

## **Conflict Studies and Terrorism Studies: Inter-disciplinarity and Convergence**

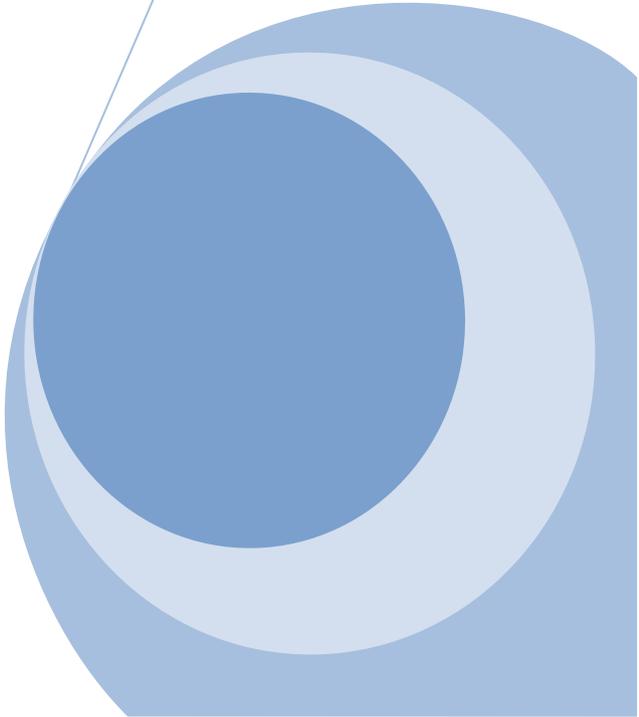
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The two distinct academic disciplines of conflict studies and terrorism studies have developed to the point where calls from within conflict studies for the breaking down of the separation of applied social science disciplines can be addressed. This is particularly the case for conflict studies and terrorism studies as the changing nature of armed conflict has meant that their subject matters have converged. This paper argues the case for the utilization of methods from conflict studies to inform the analysis of terrorism.

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## Conflict Studies and Terrorism Studies: Inter-disciplinarity and convergence

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### 1. Introduction

This paper argues the case that the subject matters of the two distinct fields of study of conflict studies and terrorism studies have converged due to the changing nature of armed conflict and the increasing reliance of contemporary sub-state actors on terrorism, guerrilla warfare and insurgency in achieving their goals. That these forms of warfare have become prevalent does not diminish the threat to world peace of intra-state warfare, which due to the resources available to powerful states and alliances remains distinctly dangerous. It is more the case that the sub-state methods of terrorism, guerrilla warfare and insurgency are an actual threat, whereas conventional or nuclear warfare between states are potential threats. This has implications for interdisciplinary crossover between conflict studies and terrorism studies, both of which have drawn on a variety of social science disciplines throughout their short histories. More recently, there have been calls for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding conflict and this paper presents an argument for this to continue between conflict studies and terrorism studies, building on a small but developing body of knowledge. In order to do so the reasons for the separation of social science disciplines and how their future integration can be achieved without losing the benefits of specialised knowledge is introduced. The text below presents inter-disciplinarity and convergence as concepts and then discusses each individually before drawing conclusions.

### 2. Inter-disciplinarity and Convergence as Concepts.

*Inter-disciplinarity* refers to a trend seen within conflict studies to cross disciplines in the search for explanatory theoretical frameworks. Examples of this are the University of Michigan's Centre for Research on Conflict Resolution and John Burton's human needs approach.<sup>1</sup> Terrorism studies, whether as a sub-discipline or discipline in its own right, has been multidisciplinary from the outset although the various contributors have brought in their own theories from their own disciplines<sup>2</sup> and the majority of articles about terrorism have been authored by people from outside the field<sup>3</sup>. We should add that there is a core of researchers and academics that are driving terrorism studies forward and established journals meaning that terrorism studies can emerge as a distinct discipline<sup>4</sup>. The argument presented here is influenced by Galtung's proposition that the social sciences in general are badly in need of integration: specialism is a necessary aspect, but applied social sciences

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<sup>1</sup> Martha Harty and John Modell 'The first conflict resolution movement, 1956-1971: An attempt to institutionalize applied interdisciplinary social science' *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1991), pp. 720-758.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Wilkinson "Research into terrorism studies: achievements and failures" in: Ranstorp (ed) *Mapping Terrorism Research: State of the Art, Gaps and Future Direction* (Routledge:London:2007) pp 116-328 (p 316).

