WHAT IS DISTINCTIVELY NEW ABOUT SO-CALLED 'NEW WARS'?

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Abstract

In the post-Cold war era, there has been a growing tendency to suggest the classification of 'new' wars, since the perception of the threat has changed. Since threats coming from within states have recently become dominant, many scholars have studied this development. The consensus they have reached is that this type of threat represents a different kind of war. Kalevi Holsti has named it a third kind of war (1996); Martin van Creveld has named it 'Low-Intensity Conflict' (1991); and Mary Kaldor has named it 'new war' (1999). This article will embrace Mary Kaldor's 'new war' concept and use it to analyse and describe this different kind of war and compare it with old wars. In contrast to these aforementioned arguments, some scholars, such as Edward Newman and Stathis N. Kalyvas, have argued that there are no new wars in the contemporary world. According to them, many features of the so-called new wars can be seen in old wars. This paper also aims to unfold whether the new wars are in fact new or not. To better observe this, first the characteristics of new wars and old wars will be considered and then they will be compared to find out what is distinctively new about so-called new wars.

Keywords: New wars, Old wars, Privatisation of war, Intrastate wars, War economy *JEL Classification:* F51, F52, F59

YENİ SAVAŞLARI AYIRT EDİCİ KILAN 'YENİLİK' NEDİR?

Öz

Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde tehdit algısı değişmiş olduğundan ötürü savaşlarla ilgili 'yeni' sınıflandırmaların ortaya atılması yönünde eğilimler ortaya çıkmıştır. Devletlerin içinden gelen bu tehdit yaygınlaştıkça birçok akademisyen bu tehdit üzerine çalışma yapmaya başlamıştır. Genel olarak ulaşılan konsensüs bunun farklı bir tür savaş olduğudur. Bununla birlikte, Kalevi Holsti (1996) bunu üçüncü tür savaş olarak adlandırırken; Martin Van Creveld (1991) Düşük-yoğunluklu Çatışma olarak nitelendirmiş ve Mary Kaldor (1999) yeni savaş kullanımını tercih etmiştir. Bu makale Mary Kaldor'un 'yeni savaş' konseptini temel alarak bu yeni tehdidin eski savaşlardan farklarını açıklamaya çalışacaktır. Diğer taraftan, Edward Newman ve Stathis N. Kalyvas gibi bazı akademisyenler de modern dünyada yeni savaşların olmadığını savunmaktadırlar. Onlara göre yeni olduğu iddia edilen özellikler aslında eski savaşların özellikleridir. Bu nakale yeni savaşların gerçekten yeni olup olmadığını sorgulayacaktır. Bu bağlamda ilk olarak eski ve yeni savaşların özellikleri incelenecek ve bu özellikler karşılaştırılarak 'yeni savaş'ların ayırt edici özelliklerinin var olup var olmadığına bakılacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Savaşlar, Eski Savaşlar, Savaşların Özelleşmesi, Devlet-içi Savaş, Savaş Ekonomisi JEL Sınıflandırması: F51, F52, F59

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1. Introduction: Conceptual Framework of New Wars

From Cicero to Mary Kaldor, there have been various explanations of war in the literature. While Cicero defined war as a contending by force (Williams et al. 1993: 85), Hugo Grotius (2007:18) described the concept thus: 'war is the state of contending parties, considered as such'. In addition, Thomas Hobbes argued that 'by war is meant a state of affairs, which may exist even while its operations are not continued' (Grotius, 1814:386), while Denis Diderot saw war as 'a convulsive and violent disease of the body politic' (Lippard et al. 2018). Furthermore, for Clausewitz, 'war is the continuation of politics by other means'. Clausewitz also defined war as 'an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfil our will' (Clausewitz, 1989:44).

Throughout recorded history, war has been a part of human life. Mingst approves this expression via his research on the numbers of war, as follows: 'around 14,400 wars have occurred in history, claiming the lives of some 3.5 billion people. Since 1815 there have been between 224 and 559 wars, depending on the definition of war that is used' (Sheehan, 2008:212).

