

The New War Thesis and Clausewitz: A Reconciliation

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Abstract

Mary Kaldor's work constitutes an exceptionally sustained, cohesive, and also broadly aimed argument for often radical – and generally cosmopolitan – changes to state's approaches to security. Informing the project's various proposals is a theoretical foundation derived from earlier work on 'new war'. This 'new war thesis' holds that the nature of war has changed from involving a Clausewitzian logic of extremes to one of 'persistence and spread'. This thesis is presented as an ideal type that should inform scholarship and policy. The essay finds fault with the way this foundation is constructed, in particular its rejection of Clausewitz. Rather than reject the new war thesis, though, the essay shows that a reconciliation between it and the Clausewitzian theory of war is not only possible, but results in more cogent arguments for the policy proposals Kaldor contends are the real test of the theoretical underpinning of her project.

Policy Implications

- Human security advocates should not justify their views on the use of military force by contending that war is fundamentally transformed. War is still a contest centrally involving the search for victory over an enemy force, even though what victory must look like and the strategies necessary to obtain it have changed.
- Civilian protection should be the primary objective for most uses of military force, not simply because of the danger that too much offensive warfighting will result in too many civilian casualties, but also because most 'new war' forces are so weak and disorganized that there is no immediate need to seek their physical destruction.
- Rather than a relatively selfless and risky allocation of resources, training large portions of modern military forces to be adept at human security's quasi-policing and civilian protection imperatives is the best way for states to maintain their own power and security over the long-term.

What this essay calls the new war thesis (NWT) is at the core of Mary Kaldor's (2007, p. 2) decades-spanning project for a 'new approach to security'. The thesis, which contends war now has an internal logic of persistence and spread, is not only crucial to a host of policy prescriptions aimed at a generally cosmopolitan – or 'human security', as Kaldor prefers – reorientation to state's security approaches, but is central to Kaldor's responses to various criticisms of her project. She pointed to the NWT in response to empirically based critiques, essentially claiming that too often critics were missing its ideal-typical forest for the empirical trees (Kaldor, 2013a; see Masullo and Bajo, 2014 for a summary of these criticisms). And in response to theoretical criticism (Fleming, 2009; Schuurman, 2010), Kaldor doubled down by refining and making more explicit the NWT.

Despite the importance of the NWT to Kaldor's project, a relatively recent essay in this journal proposed moving the 'new war' debate forward by 'focusing exclusively on the empirical dimension of it' (Masullo and Bajo, 2014, p. 416). I sense that, like myself, undergirding that proposal is a recognition that at the same time that academic and policy fervor over the new war idea has dwindled, events in the world seem to continually – and depressingly – confirm

much of what Kaldor was alerting us to with the seminal *New & Old Wars*, first published in 1999. Kaldor (2018, pp. x–xi) seems to share this sentiment, noting in her most recent work that the 'tragedy' she warned us about 'is already happening', all while ways 'of doing security are changing but not in the direction of human security'. With this essay I too hope to encourage more work in the new war milieu, but I think it unwise to so easily elide theoretical foundations. Theory of course necessarily precedes observation (Dunne, et al., 2013), and so flawed or unnecessarily strident theoretical contentions can have a quite negative effect at the analytic and policy levels. The main contention of this essay is that the NWT suffers from precisely those problems. Rather than abandoning it, though, I argue it can be improved by moving away from the strong claim that persistence and spread is the *internal logic* of war. Instead, we should theorize persistence and spread as strong *tendencies* generated in relation to the traditional conception, developed in the 19th century by Carl von Clausewitz (1984), of war's logic of extremes. Reconciling that logic with the NWT, I argue, in fact produces a more cogent foundation that, most importantly, better serves what I take to be a policy project that is as vital as ever.¹

The new war thesis and the nature of war

Because Kaldor's conception of the altered nature of war is explicitly meant to foster a fundamental shift in thinking about security, she deliberately exaggerates the difference between the past and present. There is the need, she writes, to develop a 'new language', to tell a better 'story' than the 'common narrative' that guided security-thinking before the end of the Cold War (Kaldor, 2007, p. 11).² The new story must not simply offer a better 'fit' with the evidence but also have 'political resonance' (Kaldor, 2007, pp. 11–12). Thus the blunt division posed between 'old war' and 'new war' is at least partially due to what Kaldor (2007, p. 10) calls 'methodological and normative considerations'. Put another way, the division serves a more direct political purpose than the concepts typically chosen by social scientists. Unfortunately, some of the theoretical claims used to sustain such a stark division are based on a misreading of Clausewitz that, once corrected, leave Kaldor's rejection of the logic of extremes not only unconvincing, but, I suggest, likely damaging to the NWT's basic function of allowing us to understand how to best analyze and deal with war now and into the future.

The NWT is drawn from Kaldor's (2012a) earlier identification of new wars, which are defined by a toxic combination of empirical features: loose networks of state and non-state fighters; violence aimed largely at civilian populations; private financing; and a core goal of mobilizing particularistic identities. This combination of features means that, in contradistinction to the idea of 'old wars' that Kaldor (2013a, p. 3) says we think of as tending 'to extremes as each side tried to win, new wars tend to spread and to persist or recur as each side gains in political or economic ways from violence itself rather than "winning"'. From here Kaldor (2013a, p. 5) theorizes the NWT as a 'model of war ... [meant to] underpin both policy and scholarship', with the central contention that all war now features an internal 'logic of persistence and spread'. In this way the thrust of the NWT is ideal-typical, a way 'to exclude "old" assumptions about the nature of war and to provide the basis for a novel research methodology' (Kaldor, 2013a, p. 3).