<sup>3</sup> Magnus Ranstorp "Mapping terrorism studies after 9/11: an academic field of old problems and new prospects" in: Jackson, Breen Smith & Gunning (eds) *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (Routledge:London:2009) pp 13-33 (p 19).

<sup>4</sup> Avishag Gordon "Terrorism and knowledge growth: A databases and internet analysis" in A Silke (ed) *Research on Terrorism: Trends, Achievements and Failures* (Frank Cass: London: 2004) op cit, pp 104-118.

(including conflict and terrorism studies) need to account for the gaps between disciplines<sup>5</sup>. Conflict studies has matured considerably since its inception and has a lot to offer terrorism studies, a project that has already begun, but with the caveat that the former informs the latter, and not by direct transfer of a model or theory.

*Convergence* refers to the breaking down of the separation between the two distinct disciplines of conflict and terrorism studies due to changing nature of conflict. The debates concerning the 'new wars' and 'new terrorism' have effectively eroded the distinction between state and non-state actors so security is no longer seen in purely state-centric terms<sup>6</sup>. States remain important, but the major actors in what are predominantly intra-state conflicts are warlords and terrorist groups<sup>7</sup>. Terrorism, insurgency and guerrilla warfare have long been a concern of governments, whether during the withdrawal of the colonial empires or due to the proxy wars of the Cold War era. The last decade of the twentieth century saw the United States humiliated in Somalia, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia and the genocide in Rwanda. The new century began with the 9/11 attacks, which made countering terrorism a strategic priority: a new kind of terrorism (Al Qaeda) for a new kind of war (Global War on Terror-GWOT).

### 3. Inter-disciplinarity

While once there was a clear division between the 'educated', in the sense of classical learning, and the 'uneducated', but improvements in education led not only to this line being blurred but also new 'distinctions based on the specific nature of the education one received'<sup>8</sup> and a subsequent sorting out of disciplines distanced by a gap similar to that of the educated and uneducated. A professional, specialised and formal system of education came into being and, increasingly 'moral and theological truth ceased to be recognized as objects of substantive enquiry and instead were relegated to the realm of privatised belief.'<sup>9</sup> A distinction also developed between 'vocational' and 'university' education: the first being a specialised education in one skill and body of knowledge that enables the skill; the second an intellectual capital, which can also be specialised, that is exploratory as opposed to prescriptive.<sup>10</sup> Mayer, writing in 1934, observed that there were a number of schools of thought, which could be divided into two categories: natural science and cultural schools.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Johan Galtung "Toward a conflictology: the quest for transdisciplinarity" in: DJD Sandole, S Byrne, I Sandole-Staroste & J Senehi (eds), *Handbook of Conflict Analysis and Resolution* (Routledge:London:2009) op cit, pp 511- 524 (516).

<sup>6</sup> Oliver P Richmond 'Realising hegemony? Symbolic terrorism and the roots of conflict' *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* No 26 (2003) pp289-309.

<sup>7</sup> Herfried Munkler *The New Wars* (Polity Press:Cambridge:2005).

<sup>8</sup> Elton B McNeil "The nature of social science and human conflict" in: EB McNeil (ed) *The Nature of Human Conflict* (Prentice Hall International Inc: 1965) pp 3-13 (p 4).

<sup>9</sup> Alastair McIntyre *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry: Encyclopaedia, Genealogy and Tradition* (Duckworth: London: 1990), p 217.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Oakshott *Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays (New and Expanded Edition)* (Liberty Fund: Indianapolis: 1991).