Since there are differences between twenty-first-century organised violence and twentiethcentury wars, the literature is quite rich in its coverage of the conceptualisation of contemporary conflict. Various terms have been employed in this conceptualisation, such as 'wars among the people', 'wars of the third kind', 'hybrid wars', 'privatised wars' and 'post-modern wars', as well as 'new wars' (Duffield, 2001; Hables Gray, 1997; Holsti, 1991, 1992, 1996, 1997; Kaldor, 1999, 2007, 2012; Smith, 2005; Van Creveld, 1991). Regarding the notion of 'new wars', the term has been suggested by Mary Kaldor as a new category of war since the early 1990s. Kaldor's studies on the new wars were triggered by a new type of organised violence occurring especially in Africa and Eastern Europe. In addition, she has contrasted the new wars with earlier wars in terms of their goals, the methods of warfare and how they are financed (Kaldor, 2012; Sheehan, 2008).

As Michael Sheehan indicates, 'Just as earlier wars were linked to the emergence and creation of states, the new wars are related to the disintegration and collapse of states' (2008:222). This is why it can be argued that the new wars arise among 'third-tier' states. These states are extremely poor, they have corruption problems and government does not have control over the state. The concept of 'third-tier' states belongs to Steve Metz (1997). He classifies the world's states as first-tier, second-tier and third-tier. According to him, third-tier states are marked by crisis. There are considerable areas where the central government has lost control and non-governmental armed forces are operating (Metz, 1997). Besides this, these states are governed by authoritarian or totalitarian governments.

In short, it is assumed that the new wars blur the distinction between internal and external, public and private, political and economic, civilian and military, and even war and peace themselves (Holsti, 1996:36–40). In this blurring, several features of the new wars come forward. In general context, there are six major qualifications which characterise the new wars.

1.1. Privatisation of War

Because of the weakening of the state's authority, several groups emerge as actors in the new wars. These groups may be criminal gangs, diaspora groups, paramilitary groups, mercenaries or local warlords, as well as regular armies. While they are involved in illegal activities in order to finance themselves, they fight for their interests. In addition, in organisational terms, they are highly decentralised and operate through a mixture of confrontation and cooperation even when on opposing sides (Kaldor, 2007:8).

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina could be categorised as an instance of privatised war. While, regular forces, such as the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA), the Croatian Defence Council (HVO) and the Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABiH), took part in the war, there were also paramilitary organisations, foreign mercenary groups and local police. During the war, eighty-three paramilitary

groups were identified on the territory of the former Yugoslavia; some fifty-six were Serbian, thirteen were Croatian and fourteen were Bosnian (Kaldor, 2007:47).

1.2. Intrastate Wars

Intrastate wars are comprised of three different concepts:² civil wars, regional-internal wars, and intercommunal wars. Civil wars involve the government of the state against a non-state entity; regional-internal wars involve the government of a regional sub-unit against a non-state entity; and intercommunal wars involve combat between/among two or more non-state entities within the state (Sarkees, 2010:2). Despite the differences between them, all three concepts are regarded as primarily domestic wars.

In the light of this knowledge, the new wars are accepted as intrastate wars. In addition, the aforementioned sub-state groups come forward as fighting parties in these wars. It is accepted that this is the basic argument of the new wars. The wars in Rwanda (between the Tutsis and the Hutus), Bosnia-Herzegovina (between the Serbs, Croats and Bosnians), Angola and Sierra Leone are assumed to be intrastate wars. During the post-Cold War era, while the number of interstate wars has decreased, the number of intrastate wars has increased. Between 1816 and 1997, intrastate wars made up 52% of all wars. (Wayman, et al. 2005:17).

1.3. Identity Politics

The goals over which new wars are fought are connected to identity politics. People do not fight for geopolitical or ideological goals in the new wars. On the contrary, they fight for their identities, which are revived by globalisation itself. The societies of which states are comprised are aware of their identities through the effects of globalisation and they assume that they have the right to establish a state.