The "'old" assumptions' at which Kaldor takes aim are derived from a Clausewitzian framework best interpreted as involving what Antulio Echevarria (2003, p. v) calls 'objective' and 'subjective' knowledge of war. The former is a theorization of war's essentially unchanging *nature*, while the latter shows how this nature can manifest in a highly malleable *character* of war. This is important to underscore insofar as Kaldor should not be lumped together, as she often is, with the number of prominent scholars who make arguments that war is post-Clausewitzian by aiming their critiques at the subjective side of the framework (e.g. Keegan, 1993; Van Creveld, 1991). War at present may not mainly involve states with clearly delineated civilian populations, governments, and militaries – as such critics pointed out – but Clausewitz (1984, p. 580) understood those features as a reflection of the 'ideas, emotions, and conditions prevailing at the time' of his writing. To say those have changed does not

fundamentally challenge Clausewitz. To her credit Kaldor (2013a, p. 11) rightly finds those arguments to be 'rather trivial', and instead boldly articulates the NWT as a reformulation of the nature of war as Clausewitz actually understood it.

Clausewitz (1984, p. 75) places the practice of fighting at 'the heart' of war's nature. The defining feature of war is the way each side uses *violence* to 'compel' the other to submit to 'their will' (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 75). This existential relationship, involving as it does the inherent fear of being physically overthrown, and the inability to ever be sure of how much force an enemy will deploy, generates constant pressure for both sides to increase their levels of force, hence the idea that war contains a logic of extremes (Clausewitz, 1984). War in the abstract should always proceed to totalization, or what Clausewitz (1984) called 'absolute war'. However, 'real war', while always involving the pressure of this internal logic, never reaches totalization because of the subjective 'frictions' of war, the historical, temporal, and perceptive nuances of human life, and at a more fundamental level because war also always involves 'a wondrous trinity' of malleable and complexly interacting 'inherent tendencies' (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 89).

Though sometimes expressed differently, following Christopher Bassford (2007, p. 80) I distill Clausewitz's somewhat tangled description of the trinity to the elements of emotion, chance, and reason. The characteristics of war are reducible to the particular mixture of these tendencies and their interaction with the logic of war. War is, as Clausewitz (1984, p. 89) put it, 'like an object suspended among three magnets'. Kaldor (2013a, p. 11, emphasis added) challenges this theorization by way of the third leg of the trinity, proffering a somewhat unique reading of, according to the translation she uses, the idea that war is 'of the subordinate nature of a political instrument, by which it *belongs* to pure reason'. Kaldor (2012a, p. 23) seems to take from this that Clausewitz thought the logic of war was determined by the tendency of reason, or is at least 'derived from the logic of the three different tendencies'. From here Kaldor (2013a, p. 11) wades into a controversy over whether to translate the original German *politik* as politics or policy, and proposes that 'it applies to both if we roughly define policy as external, in terms of relations with other states, and politics as the domestic process of mediating different interests and views'. Arguing that Clausewitz would have understood reason to be synonymous with the 'universal values' that motivated the 'modern state', she sees this element of the trinity involving, as a function of this mode of reason, a coherent 'external policy and [domestic] political mobilisation the means' to enact it (Kaldor, 2013a, pp. 11–12).

With the recognition that war between advanced states is too destructive to risk, with the 'erosion of nation states under the impact of global interdependence', and with our burgeoning 'consciousness of humanity as a single community', states – and even more so the inchoate non-state parties to war – cannot *really* project any sense of 'universal values' through war (Kaldor, 2010, p. 279). Put more simply, the two-step from a coherent external policy to domestic mobilization is not possible. Instead domestic mobilization

will tend to be the actual purpose of war, with only a veneer of reasoned external policy to make that possible. This reversal, packaged as a distillation of the combined empirical novelties Kaldor first highlighted as new war, constitutes the fundamental shift in war's logic. From a logic of extremes to one of persistence and spread, wars are now 'without end ... [because of a] shared self-perpetuating interest in war to reproduce political identity and to further economic interests' (Kaldor, 2013a, p. 13).

While this model may be analytically and practically useful, it must be noted that it is built upon a strained reading of Clausewitz. Bassford (2007, p. 77, emphasis added) translates the crucial line Kaldor quotes above as war's '*element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to pure reason*'. Less an issue of the verity of a particular translation, this formulation is crucial because, given the totality of Clausewitz's writing on war's nature, war cannot be entirely subordinated to reason (Bassford, 2007, p. 75). Reason is simply the one fundamental element that *can* have that subordinating tendency. It is true that Clausewitz (1984) conceived of war as necessarily a political instrument, and that politics is usually interpreted as being subsumed within the tendency of reason. Were it not we may have to cede to something like John Mueller's (2004, p. 115) contention that most of what we call war today is actually the 'opportunistic and improvisatory clash of thugs', a thesis Kaldor (2013a) rejects. But as Clausewitz (1984, p. 87) also wrote, the 'political aim' is not 'a tyrant', and will always have to somewhat 'adapt itself' to the violent realities of what war involves, as well as the influence of war's other inherent tendencies.³ For Clausewitz, then, the logic of war is clearly not entirely determined by war's social relations. It is emergent from the core practice of reciprocal violence – fighting – which Kaldor does not argue is somehow no longer a part of war. The way the logic of extremes is able to manifest may be impacted by the current politics of war, but for those relations to obviate this logic would require that violent clashes, however amorphous, are not actually occurring in – or are at least not central to – war.