<sup>11</sup> Joseph Mayer 'Scientific method and social science' *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (1934), pp. 338-350 (p339).

He argued that social science needed to be dependent on a 'rigorous scientific methodology' based on 'observation and verification; theory and rigorous analysis.'<sup>12</sup>

There are clear advantages of the division of disciplines: the scope of knowledge is too broad, even within disciplines, to allow for general knowledge in depth, and without specific theories and methods, knowledge becomes unstructured and disorganised. However, this has implications for the study of the human condition as the parts become understood but the whole is lost. Such concerns led to a call to unify the sciences without losing the gains of disciplinary separation and recognising that synthesis would need to be fruitful in order to counter the tendency to specialisation.<sup>13</sup> A distinct trend has been that social science has moved towards post-positivism and away from mechanistic explanations of human behaviour. In terms of intellectual discourse there is a need to consider that in following a theoretical line of enquiry we may naturally exclude what is potentially disruptive.<sup>14</sup>

The separation of social science disciplines has implications for peace and conflict studies as they are clearly dependent on contributions from the social science disciplines, but it can be argued that they also reciprocate the knowledge gained:

'While reviewing the literature for this essay we also reached the conclusion that peace research does have the qualities of a discipline. It is certainly important that peace research is one dimension of virtually all disciplines. On the other hand, it is vitally necessary that the various dimensions be assembled, as is the need in efforts to develop long-range peace-building strategies. As with other disciplines, the peace research discipline will always have a need to be continually linked to, and apply, the insights of other disciplines. But at the same time, other disciplines need the insight that the peace research discipline can offer them with respect to how the dimension of peace research that is an aspect of their discipline fits into the more holistic view of peace.'<sup>15</sup>

How the discipline of conflict analysis and resolution has approached the problem of the separation of disciplines will now be addressed. A pioneering attempt at establishing an inter-disciplinary research centre took place at the University of Michigan between 1956 and 1971. This involved the founding of the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and shortly after the establishment of the Centre for Research on Conflict Resolution (CRCR). Despite a productive output the goal of unifying social science disciplines into a theoretical framework for conflict analysis and resolution was not met.<sup>16</sup> Further attempts to clarify the study of conflict as a distinct body of thought have a recent history:

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, p 350.

<sup>13</sup> Carl Landauer 'Toward a unified social science' *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 86, No. 4 (1971), pp. 563-585 (p585).

<sup>14</sup> George A. De Vos 'Toward an integrated social science' *Ethos*, Vol. 27, No. 1 (1999), pp. 33-48.

<sup>15</sup> Chadwick E Alger "Peace studies as a transdisciplinary project" in: C Webel & J Galtung (eds) *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies* (Routledge:Abingdon:2007), pp 299-318 (p300).

<sup>16</sup> Harty & Modell , op cit.

‘There are at least four paradigms relevant to conflict and conflict resolution at *all* levels, from interpersonal to international: (1) Political Realism (*Realpolitik*), (2) Political Idealism (*Idealpolitik*), (3) Marxism, and (4) what I call “Non-Marxist Radical Thought” (NMRT)<sup>17</sup>

Without going into the intricacies of international relations theories the above needs some clarification here. By NMRT, Sandole is referring to an approach that ‘recognizes the potency of our biological nature’<sup>18</sup> yet,

‘...stresses structural change to bring social, political and economic, and other institutions more in line with *basic human needs*.’<sup>19</sup>

The combining of the four paradigms and two approaches into an overall framework and its application to levels of conflict into a generic theory that incorporated elements of biology, psychology, sociology and international relations, was a framework that transcended competing paradigms. The *Conflict Series* helmed by John Burton represented another attempt at creating a viable framework, arising in the late 1980s and coming to prominence in the 1990s. Burton sought a ‘political philosophy’ that moved away from power politics and focused on human needs. For Burton ‘conflict is a symptom of the need for system change. Conflict resolution processes and conflict prevention policies could be the means for peaceful change.’<sup>20</sup>

