' AS POLICY GUIDE

- Kaldor stresses 'new' and 'old' wars are idealised types – not empirical descriptions
- Goal is to make policy-makers think about wars differently, and avoid always applying the 'old war' template



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CRITICISMS

NOT EVERYONE IS CONVINCED...



CRITICISM 1 - ARE 'NEW WARS' REALLY NEW?

- Critics note there is a long history of looting, atrocities, and use of mercenaries in war
- Wellington's armies in early 19th century (see picture) sustained themselves by looting and pillage
- Are 'new wars' really a return to much older forms of war?



KALDOR'S RESPONSE - IN KEY WAYS, MUCH IS NEW

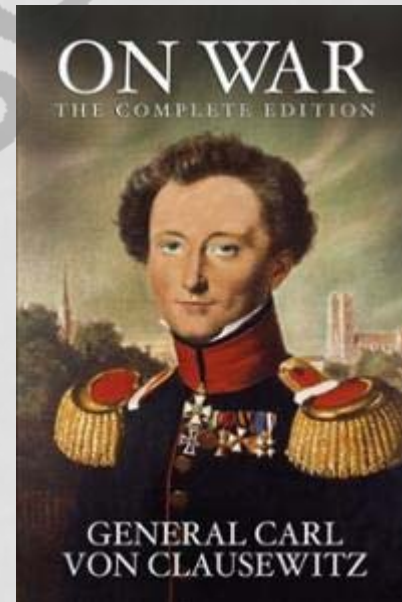
- Kaldor accepts some elements of 'new war' are in fact very old
- But points out it is profoundly important if we are returning to a world of "tribes, sects, warlords and criminals"
- And in other ways, much clearly *is* new:
 - Technology has made major inter-state conflict virtually suicidal
 - Globalisation means no conflict can remain local

CRITICISM 2 - ARE NEW WARS REALLY JUST CIVIL WARS? ARE THEY EVEN WARS AT ALL?

- Just civil wars?
 - Bosnia? Rwanda?
 - Kaldor says 'no' – the boundaries between internal and external are increasingly blurred
- Wars – or just thugs?
 - 'Wars' a veneer for predation and criminality?
 - But undeniable political element to many conflicts, hence 'war' is accurate terminology

CRITICISM 3 - IS WAR STILL CLAUSEWITZIAN?

- For Clausewitz, war was primarily inter-state
- Critics say this remains true, e.g. Croatia role in Bosnia; role of Iraqi state in Gulf
- But Kaldor correct that modern inter-state conflict now so destructive that world has moved beyond Clausewitzian conceptions



SYRIAN WAR

- A perfect example of a 'new war'
- Began in 2011
- Over 250,000 dead
- Can be analysed across Kaldor's four categories of analysis



1: ACTORS IN SYRIA

- Bewildering array of state and non-state actors
- Syria, Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, Shia militias
- Versus
- Free Syrian Army, ISIS, the West



2: GOALS IN SYRIA

- Both sides aim to control Syrian state in interests of their own identity group
- Cleavage is ethnic and religious, not ideological
- Some geopolitical interests for other actors, e.g. Russia



3: METHODS IN SYRIA

- Some battles, e.g. Aleppo
- But unlike 'old wars', the target is often civilians
- Massive population displacement
- Blurred lines between soldier and civilian



4: FINANCING IN SYRIA

- Oil
- Extortion
- External Aid



SYRIA: SUMMARY

- A textbook 'new war'
- A war of globalisation, and of identity
- A war of state and non-state actors, civilians and soldiers
- Continues to rage after five years
- No end in sight
- Are 'new wars' even more intractable than old ones?

Discuss and define Mary Kaldor's term 'New Wars', using the current war in Syria as an example.