Additionally, even if we make a distinction between policy and politics, the kind of division Kaldor proffers fails to reflect Clausewitz's intention to develop a theory of war's nature that can apply 'across cultures and time' (Bassford, 2007, p. 84). Attempting to do so while not contradicting the way Clausewitz utilized *politik* elsewhere in his work, Bassford (2007, pp. 84–85) defines policy as the 'unilateral and rational' effort of an organized group to 'bend its own power to the accomplishment of some purpose', and politics as the 'multilateral and interactive ... struggle' by which 'power is distributed'. It would be odd to divide politics and policy as completely separate in the directional and temporal manner that Kaldor does, even if we are only referring to their role in the specific practice of war. Doing so occludes consideration of the political relationship between antagonists that is logically prior to Kaldor's notion of 'external policy'. Bassford's (2007, p. 85) formulation is that politics is the encompassing master concept and policy 'a subcomponent thereof'. Politics is the omnipresent process by which power

is distributed at every level of the social strata. Policy is the conscious effort to shape politics by particular agents within a particular political context, and thus can manifest at levels and in directions as varied as that context. That the trinity means to constitute a theory of war 'as a whole', its element of reason must be referring to the highly variable effort to grapple with 'the larger, multilateral, interactive realm of politics' constituted by the relationship between warring actors, which can contain within it myriad influences – domestic politics included – on the way to policy (Bassford, 2007, pp. 86–87).

The above interpretations raise red flags about the coherence of the theoretical construct Kaldor offers as guidance for much of her more policy-relevant work. Can we so easily dismiss the logic of extremes? For Clausewitz that logic is simply not subject to elimination or complete reversal by the tendencies of the trinity, even its tendency of reason. We might theorize an extreme version of 'real war' in which frictions abound to such a degree that 'war consists of separate successes each unrelated to the next' (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 582). But, he writes, 'just as absolute war has never in fact been achieved, so we will never find a war in which the second concept [(real war)] is so prevalent that the first can be disregarded altogether' (Clausewitz, 1984, p. 582). Kaldor seems to disagree, at least as it pertains the usefulness of our ideal type of war. Where Clausewitz accounted for frictions by way of the trinity, they become the essence of war in the NWT, with any nod toward 'absolute war' being an almost epiphenomenal – and always misguided – feature. Indeed, Kaldor (2013a, p. 13) redefines war as 'an act of violence involving two or more organised groups *framed* in political terms'.

The next section begins to show how this reformulation may be problematic *for the purposes the NWT is meant to serve*. For as Kaldor (2010, p. 275) writes the NWT is 'a theory of war, whose test is how well it offers a guide to practice'. I will not argue, as Etienne Balibar (2008, p. 367) does, that it is important to retain the logic of extremes as something more than some malignant residue of old war 'if only to explain in what sense they are "new", or have transgressed the limits of what used to be considered a war'. Rather, I will contend that without considering the logic of extremes a necessary force even in the most limited, asymmetric, or persistent wars we are misunderstanding what must be occurring to make them what they are, while confusing something like persistence and spread as more intrinsic than it is. The third section more directly retheorizes the NWT with this contention in mind, but first I want to demonstrate that it is worthwhile to do so by illustrating some problems with the analytic tendencies that flow from the absence of the logic of extremes.

War as a mutual enterprise?

Kaldor's (2010, p. 274) practical concern with retaining the logic of extremes is that it mandates we view war as a 'contest of wills', and from there adopt strategies weighted too heavily toward the military destruction of an enemy.

Because the inner logic of new war is said to work against that possibility, seeking military victory is only either a mask for the goal of creating 'a state of war in which particular groups benefit' (Kaldor, 2010, p. 274), or, as in the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, believing decisive victory possible leads to new wars where they otherwise would not have existed (Kaldor, 2005). To avoid these scenarios Kaldor (2013a) argues we should, as in the reversal of war's logic, flip the metaphor of war as a contest and instead see it as a 'mutual enterprise'.

Unlike war as a contest, which is close enough to reality to signal that warring parties do seek to actually win, it is unclear to what degree the idea that war is a mutual enterprise is meant to indicate actors' conscious intention to cooperate to produce violence to shore up an identity or gain economically. For instance, on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Kaldor (2010, p. 275) writes that:

the existence of each side justifies the behaviour of the other. They are two-sided but the two sides collude as well as conflict. A Palestinian suicide attack on Israel legitimizes an Israeli attack on Hamas and vice versa. ... a kind of implicit collusion against the civilian population rather than deep hostility between each other.