Despite such demonstrable attempts at crossing disciplines within conflict studies, according to Galtung:

‘However, polarised by the niches assigned to them in the intellectual landscapes the social sciences are badly in need of bi-, multi, inter- and transdisciplinary integration’<sup>21</sup>

and:

‘Obviously, we are now also saying that interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary sciences have a major role to play in bridging the gaps between legitimate but one sided approaches.’<sup>22</sup>

The argument is therefore that while specialisations are necessary and valuable to knowledge, for the applied social sciences such as peace and conflict studies that draw on them, there is a need to account for the gaps between the ‘black boxes’ of disciplines. The solutions put forward by Galtung are both simple and complex: for the simple, talk to a ‘dialogue partner’ from another discipline, start the day at a focus of interest and follow the leads across disciplines; for the complex (conflictology), Galtung specifies that it should be intra- and inter- (conflict within and between), individual and collective, ‘draw on the distance between space and time’ in that it uses history and takes into account non-western

<sup>17</sup> Dennis J D Sandole “Paradigms, theories, and metaphors in conflict and conflict resolution: coherence or confusion?” in: Dennis J D Sandole & Hugo Van der Merwe (eds) *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (Manchester University Press: Manchester: 1991) pp 3-24 (p4).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p5.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p4.

<sup>20</sup> John Burton “Conflict resolution as a political philosophy” in: Sandole & Van der Merwe (eds) *op cit*, pp 55-64 (p63).

<sup>21</sup> Galtung, *op cit*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p518.

societies<sup>23</sup>, and a 'diachronic-nomothetic combination, because it is causally orientated and generalizing.'<sup>24</sup>

The short description above is a indication of what can be, pointing 'in the direction of a conflictology or general theory of conflict that is transdisciplinary and captures reflexive practice as well as theory building'<sup>25</sup>. The present is a visible and burgeoning conflict analysis and resolution field that is holistic and organic and has matured over the last twenty years.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, terrorism studies, does not demonstrate a truly interdisciplinary approach to the same extent as conflict analysis. Excluding the more recent developments of Critical Terrorism Studies<sup>27</sup>, Frank's multi-level approach<sup>28</sup> and Crenshaw's theoretical work<sup>29</sup>, terrorism studies has been typified by the application of theories from other social science disciplines and sub-disciplines to the study of terrorism. A significant (and by no means exclusive) contribution to the study of terrorism has been made from the fields of political studies, international relations, history, psychology, sociology and criminology.<sup>30</sup> The various contributors brought with them their own theories, which were then applied to terrorism, hence, while Wilkinson argues correctly that terrorism studies has been multi-disciplinary in nature from the outset<sup>31</sup> it can also be argued that gaps (as per Galtung) will remain from the contributions of the disciplines. Such a state of affairs is compounded when we consider that the majority of articles about terrorism have been authored by visitors to the field, preventing debate and theory driven contributions with terrorism studies.<sup>32</sup>

The current state of terrorism studies is that it has evolved to the extent that there is a core of terrorism researchers whose main interest is terrorism and seek to push terrorism studies forward as a discipline with some 42 terrorism journals, which provide a solid knowledge database. When combined with the increase in terrorism literature after 9/11, this provides the foundations for terrorism studies to emerge as a separate discipline.<sup>33</sup> In effect, much as Galtung proposes that peace and conflict studies can develop into 'conflictology' there is potential for terrorism studies to develop into 'terrorology'. These are grand projects, it is not the purpose of this paper to develop such projects, the aims being smaller and the method specific in its approach, but the themes of inter-disciplinarity and trans-disciplinarity within conflict studies are transferable to terrorism studies. This is possible for two reasons:

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Sean Byrne & Jessica Senehi "Revisiting the CAR field" in: DJD Sandole, S Byrne, I Sandole-Staroste & J Senehi (eds), op cit, pp 525-536 (p 525).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> See: Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smith & Jeroen Gunning (eds) *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (Routledge:London:2009).