Slide 1 – Title Page

Slide 2- Background Context

Mary Kaldor's book *New and Old Wars* was first published in 1999, and has been described as “a cornerstone text with an extraordinary intellectual impact”.¹ Kaldor wrote *New and Old Wars* in the context of an important academic debate about whether the nature of warfare was changing in the 21st century. A number of terms have been used to conceptualise the changing nature of war, including ‘wars among the people’, ‘hybrid wars’, ‘privatised wars’, and ‘post-modern wars’² – but Kaldor's popularisation of the term ‘New Wars’ proved most compelling. Kaldor herself was heavily influenced by her experiences as a researcher and activist in Bosnia, one of the most ferocious of the ‘new’ wars that sprang up in the aftermath of the Cold War.³

Slide 3 – ‘Old Wars’

Kaldor defines ‘New wars’ in opposition to ‘Old wars’. ‘Old wars’ characterised Europe between the late 18th and mid-20th centuries. They were wars of states, where uniformed armies would fight decisive battles.⁴ In ‘Old Wars’, there was a clear distinction between public and private, internal and external, economic and political, civil and military, combatant and non-combatant.⁵ As Kaldor notes, ‘Old Wars’ reached their zenith during the mid-20th century when the application of science and technology enabled states to commit destruction on a massive scale – 35 million people were killed in World War One and 50 million in World War Two.⁶

¹ Rauta, 2014, p. 423

² Duffield, 2001; Smith, 2005; Snow, 1996; van Creveld, 1991

³ Shaw, 2000, p. 171

⁴ Kaldor, 2005, p. 2

⁵ Shaw, 2000, p. 173

⁶ Kaldor, 2005, p. 4

Slide 4 – ‘New Wars’

‘New Wars’ are the opposite of ‘Old Wars’. ‘New Wars’ are the product of globalisation, occurring where states are weakest – the main parties tend to be networks of state and non-state actors. There are few uniforms, and even fewer decisive battles. Instead, violence is waged by combinations of state armies, militias, mercenaries and international troops – and their targets are often civilians, as the distinction between combatant and non-combatant breaks down.⁷ In ‘Old Wars’, 80% of the casualties were soldiers – in ‘New Wars’, 80% of the casualties are civilians.⁸ ‘New Wars’ are wars of identity rather than ideology.⁹ Unlike in ‘Old Wars’, there is no distinction between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace.¹⁰

Slide 5 – What’s new about ‘new wars’?

Kaldor identifies four main categories across which the distinction between ‘Old’ and ‘New’ wars becomes apparent. First, the actors are different. ‘Old wars’ were fought by regular armies; ‘New wars’ are fought by a combination of state and non-state actors.¹¹ Second, the goals are different. ‘Old wars’ were fought for geopolitical interests or ideology; ‘New wars’ are fought in the name of identity.¹² Third, the methods are different. ‘Old wars’ were fought by decisive battles and military means; ‘New wars’ have few decisive battles, and instead territory is captured through political means and ethnic cleansing.¹³ Finally, the forms of finance are different. ‘Old wars’ were financed by states; in ‘New wars’ the states are too weak

⁷ Shaw, 2000, p. 172

⁸ Shaw, 2000, p. 172

⁹ Kaldor, 2005, p. 3

¹⁰ Kaldor, 2013, p. 2.

¹¹ Kaldor, 2013, p. 2

¹² Kaldor, 2013, p. 2

¹³ Kaldor, 2013, pp. 2-3

to finance war, and so instead the warring parties resort to looting, pillage, crime, and diaspora support. Finance in ‘old wars’ relied on production; finance in ‘new wars’ relies on predation.¹⁴

Slide 6 – Guide to Policy

Kaldor stresses that ‘old’ and ‘new’ wars are ideal types – ideas of war rather than attempts at empirical descriptions.¹⁵ Her goal is to change the way scholars and policy-makers conceptualise conflicts, to shift them from counter-productive ways of perceiving conflict to more useful ways of doing so. Kaldor believes that a preoccupation with old ways of warfare is preventing us from developing appropriate policies for the new forms of warfare we encounter today.¹⁶

Slide 7 – Criticisms (sub-header)

Kaldor’s notion of ‘new wars’ has been criticised in a number of ways. Some question whether new wars are really all that ‘new’. Others argue that ‘new wars’ are really just civil wars, or another term for criminal behaviour. Finally, some argue that Kaldor overlooks the continuing role of states in warfare and the persistently Clausewitzian nature of even 21st century wars. We will deal with each criticism in turn.