From this it seems the mutual enterprise is either the result of some sort of 'false-consciousness' on the part of the warring parties, something that happens alongside war, or a game that only some of the actors are conscious of, and which they only play some of the time. Kaldor (2010, p. 275) does suggest the metaphor helps us get at a deeper reality, in that it prompts us to question whether mutually beneficial 'activities' like drug trafficking are tangential to war, or whether war merely provides the necessary 'cover' for them to proceed. Much as in the Clausewitzian schema, though, Kaldor (2010) judges the worth of the mutual enterprise metaphor not on the precise outward manifestation of its internal logic – Clausewitz (1984, p. 75–78), as noted above, is explicit that the single-minded focus on militarily rendering 'the enemy powerless' mandated by the logic of extremes will never occur in practice – but in how 'useful' it is in correctly shaping our vision of the messy reality of war. In particular, she contends it is the only way to properly conceive of the remaining shadows of old war; dispelling the notion that displays of real conflict or the 'real policy aims that can be achieved' indicate the possibility of military 'victory or defeat' as the route by which war will end (Kaldor, 2010, p. 275).

Any imprecision, then, may be beside the point if the general reorientation in analytic focus is not only crucial given present realities, but is impossible when working from a Clausewitzian baseline. Indeed, Kaldor (2013a, p. 13) chides Echevarria's (2007, p. 211) Clausewitzian analysis of the 'War on Terror' for assuming that both 'antagonists seek the political destruction of the other'. She insists that such a viewpoint mandates 'a military response, which, in turn, produces a more extreme counterreaction' (Kaldor, 2013a, p. 13). Because the terrorists fight among the people and

the US is so powerful, neither side can win in so militarized a conflict. Conversely, with the war seen 'as a mutual enterprise – whatever the individual antagonists believe – ... the proposed course of action is ... the application of law and the mobilisation of public opinion not on one side or the other, but against the mutual enterprise' (Kaldor, 2013a, p. 13). For soldiers, concomitantly, warfighting becomes a contingency instead of a defining practice; the protection of civilians in a war zone takes precedence over some chimeric defeat of an enemy. More broadly, state's military training and strategies can then aim at making 'a contribution to global security and to implementing a global social contract, which enshrines human rights' (Kaldor, 2008, p. 36).

Setting aside for the moment further discussion of the way a mutual enterprise lens flows into policy specifics, it should be noted that Echevarria comes closer to Kaldor's prescriptions than anything like advising a solely 'military response'. Contrary to Kaldor's reading, he explicitly addresses the way globalization has produced a 'constellation of possibilities and, by extension, impossibilities which influence what policy can and cannot achieve' (Echevarria, 2007, p. 211). Echevarria (2007) highlights the mismatch between American military force-postures and the threats it and its allies face, the often personalized and volatile identity-centric goals of warring parties, the use of the populace as 'both weapon and target', and the influence of new information technology. Furthermore, he recommends tactical nuances such as infiltration, propaganda, and 'offering alternatives to the jihadi lifestyle' over and above the use of military force, because military responses are only likely to exacerbate the 'basic hostility' sustaining the will of violent jihadists (Echevarria, 2007, p. 215). Clearly, then, the degree to which a Clausewitzian perspective mandates an over-militarized response is exaggerated.

Perhaps, though, the mutual enterprise metaphor is best seen as a device that uniquely opens us to the broader structural changes Kaldor advises, namely those required to reshape militaries to fight with a 'global social contract' in mind. Nothing in Echevarria's analysis directly obviates the wisdom of such a shift. States may need to work against the tendency of persistence and spread because of the way globalization has influenced security, *and* because of the way the logic of extremes exerts itself within that changed context. But in maintaining the latter, and so some sense of war as a contest, the issue of risk to soldiers' lives is brought to the forefront in ways that war as a mutual enterprise obfuscates.

Kaldor is correctly intuiting the way a soldier's willingness to risk death is at the heart of our current state-centric politico-military framework. The relationship between the state and its soldiers reflects an implicit social contract where soldiers accept that risk as intrinsic to their professional duties, but in return the state will only actualize it for, as Martin L. Cook (2000) puts it, 'weighty causes'. Soldiers' involvement in a 'contest' brings with it a higher sense of risk, and so more pressure on leaders to hew closely to causes that directly affect the state. The Clausewitzian vision of war, then, may be a key *practical* obstacle to building a stronger

sense of global community. And if without it the structures of a more solidarist global community begin to come into place they will, in a virtuous circle, also make it easier to resist the tendency to concentrate so much on relatively myopic risks and state-centric interests. The mutual enterprise metaphor, then, can be conceived as a mechanism to convince states that, as Kaldor (2003) has argued extensively, fighting for a global social contract simply is this era's weighty cause. In this reading, the mutual enterprise metaphor is largely about Kaldor's goal of altering the language of strategy in a way that will have 'political resonance'.