<sup>28</sup> Jason Franks *Rethinking the Roots of Terrorism* (Basingstoke:Palgrave MacMillan:2006).

<sup>29</sup> An example is: Martha Crenshaw 'The causes of terrorism' *Comparative Politics* Vol 13, No 4 (1981) pp 379-399.

<sup>30</sup> Wilkinson, op cit.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ranstorp, op cit.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon, op cit.

the aforementioned by Wilkinson that terrorism studies has been multi-disciplinary from the outset<sup>34</sup> and the convergence of interests between the two areas of study.

A synthesis of terrorism studies and conflict studies has been previously undertaken by Franks to develop a comprehensive and holistic framework that can be applied to the study of the roots of terrorism. He compared approaches of terrorism studies and conflict studies and used conflict theory to break out of a mono-causal and positivist understanding of terrorism.<sup>35</sup> Weinberg and Richardson applied the process model of Kriesberg to understanding how terrorist campaigns begin and end. Based on a process of emergence, escalation and de-escalation it they first applied to terrorist campaigns in Western Europe in general before applying it directly to Northern Ireland and Spain. They concluded that conflict theory can be useful in understanding the trajectory of terrorist campaigns.<sup>36</sup> Tellidis, focusing solely on ethno terrorism in the Basque Country, combined critical theory approaches to terrorism and the root causes and human needs aspects of conflict theory, concluding that civil society can have a greater contribution to the resolution of conflicts than liberal democratic states recognise.<sup>37</sup> Buttner compared the conflicts in Corsica and the Basque Country using conflict analysis, utilising Byman's theory of ethnic terrorism. He found that there were similarities in that there was an incompatibility between regionalism and centralism and the long term survival of clandestine groups despite an environment in which states were democratically responsive, although there was a stronger concept of identity and greater degree of ideology in the Basque case.<sup>38</sup> Turner integrated theories of terrorism into a combined relational model and conflict process theories of conflict, and applied this to the Basque Country, Corsica, and Northern Ireland. His conclusions were that political reform was the key to ending terrorism in all three cases, but was dependent on effective counterterrorism methods against challenger groups.<sup>39</sup> A final example is Schmid's application of Crenshaw's preconditions and precipitants to produce a conceptual model for the emergence of terrorist campaigns, which draws on root causes.<sup>40</sup> These studies demonstrate that the combining of conflict and terrorism studies is theoretically sound and provides a small body of knowledge on which future research can draw.

#### 4. Convergence

Since the end of the Cold War there has been a discernible shift in the nature of conflict across the world from one of the classical warfare of organised state actors to one in which the major actors are mercenaries, warlords and terrorist groups.<sup>41</sup> The nation-state still

<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson, op cit.

<sup>35</sup> Franks, op cit.

<sup>36</sup> Leonard Weinberg and Louise Richardson (2004) Conflict Theory and the Trajectory of Terrorist Campaigns in Western Europe in A Silke (ed) op cit, pp 138-160.

<sup>37</sup> Ioannis Tellidis *Preventing Terrorism? Conflict Resolution and Nationalist Violence in the Basque Country* University of St Andrews PhD thesis (2008) <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>

<sup>38</sup> Wolfgang Buttner *Corsica and the Basque Country: A Comparative Conflict Analysis* (Stuttgart: *ibidem*-Verlag:2000).

<sup>39</sup> Carl P Turner *How Terrorism Ends: A Comparative Conflict Analysis of Northern Ireland, the Basque Country and Corsica* University of Hull PhD Thesis 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Alex P Schmid 'Root causes of terrorism: some conceptual note, a set of indicators, and a model' *Democracy and Security* Vol 1, No 2 (2005) pp 127-136.