From this point of view, identity was one of the fundamental problems in the Bosnian war. In this regard, the political goal of both the Bosnian Serbs, backed by Serbia, and the Bosnian Croats, backed by Croatia, was ethnic cleansing. While the Bosnian government, which was controlled by the Bosnian Muslims, aimed for territorial integrity, the Bosnian Serbs and the Bosnian Croats aimed to establish ethnically homogeneous territories by means of ethnic cleansing (Kaldor, 2007; Chomsky, 1999; Goerzig, 2005).

1.4. State Un-building Wars

The age of globalisation is mostly characterised by a gradual erosion of state authority and accompanying violent war economies (Brzoska, 2004). That erosion gives rise to the decline of state legitimacy. In turn, this decline causes a blurring of the distinction between public and private authority. That is why, in Kaldor's concept, these wars are characterised as 'state un-building' wars (2007:5). In conclusion, these wars erode state authority and as a result, in some cases, the states in question may be labelled failed states.

Yugoslavia is one of the most relevant examples of the state un-building feature of these wars. Towards the late twentieth century, new nationalism, which is about the disintegration of the state, was dominant in Yugoslavia. This kind of nationalism was different from earlier nationalisms, which were about state building (Kaldor, 2007). Following the war in Yugoslavia, there are seven states in the region, including Kosovo. International public opinion would contend that the intrastate war caused the un-building of Yugoslavia.

1.5. No Distinction between Combatant and Non-combatant or Permissible Violence and Criminal Violence

² Correlates of war scholars Melvin Small and J. David Singer first divided intrastate wars into civil wars and intercommunal wars. According to them, civil war is 'defined as any armed conflict that involves (a) military action internal to the metropole, (b) the active participation of the national government, and (c) effective resistance by both sides'; an intercommunal war is one fought between two groups within the state (neither party being the government) (Small and Singer, 1982:210).

The new wars are characterised by the fact that there is little or no distinction between combatants and non-combatants. These wars bring about changes in the structure of violence, such as genocide, mass expulsion and ethnic cleansing. The main aim of these methods is to spread fear among people. In this sense, while winning the people's hearts and minds is one way of conducting war, the new wars use intimidation and suppression as a tactic. Some of the main features of these wars are systematic rape, ethnic cleansing, civilian casualties and child soldiers; it is especially notable that the use of child soldiers increases in the new wars. Nearly 250 million children are living in countries affected by conflicts around the world, and tens of thousands of them have been recruited and used as child soldiers (Wallström and Zerrougui, 2017). According to UNICEF: 'A number of the world's child soldiers are actually girls – in some countries up to 40% – and many are as young as seven or eight years old' (quoted in Brocklehurst, 2007:4). In addition, over 115,000 children have been released from armed forces and groups since 2000 (Wallström and Zerrougui, 2017).

The use of excessive violence has a significant impact on the outcomes of these wars. Kaldor emphasises the importance of this as follows:

These are wars where the main targets are civilians and, of course, this is a situation where battles are just too dangerous, because of the equalisation of military technology, so the only way you can win is by killing innocents, or pushing out innocent people, as in Darfur. (Kaldor, 2007:7)

These changes, which are about the structure of violence, cost the lives of many people. While over 80 per cent of victims of wars earlier in the twentieth century were military, it is estimated that 80 per cent of victims in more recent wars have been civilians (Shaw, 2000).

1.6. War Economy

When it comes to war economy, since the warring parties have their own way of conducting these wars, there is no centralised economy in the new wars. The warring parties finance themselves by plunder, looting, trade in illegal goods, drugs and banditry. This is a result of state failure and a social transformation driven by globalisation and liberal economic forces. Globalisation pushes the aforementioned third-tier states towards opening to the outside world and influences them not only economically but also politically. Economically, the states rebuild their budgets effectively (Kaldor, 2007; Newman, 2004; Duffield, 2001). As Kaldor mentioned, in the course of globalisation 'the states have often lost aid from outside donors, superpower sponsors, so they have lower levels of revenue' (2007:5). Politically, people who live in these authoritarian or totalitarian states communicate with the outside world by internet, television, radio and newspaper. Because of that, the society is confronted with freedom. This situation persuades the people that there is a chance to change the state.