Unfortunately, at least to the degree the meaning attributed to social practices partly shapes their enactment, it is impossible to deny that the 'old' logic of Clausewitzian war is still real and effectual. Even Kaldor's own redefinition of war maintains it as an activity *framed* in political terms, and so there is at least a continued perception of the existential component of war. Whether based in 'reality' or not, this perception helps explain why threats to one's own state and its soldiers are difficult to dislodge from the top of the hierarchy of *casus belli*. Add to this the fact that the frame of a mutual enterprise is more ambiguous a guide than the idea of war as a contest, and that it is not the only way to see the dynamics highlighted in Kaldor's analyses of new wars, and there arises the pressing open question of whether treating war so much 'as-if' it is a mutual enterprise is the best way to disabuse states that the for-now perceptively more other-directed goals of human security involve risks too far. Indeed, at the same time Kaldor (2018) is willing to acknowledge that 'casualty aversion' and human security's 'big commitment of resources' work against more directly putting soldiers' lives on the line to protect civilians, the obfuscation involved with the mutual enterprise frame also seems to work against understanding how to overcome those obstacles. When specifically addressing the issue of perceived additional risks, Kaldor (2008, p. 43) can come off as dismissive, noting that 'human rights activists, who volunteer, routinely take such risks'. Human rights activists, of course, are not at present formally accountable to an identifiable population in the way soldiers are, and no doubt soldiers and their political masters understand this difference as crucial. At other times Kaldor (2012b, p. 12) oddly presents riskiness as a positive for the human security paradigm, lauding the fact that its 'complex operations', far from being 'too soft', 'can be even more risky than conventional warfighting'.

This brings us to the crux of the issue when judging between an NWT that either dismisses or maintains some place for the logic of extremes. If, at the very least, Kaldor is overstating the necessity of seeing war as a mutual enterprise, this gives weight to the issue of imprecision, and the ability to speak convincingly to belligerents – most of whom surely do not perceive themselves to be involved in or intervening in a mutual enterprise. How much is lost with that feature of the NWT, and is it outweighed or not by the ability to motivate actors to move toward a new paradigm meant to change those perceptions and experiences of existential, state-centered risk? The notion of advanced militaries contributing to broad structural changes like a global social

contract is made much more sensible by viewing war as a mutual enterprise. But if that 'story' about war is too far from reality then its usefulness as a change agent may be undercut by a perception on the part of analysts and the actors who must adopt those changes that it is farcical given present realities. Moreover, as the next section argues, the scales really tip in favor of an NWT reconciled with Clausewitz once we realize that the policy changes the NWT is meant to enable may not only be possible to conceive while maintaining the more plausible sense that war is still a contest, but that maintaining that sense may actually improve the cogency of the arguments for them.

A Clausewitzian new war thesis

The reconciliation hinted at above is not meant to invalidate Kaldor's prescribed shift toward human security. In this sense I am like many of the critics of the NWT who, as Kaldor (2013a, p. 3) observes, 'often concede that what is useful ... is the policy implication of the argument'. But it is not enough to simply contend, as Kaldor (2013a, p. 3) does, that such agreement is 'precisely the point' of the NWT and move on. At the very least there remains the likelihood of hasty and unfortunate rejections of the NWT by the many insightful security analysts who continue to find in Clausewitz a frame for thinking about how the complex politics of today should impinge on the use of military force (e.g. Shaw, 2009; Strachan and Scheipers, 2011). Even more important than increased scholarly comity, though, is the profound difference reconciling the NWT with Clausewitz makes in the analyst's ability to clearly and convincingly speak to the tactical realities of belligerents attempting to stop the persistence and spread of new wars.

Reflecting the fact that Kaldor still emphasizes that new war *is* war, there is also still a place for warfighting within her human security approach. For all the emphasis on the strategic lodestar of civilian protection, Kaldor (2012b, p. 7) admits there will still be times when it is 'necessary to try to capture or even defeat insurgents'. The key is that doing so 'has yet to be seen as a means to an end – civilian protection – rather than the other way around' (Kaldor, 2012b, p. 7). Put in more classical strategic terms, the use of warfighting moves to the level of tactics, one among others in service of broader and deeper human security goals. Central to 'victory' is the prevention or marginalization of the 'violent processes of identity construction', and the opening up of spaces for the local promotion of 'multiple ... nonsectarian identities' (Kaldor, 2013b, p. 336). Not being tasked with battlefield victory, the pressure to kill as many of the enemy as possible is replaced with goals such as 'stabilization' and the establishment of 'safe zones where political solutions can be sought' (Kaldor, 2012b, p. 7) – termed 'islands of peace' in Kaldor's (2018) latest work. Even as a tactic, though, the use of offensive military force will be critical to the success of any human security mission. Especially if utilized too often we can assume that, given the dynamics highlighted by the NWT, more traditional modes of warfighting will only serve to perpetuate war. That it is still a part of the general

approach, then, we require a great degree of precision on the when and how of utilizing it.

At a principled level, and following from the shift in war's center of gravity from combatants to civilians on all sides, when 'civilian protection requires robust military action' Kaldor argues it should be guided by 'the right to self-defense' or the protection of 'a third party' – much like domestic policing (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010, p. 91). Unlike police, though, once these rights are activated militaries may be 'ruthless' (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010). However, that ruthlessness cannot be motivated by 'military necessity', while force protection must be subordinated to civilian protection (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010).