<sup>41</sup> Munkler, op cit.

underpins the new frameworks but distinctions such as friend/enemy and soldier/civilian have been lost<sup>42</sup>: warfare has become more complex, moving from that involving the organised forces of the state to the low technology conflicts centred round ethnicity, religion and the tribe.<sup>43</sup> The principal reason for this is that conflict between states has declined and intrastate conflict has increased<sup>44</sup>: although this does not mean that the potential for of interstate war has disappeared completely. The 9/11 attacks by Al Qaeda on the United States placed terrorism firmly into the context of international conflict and made terrorism a strategic concern for the world's predominant superpower. This has brought about a convergence of interests between conflict and terrorism studies, two areas of study previously divided:

'Partly, this division has arisen because of conflicting methodologies and ontologies-conflict analysis focuses on roots and institutional responses from states or state-controlled organisations and agencies as well as from nongovernmental organisations (NGO's), whereas terrorism studies focuses on individual and group dynamics, legal and military regimes, and prevention within a legalist and state-centric framework.'<sup>45</sup>

The breaking down of the separation between conflict and terrorism studies reflects the changing nature of conflict. According to Richmond, the 'new wars' and 'new terrorism' debates have deconstructed 'the traditional distinction between state and non-state actors and issue areas' and 'broadened the concept of security away from its traditional state-centric framework'.<sup>46</sup> This has implications for theory within terrorism studies as it encourages the incorporation of theories and methodologies from conflict studies. Conflict and terrorism studies have both had to cross disciplines in order to present 'coherent frameworks and bodies of theory'.<sup>47</sup>

A general picture of the nature of armed conflict since 1989 indicates armed conflict in the world actually decreased between 1989 and 2002. Based on data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Project that takes into account the number of conflicts as well as the location of conflicts, an overview can be inferred of the incidence of armed conflicts by year by type. Taking total conflicts, initially there was a rise from 48 armed conflicts in 1989 to a peak of 54 in 1992, which then dropped to 47 in 1993 and 35 in 1995. The total number of conflicts in 2002 was the lowest at 31. When broken down to a typology of intrastate, internationalised intrastate and interstate conflicts the picture is dominated by intrastate armed conflict. This rose from 43 in 1989 to a peak of 52 in 1991, dropping to 33 in 1995 and 26 in 2002. The internationalised intrastate category in which either or both sides receives outside support underwent an increase from 3 in 1997 to 6 in 1999 and dropped again to 4 in 2002, in 1989 there were two of these. Taken together, there was still a decrease in armed conflict of the intrastate type between 1989 and 2002. Overall, the figures indicate that armed conflict had decreased and it was predominately of the

<sup>42</sup> Richmond, op cit.

<sup>43</sup> Martin Van Creveld *The Transformation of War* (The Free Press:New York:1991).

<sup>44</sup> For a survey of the prevalence of different types of conflict see: Mikael Eriksson & Peter Wallenstein 'Armed Conflict, 1989-2003' *Journal of Peace Research* Vol 41 (2004), No 5, pp625-636.

<sup>45</sup> Richmond, op cit, pp 289-290.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p 290.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

intrastate type.<sup>48</sup> The initial upsurge after 1989 can be largely attributed to the breakup of the Soviet Union and Former Yugoslavia, which gave nationalist and ethnic sentiments room to breathe, and a Central African regional conflict complex that initially centred around the Hutu-Tutsi conflict. It should be noted that despite a decrease in the number of armed conflicts globally there was still a large amount of conflicts ongoing and as some were settled others began.<sup>49</sup>