When globalisation is effective in third-tier states, competition over natural resources and illegal commerce between warlords, criminal gangs and mercenaries rises dramatically. For instance, Arkan and Šešelj were two of the leaders of militia groups during the Bosnian war. Both of them were fanatical and, because of this fanaticism, both organised militia groups. During the war, both were active in all kinds of criminal activities in order to finance their militia groups. Moreover, Arkan and his militia group were recruited by the Serbian government to assassinate exiles and kill people in Bosnia.

This is an unequivocal example of the fact that in the new wars, the state's economy is decentralised and criminalised. States lose their authority over their own economies. As a result, paramilitary groups, mercenaries and local warlords take over the authority and finance themselves through illegal means.

2. Old Wars; Old Assumptions?

Since the wars in the post-Cold War era are called 'new wars', the wars before the end of the Cold War can be named the old wars. This includes conflicts such as the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, the First World War, the Second World War and the Falklands War. Six characteristics are common to these old wars.

The first characteristic is legitimate authority. With reference to this qualification, the old wars were generally fought between states, while the new wars have sub-state groups as actors. The Falklands War was a typical example of an old war, since there were two legitimate authorities, Argentina and the United Kingdom, that were party to the conflict. In the First World War and the Second World War too, the only warring parties were states which had legitimate authority.

The second characteristic is the nature of the goals of the old wars. It is commonly assumed that while in some old wars the goal was politics, in others it was identity, or both at the same time. The majority of the old wars were disputes over territory, land, natural resources and identity. In this context, when the participants went to war their aims were clear and obvious. For example, in the Falklands War, the goal of was to occupy the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. In this case, the goal was rooted in politics rather than identity. On the other hand, in the new wars the goal is not about geopolitical or ideological interests. It is about the identity of the warring parties, even if this is not clear in some cases. This is why it is argued that the old wars were political and were fought over collectively articulated, broad, even noble causes – such as social change – often referred to as 'justice'. (Kalyvas, 2001:102)

The third characteristic relates to the actors in warfare. The old wars were generally fought by standing armies, and these armies were armed and supplied by the states. Thus, the old wars were fought by combatants and, at the same time, combatants were the targets, while in the new wars there is no clear distinction between combatants and non-combatants. Moreover, while the distinction between combatants and non-combatants is blurred, the distinction between permissible violence and criminal violence is also not clear. There was a clear distinction between combatants in the old wars. Civilians, women or children, had immunity. In terms of distinction between combatant and non-combatant, permissible violence and criminal violence, the Falklands War was the archetypal old war, since 907 people (255 British, 649 Argentine and 3 islanders) were killed in this war (Bluth, 1987:17).

On the one hand, it is widely thought that, in terms of the violence of the old wars, they were limited, disciplined and understandable. On the other hand, the old wars had a tendency to develop to extremes. Technology and techniques of warfare were developed which culminated in the world wars, during which destruction was caused on an unthinkable scale (Kalyvas, 2001:116; Kaldor, 2007:4). As is known, in the First World War, the casualties were around 15 million and in the Second World War they increased to around 50 million. These numbers were unprecedented, and have not been matched since by the numbers of casualties in the new wars.

The fourth characteristic is the centralised war economy. The old wars' economy was budgeted for by the states, whose major revenue source was tax. In the new wars, by contrast, there is no solid centralised economy because of the lack of a state authority. In the context of the old wars in Western Europe, 'when kings went to war, the states had to raise taxes in order to pay for wars, they had to set up central banks in order to borrow to pay for wars, they had to improve the efficiency of administration in order to make sure that the money didn't get wasted' (Kaldor, 2007:4).