Beyond these principles, Kaldor is vague on when warfighting can be activated. In a book-length treatment of the 'new rules of war and peace' (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010; also Kaldor, 2018), descriptions of the moments when 'defeat' of an identified enemy should be sought are few and ambiguous. An instance of 'kinetic operations' by Iraqi and American forces against 'militias and criminal gangs' in Basra, for instance, is criticized for killing civilians, and then juxtaposed to the eventual adoption of a human security approach (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010, p. 85). But it is also suggested that such operations may have been crucial to opening the space for that very turn to human security (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010). Rather than clarify, most of the emphasis is on acting 'proactively before conflict turns violence' (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010, p. 90).

Furthermore, in another context Kaldor criticizes the principle of self-defense as a poor guide to military action. In a recent book that applies the NWT to international law, Chinkin and Kaldor (2017) argue that in today's interconnected world the constitution of self in terms of military affairs, as well as when that self is actually under imminent threat, is so elastic that an unacceptable amount of violence is legitimated. Self-defense should be reframed as a response not to an armed attack but rather to a 'crime against humanity', essentially making our primary legitimate *casus belli* the defense of human rights (Chinkin and Kaldor, 2017, p. 172). Of course, such elasticity should only become more of a problem in the complex situations present *within* a human security operation. In the 2011 NATO intervention in Libya, for instance, officials infamously justified the shift to a strategy aimed at regime change – a clear step beyond their UN-mandate to only protect civilians – by arguing that civilian protection required the elimination of the Gadhafi regime (Kuperman, 2013). How many soldiers among human security forces, or civilians they are protecting, need to be killed or injured before the 'self' they represent is in need of defense? More fundamentally, if we are to treat attacks from insurgents as not actually aimed toward some victory, how do we know when 'robust military force' is the best tool to alter their incentive structure away from future attacks?

This problem of knowing when to activate warfighting is compounded by a tension between the ruthless violence allowed once forces move past the standard quasi-policing mode of human security, and the mandate that such violence not take into account military necessity or force

protection. This tension reflects an attempt to blend the traditional foundations for the rules of engagement for domestic policing and warfighting – human rights law and international humanitarian law, respectively. The latter allows enemy combatants to be shot on sight and unintended civilian casualties to be balanced against the military gains to be had, because in war it is assumed there is real potential that a just warring defender may potentially lose, and that that would be the ultimate miscarriage of justice. Voiding recourse to military necessity and force protection indicates this is seen as no longer a strong possibility. That may be so, but the potential need for ruthlessness suggests otherwise. The idea that 'ruthless' military force is activated implies the enemy is capable of doing real ongoing harm to intervening forces or the civilians they are protecting, harm that might endanger the overall success of a human security mission in ways that outweigh the potential harm of using offensive force. The risks involved, then, even in a paradigm where warfighting is reduced to a tactical measure, may reasonably necessitate momentary considerations of something like military necessity.

Of course, warfighting is something well-captured by a model of war that contains the logic of extremes. Which is not to say that simply adding the logic of extremes to the NWT offers easy solutions to the problems identified above. Space constraints prevent a thorough retheorization, and extrapolation therefrom into specific strategic and tactical advice. At the very least, though, if it is possible to conceive of the NWT with some place for the logic of extremes we may be able to begin making more sense of what can and should be done when warfighting becomes a necessity.

At a practical level, the NWT allows Kaldor to place at the forefront of our strategic considerations the general, pervasive, and high levels of insecurity that at present define war and conflict more generally. For her this deep insecurity is a function of a logic of persistence and spread. I have suggested we could understand persistence and spread as a function of a particular constellation of the wondrous trinity existing in relation to the Clausewitzian logic of extremes, and as such it becomes in part a manifestation of that logic rather than its own. In the way Kaldor understands Clausewitz this would seem on its face to be illogical; the logic of extremes is said to require that war involve the efficacy of strategies for overwhelming military victory. There is a different and deeper sense, though, in which the logic of extremes is meant to shape how we understand war.

At a more fundamental level than the form that seeking victory takes, the Clausewitzian logic highlights the inchoate pressure to use violence in a context of radical and existential uncertainty. For well-organized and equipped militaries fighting against one another, this likely translates into the felt need for quick and decisive victory; it is rational to fear that the other side has that capacity as well. However, when at least one side is irregular or 'weak' – and especially for the complex and multisided conflicts highlighted in Kaldor's work – the uncertainty at the heart of the logic of extremes is radicalized further. The pressure to violence is there, but it is so discombobulating that it works with other forces in

our globalized world to generate strategies that involve opportunistic networking, the need to get funding where one can, and to adopt barbaric tactics – all without the ability to consistently grasp any sort of reasoned vision for the end goal. The empirical features of new war, then, and which constitute the social relations of wars that tend to persist and spread, are possible to conceive as manifestations of the trinity of ‘magnets’ suspended around the Clausewitzian logic of war.

This theorization does not preclude notions of political victory that capture the tendency for wars to persist and spread, nor the need for advanced militaries who want to prevent that from adopting a human security approach. The quintessential new war actors – networked collections of fighters, often not directly affiliated with a state – should be understood as, given the conditions of their struggle, seeking victory in ways that generate the persistence and spread of war. Sometimes this will include reasons that more aptly fit the model of war as a mutual enterprise, in that whatever amorphous political motivations originally motivated the turn to violence, fighters eventually lose sight of it and carry on mostly to enrich themselves in the chaos that war brings (see Abdul-Ahad, 2013). Or, what look like strategies designed not for victory but rather for persistence and spread are utilizing that dynamic as a stepping stone toward some realistic *potential* for what in Kaldor’s terms would be a reasoned political goal.