The new century had barely begun when the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York occurred. This event, for it truly was an event of the highest magnitude, defined the course of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond. The response was both overwhelming and flawed, as the world's foremost military power set out to lead the fight against Al-Qaeda, with devastating consequences for Taliban led Afghanistan and the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, and a continuation of a state of violence for the populations of these two countries stretching back to the 1980s. While Al-Qaeda has been crippled, its franchises across the world continue their localised battles and the Islamic State of Syria and Iraq (ISIS) has emerged as a successor, and through its success in Iraq and Syria has transitioned from terrorism to insurgency.<sup>50</sup> The Middle-East and North Africa as a region has been beset by the consequences of the ill-fated 'Arab Spring', the most notorious example being the Syrian Civil War, of which the description 'complex' is an understatement. A consequence of the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts, and those in Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, is that attention has been drawn from the numerous other conflicts that are ongoing across the world. These conflicts are often protracted and driven by ethnicity, identity or religion and include the Israeli-Palestinian, Kashmir, the Caucasus and the Great Lakes region of Central Africa.

The most notable change in how armed conflict is perceived has been the transition from a Cold War dynamic, dominated by the dangerous rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, their alliances in the form of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and various proxy associations across the globe. While this was at heart an ideological confrontation between capitalism and Marxist-Leninism it was also driven by fear and the perception that the other side was a major threat. The emergence of nuclear weapons and their integration into the arsenals of the East and West gave credible reasons for this fear, yet the major Cold War confrontations never took place directly between the superpowers or their allies. The wars, when they did occur were in the other, 'third', world: the Middle East, Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan are examples. Then it ended, unexpectedly.<sup>51</sup> The false dawn of the New World Order and the 'cases from hell' in the 1990s; Algeria, Chechnya, Rwanda and Yugoslavia,

<sup>48</sup> Eriksson & Wallensteen, op cit.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Wallensteen *Understanding Conflict Resolution: War, Peace and the Global System* (SAGE Publications: London: 2002).

<sup>50</sup> The questions of the origins of the current violence in Iraq and Syria, the nature of the US led response to the 9/11 attacks, and the origins of Islamic fundamentalism cannot be addressed here adequately in what is a conceptual article. A non-exhaustive list of sources is: Paul Berman *Terror and Liberalism* (WH Norton & Company: New York:2004 ); Daniel Byman *Al-Qaeda, the Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement* (Oxford University Press: New York:2015); Fawaz A Gerges *The Rise and Fall of Al-Qaeda* (Oxford University Press: New York:2011); Dilip Hiro *War Without End: The Rise of Islamist Terrorism and the Global Response* (Routledge: London:2002); David Kilcullen *Blood Year* (Hurst & Company: London:2016)

<sup>51</sup> For an introduction, see: John Lewis Gaddis *The Cold War* (Penguin:London:2007).

coupled with the launching of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) by the United States in the 2000s led to the question of what the nature of contemporary warfare actually was, and developments since have only confirmed arguments that there has been a fundamental change.

For now, regular warfare between states is rare, and has relatively low potential to increase in the immediate future. The obvious concern is that there is still 'potential' for a major conflict to occur as there are numerous national rivalries where there is a risk of escalation to interstate war. Examples are: The United States and Russia/China, Greece and Turkey, India and Pakistan, the United States/South Korea and North Korea, and the 'strategic surprise' of unknown versus unknown. The last recognises that war can come as a total surprise, as the United States realised in 1941.<sup>52</sup> For the populations of the Cold War warriors the threat of annihilation has receded, yet it would be a major omission to forget that they have their nuclear deterrents permanently deployed. Yet, as we have seen above, intrastate conflict has increased and irregular warfare, which includes insurgency, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism, is endemic. This has led to the argument that war has been transformed and a new form of warfare has become the dominant grand narrative, replacing interstate war.