The fifth characteristic is the distinction between war and peace. In the old wars, this distinction was obvious. In the new wars, the war or the conflict goes on for many years, sometimes at low intensity and sometimes at high intensity. Generally, the old wars were started via a declaration of war and were ended via a peace treaty or agreement. The First World War and the Second World

War were archetypal examples of this characteristic. These wars were started via the declaration of war and were ended via several peace treaties.

The last characteristic is the codification of rules of war. In the old wars, there were several humanitarian rules in place in order to deal with victims of war, to regulate the use of force and to resolve conflict by peaceful means. These rules were formalised by international agreements. Two of the most famous are the Hague Convention of 1907 and the Geneva Convention of 1929 (Kinsella, 2005). Generally speaking, in the old wars war criminals could be tried, but this is rare in the context of the new wars.

3. The Characteristics of the Old Wars as found in the New Wars

Kaldor (2013) herself describes the logic of new wars thus:

New Wars are the wars of the era of globalisation. Typically, they take place in areas where authoritarian states have been greatly weakened as a consequence of opening up to the rest of the world. In such contexts, the distinctions between state and non-state, public and private, external and internal, economic and political, and even war and peace are breaking down.

Scholars have criticised the notion of 'new wars', arguing that the new wars are not utterly new. Furthermore, some critics argue that the term 'new wars' is too vague (Chojnacki, 2006) and too fuzzy (Henderson and Singer, 2002). Kaldor defends herself and the concept of 'new wars' by elucidating the newness of the conflicts in question. According to her, the 'new wars' thesis is about both the changing character of organised violence and developing a way of understanding, interpreting and explaining the interrelated characteristics of such violence

The point of the adjective 'new' does not have to do with any particular feature of contemporary conflicts nor how well it resembles our assumptions about reality, but rather it has to do with the model of war and how the model I spell out is different from the prevailing models that underpin both policy and scholarship. It is a model that entails a specific political, economic and military logic. (Kaldor, 2013:5)

Since the new wars concept itself is a new notion for the literature, the similarities and differences are here taken into consideration by looking at four separate features to find out whether the new wars truly are 'new'. These features are actors, goals, methods, and forms of finance.

3.1. Actors

Kaldor argues 'Old wars were fought by the regular armed forces of states. New wars are fought by varying combinations of networks of state and non-state actors – regular armed forces, private security contractors, mercenaries, jihadists, warlords, paramilitaries, etc.' (2013:2). Kaldor is right to a certain extent to claim that 'old wars were fought by the regular armed forces of states'. In addition, she has named the new wars the 'wars of the era of globalisation' (2013:2). In this sense, if the nationalistic insurgencies in the 1800s and 1900s are considered old wars then so-called new actors can be identified as participating in wars before the era of globalisation as well. In that case, it needs to be conceded that, regarding the actors taking part in them, the new wars are not 'new'.

3.2. Goals

According to Kaldor, identity is one of the basic goals of the new wars. However, identity wars are not new. It is well known that the nationalism concept played an important role in dividing states or empires into smaller parts from the early part of the nineteenth century onwards. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire can be given as an example of this unclear division between old and new, since nationalistic insurgences played a role in that collapse. The breakdown of the Ottoman 'millet'³ system was the result of identity-related controversy, in particular following the insurgencies of Bulgarians, Greeks, Macedonians, Romanians, etc. during the 1800s and 1900s.

When it comes to the lack of clarity over the goals of the new wars, Kaldor puts forward the view that 'Old wars were fought for geopolitical interests or for ideology (democracy or socialism) while new wars are fought in the name of identity (ethnic, religious or tribal)' (2013:2). But the following statement makes a solid counter-argument regarding the new wars' goals; 'What gives today's civil wars a new and terrifying slant is the fact that they are waged without stakes on either side, that they are wars about nothing at all' (Enzensberger, 1992:21). Moreover, the abovementioned collapse of the Ottoman millet system again presents the idea that old wars too were fought in the name of ethnic, religious or tribal goals.