The purported strategy of Al Qaeda is a case in point (see Ryan, 2013). From the point of view of the NWT, we can say the leading strategists of Al Qaeda saw their actions as a means of generating new war conditions in order to eventually be able to marshal the strength to actually topple governments and control territory. Terrorist attacks, and the hopefully overwrought responses they were meant to spark, were of course not intended as an immediate and decisive blow that would force some political change among and adversary, but neither were they meant to simply generate conditions that would enrich Al Qaeda. They were intended to both increase the ranks of Al Qaeda and generally radicalize the average Muslim, such that in combination those forces would eventually be able to accomplish something akin to what the so-called Islamic State (IS) could not – the reconstitution of a caliphate. Given the conditions of their existence and their goals, groups such as this can only hope to generate wars that, relative maybe to those in the past, persist and spread until such point that more decisive battlefield victories can actually be fought. Kaldor (2013a) is probably right that under the conditions of our globalizing world getting to that point is impossible. But that does not mean the actors involved are not trying. And it is in them trying that we can begin to explain when warfighting is needed within human security. When new warriors attempt to master uncertainty by lashing out with relatively focused violence, then and only then *need* it be put down decisively. Warfighting should rarely occur not because battlefield defeat is something we need to push outside of our conceptual purview, but because terrorists or insurgents are rarely able to create a real ‘battlefield’.

Crucially, this retheorization is able to maintain an emphasis on why it is wise to restrict the rules of engagement, and orient ‘victory’ toward generally involving the protection of civilians. If what looks like policing in a warzone is still a practice dealing with the logic of war, human security forces are operating to protect human rights because they can, because the other side really is so in the grips of weakness and uncertainty that instead of treating them like highly trained and effective warriors, and in the process killing a disproportionate number of civilians, militaries can justify human security operations because of a massive advantage in strength and wherewithal. This helps better frame and give meaning to the moments when warfighting becomes necessary. Put simply, it is when the ‘old’ forms of war, unnecessarily occluded by Kaldor’s version of the NWT, rear their ugly head that militaries must switch from ‘escorting kids to kindergarten’ (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010, p. 79) to the defeat of the enemy using kinetic force.

Can, though, this reconciliation justify a human security turn that is replete with broader shifts in political structures and the training of advanced militaries? If persistence and spread is not some natural force ‘internal’ to war, why should advanced militaries train ‘engagement brigades’ that ‘contain a mix of capabilities ranging from the use of force’ to the ‘support for reconciliation’ (Beebe and Kaldor, 2010, p. 119)? The reasoning is even more compelling than the notion that states should not think about war as a conflict of wills. Utilizing human security is about tackling persistence and spread to prevent a more robust realization of war as a contest, always latent as it is when we acknowledge the logic of extremes. Posed this way, human security is convincing because it is the *least* risky option next to either allowing wars to persist and spread – and thus feeling the effects of generalized instability down the road – or seeing that persistence morph into a real existential threat to advanced states. Those who do wield military force, rather than make the leap to seeing war as a mutual enterprise and being asked to completely upend their conceptions of risk, can understand human security’s kinetic and non-kinetic facets as not only serving the emergence of a new global consciousness, but as crucial to the military victory that is still a core aspect of new war.

Conclusions

The theoretical core of Kaldor’s work rests at least partially on the contention that as long as we operate from within the existing discursive structures of war and peace we will inevitably be tempted to adopt overly militarized strategies. This essay has sought to show that not only is that not necessarily true, but that the core derided element of the Clausewitzian discourse, the logic of extremes, actually helps us better analyze new war realities, and as such still prescribe policies to deal with them in the very human security mode Kaldor champions. In this way, the rhetorical gambit of a ‘post-Clausewitzian’ (Kaldor, 2013a) NWT is mostly that. The subtext of this article has been to show that taking such gambits too far, especially in times of uncertainty and

change, can actually hurt the cause of dealing adequately with those new realities. With that subtext in mind, I want to conclude with two suggestive thoughts, the first a worst-case scenario for the practical effects of adopting overly strident discourses as a means of pushing change, and the second an example of how to avoid that danger while also acknowledging the quite fundamental political and social changes that need to occur if our species is to face the challenges ahead.

In previous work, I sought to determine the health of an ongoing debate over the ethics of advanced military robotics by comparing it to the debate that took place during a past period of seemingly revolutionary change in weapons technology (Banta, 2018). Reasoning that the context of the 'warbot' ethics debate is somewhat analogous to the context of the inter-war debate over the rise of air power, and that clearly that air power discourse failed given the terror bombing that took place on all sides during World War Two, I wanted to examine some of the logics that contributed to that failure. Inspired by a seminal essay on the topic, 'War and Murder' by the philosopher G.E.M. Anscombe (1961), which counterintuitively argued it was the relatively widespread pacifism at the time that was mostly responsible for the descent into terror, I mapped the competing perspectives on air power in the lead-up to war to determine just whether, and if so exactly how, this was the case. Anscombe's (1961, p. 56) argument was that because the moral perspective on war became equated with pacifism – to the ignorance of a just war tradition that contained principles for how to restrain the violence of war if it did come – those who remained convinced that war probably could not be prevented simultaneously reasoned there is 'no way of avoiding wickedness', and so 'they set no limits to it'. Some *embraced* the opportunity to ignore moral considerations in order to promote terror bombing. The vast majority simply determined to pay 'lip-service' to the rules in order 'to prevent any doubts about the obliteration bombing of a city' (Anscombe, 1961, pp. 57–59). In my analysis of the discourse I found Anscombe was essentially correct, though there were crucial logics and turns in the discourse that her analysis could not capture.