Slide 8 – Criticism 1: Are new wars really new?

Many critics have pointed out that some of the features Kaldor describes as ‘new’ in fact have a long lineage in warfare. The early modern period was also characterised by weak states, and by banditry, mass rape, atrocities and ethnic cleansing.¹⁷ Entire armies, such as Wellington’s in the Peninsular War of the early 18th century, relied on looting and predation to feed

¹⁴ Kaldor, 2013, pp. 2-3

¹⁵ Kaldor, 2013, p. 13

¹⁶ Kaldor, 2012, loc.102

¹⁷ Kaldor, 2013, p. 3

themselves. Thus, ‘new war’ seems more like a return to older forms of pre-18th century warfare than something entirely new.

Slide 9 – Kaldor’s Response

Kaldor accepts some of these points, and acknowledges the significant parallels between ‘new war’ and older wars in pre-modern Europe,¹⁸ but makes several important points in response. First, a return to pre-19th century forms of warfare is still ‘new’ in the sense that it marks a profound shift from 19th and 20th century wars. Kaldor cites the words of John Keegan, who states: “The great work of disarming tribes, sects, warlords and criminals – a principal achievement of monarchs in the 17th century and empires in the 19th – threatens to need doing all over again”.¹⁹

Second, some elements of ‘new wars’ clearly are new. Modern technology – most obviously nuclear weapons – makes inter-state war incredibly destructive and all but impossible to win without exposing oneself to annihilation.²⁰ In addition, the global aspect of modern warfare is new – no conflict these days can remain purely local given the ease of access and communications for Diasporas, criminals, international agencies, journalists, mercenaries and other states.²¹

Slide 10 – Are ‘New Wars’ really just another term for civil war and crime?

Critics also argue that ‘new wars’ are really just civil wars by another name. The examples Kaldor most famously cites – such as Bosnia and Rwanda – could be perceived simply as old-fashioned civil wars. Kaldor retorts that new wars differ from civil wars in that “the difference between internal and external is blurred; they are both global and local and they are different

¹⁸ Kaldor, 2005, p. 3

¹⁹ Mueller, 2004, p. 172

²⁰ Kaldor, 2013, p. 4

²¹ Kaldor, 2013, p. 4

both from classic inter-state wars and classic civil wars”.²² As we shall see later in the presentation, Syria offers compelling evidence that Kaldor is correct about this important distinction between ‘new’ and civil wars.

A second variant of this criticism is that ‘new wars’ are not really ‘wars’ at all – that what passes as warfare is merely the “opportunistic and improvisatory clash of thugs”.²³ Aggressors apply a war-like veneer to behaviour that is really driven by predation and thuggery. Kaldor accepts that this is true of some conflicts, but points out that in others there is an undeniably political element to conflict – and here ‘war’ remains the most appropriate term.²⁴ Bosnia, for example, was clearly a political conflict in which identity politics was used as a tool by the warring parties.²⁵

Slide 11 – Criticism 3: Is war still Clausewitzian?

A final principal criticism of the idea of ‘new wars’ is that Kaldor overlooks the continuing role and relevance of states in most modern conflicts. In traditional Clausewitzian war, a war is fought between states²⁶ – and Kaldor is accused of overlooking the heavy involvement of the Croatian state in the Yugoslavian war – and the role of the Iraqi state in fostering persistent crises over many years.²⁷

However, this criticism arguably fails to hit the mark. Kaldor’s central point is that modern technology has pushed war beyond Clausewitz’s conceptualisation – inter-state war is now so destructive that only the suicidal would attempt it on any significant scale. As Kaldor states, World War Two marked the end of ‘old wars’ because wars of this type became impossible –

²² Kaldor, 2012, loc.81

²³ Mueller, 2004, p. 115

²⁴ Kaldor, 2013, p. 6

²⁵ Shaw, 2000, p. 172

²⁶ Strachan and Heberg-Rothe, 2007.