3.3. Methods

Kaldor argues that there is no clear distinction between combatants and non-combatants, permissible violence and criminal violence, in the new wars (2007). According to Kaldor, this distinction did exist in the old wars. Conversely, however, genocide or ethnic cleansing, excessive violence and mass rape were used in the course of the old wars, too. Therefore, it is hard to claim that the new wars are new when compared with the old wars with regard to the distinction between permissible violence and criminal violence.

In addition, Kaldor states that 'In old wars, battle was the decisive encounter. The method of waging war consisted of capturing territory through military means. In new wars, battles are rare and territory is captured through political means, through control of the population' (2013:2). Yet, it should not be forgotten that capturing territory other than by military means was valid in the old wars, as well. For instance, the strategy of 'winning hearts and minds' was used by the United States of America to win the support of the Vietnamese people to defeat the Viet Cong insurgency during the Vietnam War⁴ in the 1960s and 1970s.

3.4. Forms of Finance

The feature 'forms of finance' might be the one area in which a robust distinction can be made between the new wars and the old wars. In this sense, Kaldor is right that the new wars are new. In terms of war economy, she argues that 'Old wars were largely financed by states (taxation or by outside patrons). In weak states, tax revenue is falling and new forms of predatory private finance include loot and pillage, "taxation" of humanitarian aid, Diaspora support, kidnapping, or smuggling in oil, diamonds, drugs, people, etc.' (2013:3). These new wars are based on a new type of economy. Warring parties finance themselves by looting, trade in illegal goods, drugs and so on. They prefer to get involved in commercial activities rather than political activities. This has been named the 'commercialisation of war'.

4. Final Remarks and Conclusion

The notion of 'new war' has been criticised on many grounds. The debate over it has enriched the literature greatly and led to refinement of the argument. Therefore, there is no doubt that debate has opened up new perspectives in the field of conflict studies. Despite the fact that there are many modes of warfare under which contemporary conflicts can be categorised, such as insurgency, civil war, guerrilla war, terrorism, etc., Mary Kaldor has reformulated the argument by using the notion of 'new war'. She has illuminated the issue of the changing mode of warfare by 'helping to re-open fundamental questions which political economy and social science may have

³ Millet has its roots in early Islam; the Ottomans used it to give minority religious communities within their empire limited power to regulate their own affairs, under the overall supremacy of the Ottoman administration. The Ottomans allowed the 'religions of the book' – the Orthodox Christians or Rums, the Armenians and the Jews – to be organised in millets. Non-Muslims had to be part of a millet to be considered citizens of the empire. For further information see Efrat Aviv (2016).

Muslims had to be part of a millet to be considered citizens of the empire. For further information see Efrat Aviv (2016). ⁴ The Vietnam War (1954–75) was a protracted conflict that pitted the communist government of North Vietnam and its allies against South Vietnam. The war was also part of a larger regional conflict and a manifestation of the Cold War between the USA and the USSR, and their respective allies.

thought they had left behind in 1989, but which are still central to understanding of modern society' (Shaw, 2000).

This paper acknowledges that Mary Kaldor has opened up a new argument and enriched the literature. Yet, it also argues that the 'new war' concept is not entirely new. To prove that argument and to answer the question 'what is distinctively new about so-called "new wars"?', six characteristics of the new wars have been taken into account. These are the privatisation of war, intrastate wars, identity politics, state un-building, the lack of distinction between combatant and non-combatant and between permissible violence and criminal violence, and the war economy. When these features are compared with the features of the old wars, it can be noted that some of them are not in fact new. These are identity politics, state un-building, and the distinction between combatant and between permissible violence and criminal violence. Thus, while it has been claimed that the aforementioned characteristics are peculiar to the new wars, specifically three of them can be seen in the old wars, as well.

Therefore, while it is conceded that there are significant differences between the old wars and the new wars, these differences can only be identified in relation to specific features, rather than all them. In this sense, it should be confessed that Kaldor's new concept helps the intellectual environment to understand how the landscape of armed conflict has changed, even if the nature of war itself has not changed.

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