'New War' arguments were put forward prior to the 9/11 attacks, in short, the focus was now on identity instead of territory and there is more use of guerrilla or terrorist tactics, as put forward in Mary Kaldor's examination of the Bosnian tragedy. The economics of warfare has also changed as actors are no longer dependent on states to obtain funding or armaments.<sup>53</sup> The shift in the nature of warfare is characterised by the shift to asymmetrical conflicts with major actors being warlords, mercenaries and terrorist groups. Violence, when it occurs, is increasingly directed against civilians with little actual fighting between organised forces. The change from organised 'classical' warfare between states to non-state actors, and bearing more similarity to the Thirty Years War has been a gradual, rather than sudden one. Whereas the modern warfare of the American Civil War and World Wars was characterised by state-building, the new wars are state-disintegrating.<sup>54</sup> Martin Van Creveld also observes that there has been a gradual transformation in the nature of warfare, arguing that there has been a change from the Clausewitz's state centred model of warfare to one that is more complex. The wars fought by the dominant military powers after the Second World War, including the British and the French, the United States and the Soviet Union, invariably led to the opposing insurgent forces winning, in the face of overwhelming, often brutal force and despite significant numbers of casualties. War has become predominantly low-tech, utilising small resources and based around ethnicity, religion and the tribe.<sup>55</sup> In essence, warfare across the globe has become dominated by goals and tactics that are utterly alien to the high tech and heroic ideal of that practised by the professional militaries of the nation-state. This is not to say that they are not superior when committed directly against a foe, the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate how effective Western armed forces can be against both conventional and non-conventional forces. The problems

<sup>52</sup> Colin S Gray *Another Bloody Century* (London:Phoenix:2006).

<sup>53</sup> Kaldor, op cit.

<sup>54</sup> Munkler, op cit.

<sup>55</sup> Van Creveld, op cit.

arise when they attempt to occupy and control territory and are then vulnerable to the low tech and insurgent/guerrilla tactics of local forces.<sup>56</sup>

The transition in the nature of war in the decade before the 9/11 attacks and the decade or more that followed has brought terrorism to the forefront for the major powers, who for now are the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States). In the contemporary security environment divisions, which were once conceptually clear, are no longer so:

‘Thus, the divisions between war, peace, low intensity and high-intensity conflict, and terrorism, between friend and enemy, soldier, criminal, and civilian have become relatively indistinct...’<sup>57</sup>

With these divisions broken down, the new wars and new terrorism become merged, for the GWOT, or ‘terror wars’, between the United States and allies, and Al Qaeda, ISIS and affiliated groups are the dominant conflict, yet this overlaps with localised conflicts involving governments, good and bad, against challenger groups. Some of the old conflicts remain, with the Israelis and the Palestinians an example, major power rivalries continue, such as the United States and Russia, and local rivalries such as that between Taiwan and China have the potential to draw in the United States into a major conflagration. Old wars, new wars, and strategic surprises abound, offering fertile ground for the conflict analyst and conflict resolver alike.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper was begun before events in Iraq, Libya, Syria, Ukraine and Yemen, and was in fact influenced by previous tragedies in Darfur, Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and the series of conflicts emanating from the 9/11 attacks. State actors have not been absent in these conflicts, and in fact have usually been controversially involved, but the asymmetric nature of the relations of power between state and sub-state actors has not guaranteed victory for states. This continuing trend in armed conflict supports the arguments by Kaldor, Richmond, Munkler, and Van Creveld that there has been a fundamental change in the nature of armed conflict since the end of the Cold War. There is already a small body of literature that combines conflict studies and terrorism studies, meaning that the crossover to a wider research program has already begun. These are the foundation for an area of study that is interdisciplinary in terms of combining what have been two similar fields of study, albeit with differing aims and subject matters, and also in terms of the integration of the other social sciences. Conflict studies and terrorism studies have both increasingly crossed disciplines in their attempts to develop frameworks and theory and in the new wars/old wars and new terrorism/old terrorism context their methods and subjects of analysis have become complementary and have laid ground for the incorporation of theories from conflict studies into terrorism studies.

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<sup>56</sup> For an account of the Iraq War demonstrating how effectively the British and American’s invaded Iraq see: John Keegan *The Iraq War* (Huchinson:London:2004). For Afghanistan, see: Stephen Tanner *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the War Against the Taliban* (Da Capo Press: Philadelphia:2009).

<sup>57</sup> Richmond, op cit.

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