²⁷ Shaw, 2000, p. 178

“simply too destructive to be fought”.²⁸ The Iran-Iraq war, she argues, is the exception that proves the rule – a needlessly destructive eight year conflict that ultimately achieved nothing for either side.

Slide 12 – The Case of Syria

Perhaps no contemporary example better illustrates the idea of ‘new wars’ than the ongoing conflict in Syria. The war began after protests against the government of Bashar al-Assad descended into a full-blown ‘civil’ war between mainly Sunni opposition groups and the ruling Alawite state.²⁹ Over a quarter of a million people have since died as the conflict has become ever more vicious and dragged in increasing numbers of outside actors. If we analyse the Syrian conflict across Kaldor’s four modes of analysis – actors, methods, goals, and financing – we can judge how well Syria fits the template of ‘New Wars’.

Slide 13 – Actors in Syria

The array of actors involved in the Syrian war is almost mind-boggling. On one side, we have the Syrian state, its Russian and Iranian state allies, and various Shia militias linked to Lebanese Hezbollah and the Iranian regime. On the other side, we have a range of Sunni opposition groups running the gamut from Western allies in the Free Syrian Army at one extreme to ISIS and the al-Nusra Front at the other. In other words, the Syrian conflict is a perfect example of networks of state and non-state actors becoming involved in war.

Slide 14 – Goals in Syria

According to Kaldor, old wars were fought for geopolitical interests or ideology – new wars are fought for identity (whether religious, ethnic or tribal). The conflict in Syria seems clearly

²⁸ Kaldor, 2005, p. 9

²⁹ BBC, 2016

to be driven by the latter – identity – with the war breaking down along ethnical and confessional lines, with Sunnis on one side and Alawites and Shia on the other. Both sides aim to control the Syrian state in the interests of their own identity group. Admittedly, things are complicated somewhat by the involvement of outside powers whose interests presumably are more geopolitical (notably, Russia and Turkey) – but the main goals of the local actors seem overwhelmingly identity-based.

Slide 15 – Methods in Syria

Unlike Kaldor's version of 'new wars', regular battles have occurred in Syria – as we are currently witnessing in Aleppo. Nevertheless, the general methods of both sides in Syria largely accord with Kaldor's idea of 'new wars'. Because the line between combatant and non-combatants is so blurred, violence in Syria is often targeted against civilians – and the refugee crisis proves that forcible population displacement has been a key tool. Violence seems to be targeted at civilians as a way of controlling territory rather than against enemy forces.

Slide 16: Financing in Syria

Syria is a perfect example of how 'new wars' rely on predation and external networks, with ISIS falling back on local 'taxation' (effectively extortion) and oil smuggling to generate massive funds. External aid is also key for both sides, with Western money going to more moderate Syrian opposition groups and Iranian and Russian money going to the Assad regime. Effectively, both sides are tapping into forms of private and external finance – a textbook case of 'new war' financing.

Slide 17: Syria Summary

In sum, Syria is a textbook case of a 'new war'. It is clearly more than just another civil war. The involvement of outside parties and the reliance on external networks of support means that

the conflict is as much regional as local – indeed, one could argue that globalisation explains why the conflict has become so intractable. It is primarily a war of identity, in that ethnicity and religion are more important than ideology or geopolitical interest (even though some element of the latter motivates certain outside parties). It is a war against civilians as much as against armies, and few uniforms are worn. It is a war whose financing relies on predation rather than production.

Syria is indeed, then, a ‘new war’ – and the fact it continues to rage even after five years perhaps suggests that ‘new wars’ are even harder to bring to an end than old ones.

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