I mention this only to note that while we should not impugn the intentions of those inter-war pacifists – nor Kaldor's – and should even note that in some sense they were right that if war were allowed to come again at that height of industrialized militarism it could 'certainly destroy civilization' (Read, 1923, p. 488), there is a danger in presenting an argument for change that rests on conceptions that are overly idealized. For inter-war pacifists, their position rested on a contention that international ethics needed to mirror interpersonal ethics, a demand so impossible to fulfill that many rejected it out of hand; and then even worse, rejected the wisdom animating the concern. In this respect, while Kaldor's project may certainly represent a plea for moving in the right direction, it may also be framed in such a way that, in the worst-case scenario, it is less a discursive vanguard for change, or even a locus for debate and critique, and rather generates a wider *dismissal* of the need for change. If war is

so obviously not a mutual enterprise, it might unfortunately be said, then we can also ignore debating the desirability and feasibility of broader turns to human security.

I do not mean to suggest any single intellectual project can be blamed for actions that are certainly overdetermined by other factors. But even absent this possibility, it is hoped the above reconciliation is a net positive for the ability of the NWT to influence analysts and policy-makers, in that it strikes the right balance between the reality of the here and now and a recognition of where we must go. I say this with the recent series of works by Richard Falk (2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2016) in mind, where he has developed a sophisticated position on the political orientation needed for our present period of overlapping crises and massive concomitant obstacles to needed change. Falk's (2014b, p. 1) is certainly no less of a radical call to action than Kaldor's; he argues that to face the tripartite challenges of global inequality, nuclear weaponry, and climate change, we need a 'widespread reorientation of individual identities toward a new model of citizen ... whose principal affinities are with the species and its natural surroundings rather than to any specific state, ethnicity, nationality, civilization, or religion'. But he is careful to warn of an 'idealist' leap to the 'adoption of the outlook of "a world citizen"' (Falk, 2014a, p. 48). According to Falk (2014b, p. 4), there is a danger that the assertion of:

the oneness of the planet and of humanity ... affirms identity on the basis of sentiment and evades the hard political work of transformation. For such a world citizen, all that needs to be created is presupposed. The struggles of transition, as if by magic wand, are waved out of existence.

To avoid that tendency Falk (2014a, p. 48) emphasizes the need to think of ourselves as 'citizen pilgrims', 'an orientation toward citizenship that is animated by time as well as space'. Much of Kaldor's work reflects that orientation, especially that which speaks to the need to develop capacities, in a varied set of social fields, for human security to work and so prevent the long-term consequences of its absence. But we should be wary of simply wishing away – even in an analytical or ideal-typical sense – core aspects of reality in order to get to a place where they no longer have their present undesired effects. Kaldor may be right in the sense that much of the Western 'way of war' operates on a *misreading* of Clausewitz, seeing his conception of war as always demanding strategies for overwhelming and decisive battlefield victories. But it is also true that this need not be the case when including the logic of extremes within our theoretical purview. And it may also be true that completely jettisoning it serves too often to cause an evasion of the 'struggles of transition' from our present to a more humane form of security.

Notes

1. A number of scholars in basic agreement with the idea of 'new war' not only fail to reject Clausewitz but to varying degrees utilize his

theory for the purpose of theorizing war's current transformation (see Latham and Christenson, 2014; Münkler, 2005, 2007). This essay is in general agreement with that strain of new war thought. However, given that Kaldor is usually identified as the main progenitor and proponent of the new war idea, and that her anti-Clausewitzian version underlies a much broader set of academic and political interventions, what is produced here by reconciling her version of new war with Clausewitz is additive in important ways. In particular, I maintain Kaldor's emphasis on persistence and spread as a core feature of modern war, and the sometimes radical prescriptions for dealing with that dynamic that seem for Kaldor to be partly an outgrowth of her rejection of the logic of extremes. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pushing me on this point.

2. One of the reasons this piece seeks to reconcile the NWT with Clausewitz rather than reject the former in favor of the latter is that there is a good case to be made that Clausewitz, whether fairly or not, has historically been a favorite guru for those – both during and after the Cold War (see Gray, 2005; Summers, 1982) – who see strategy as requiring a decidedly anti-human security bent. As such, if one broadly agrees with Kaldor's prescriptive positions – as I do – she has a point that the Clausewitzian 'story' has often been an obstacle to progress. I believe, of course, that need not necessarily be the case. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for questioning the conciliatory thrust of this essay.
3. Echevarria (2007, pp. 205–208) goes so far as to argue that the trinity's tendencies are theoretically co-equal, and that this negates 'the notion that Clausewitz's theory was principally about the primacy of policy'.

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