Reflections on Modern Warfare

MY THESIS:
Conflict by West has changed in past 6 decades
Following applies to West only – not universal
In summary: less like traditional war, more like police actions
Exception: Iranian nuclear threat to Israel does not fit this scheme at all
But also: It has not happened

Ten changes
Imbalance of forces is now routine
West supremely confident
Unwilling to name the enemy
Regimes, not countries the enemy
Help the enemy economically
Winner now pays reparations
Allegiance now in play
Appeasement is respectable
Public opinion crucial
Victory rarely the goal

World War II
My point of comparison
List of then & nows, implications

1. ASYMMETRIC WARFARE THE

NORM
Then: rough equals - serried troops, tanks, ships, aircraft
That now looks archaic
Now: War on Terror, Iraq,
Afghanistan deeply imbalanced
Spain vs Napoleon, Algeria,
Vietnam, Afghanistan, ex-Yugoslavia
Great powers not fighting each other
Note the Cold War
Pattern of avoidance

Instead:
Insurgencies, terrorism
Israeli Gen. David Ivri:
“Limited-scale, asymmetrical conflicts have become the norm. All-out wars between states where both parties invest all of their national resources in an attempt to achieve a decisive victory have become less relevant.”

Note changes in Arab-Isr conflict:
⇒ Implications:
Bean counting immaterial
Not key: territory & economy
No all-out wars
Key: Understanding & morale

Welfare of the enemy population supreme
→ Implications: war as police work means Western powers always on the defensive

2. SUPREME CONFIDENCE ON W’N SIDE

Then: Worried about losing
   Outcome in doubt
Now: Not worried
   Outcome not in doubt

War as social work
National interests secondary
“Operation Iraqi Freedom”
Key: Iraq war judged by how Iraqis fare, not the allies

Akin to police action
US – police
SH – criminal, fugitive, convicted, executed
Iraqis – victims
UBL also a fugitive, as was Milosevic and Radovan Karadzic
Note how military forces now expected to collect police-like evidence
Key question – how war carried out?
Legality – UN authorization in Iraq
Civilian casualties – Gaza
Victim’s rights
No excess force

3. UNWILLING TO NAME THE ENEMY

Then: Call the enemy unpleasant names, "Huns," "Japs"
Now: multiculturalism, cultural sensitivity
E.g., "war on terror" — a euphemism, bad enough

Defense Department: Obama administration "prefers to avoid using the term 'Long War' or 'Global War on Terror' [GWOT.] Please use 'Overseas Contingency Operation'."

DHS calls the war "A Global Struggle for Security and Progress"

Janet Napolitano, secretary of Homeland Security, explaining her first testimony to Congress: "I did not use the word ‘terrorism.’ I referred to ‘man-caused' disasters.... [this] demonstrates that we want to move away from the politics of fear."

→ Implications:
Analogy: physicians have to name disease to cure it
Obstructs victory

“Female Engagement Teams” in Afghanistan
→ Implications: Makes defeat less likely

4. NATURE OF THE ENEMY
Then: countries (World War II)
Not fight Nazis & Tojo regime but Germany & Japan
Now: regimes; people are friends
Fighting Saddam, not Iraq
Bomb & food to Afghanistan
Operation Iraqi Freedom fought on behalf of Iraqis
Iraqis given equal medical care as Americans
Casualties gain for enemy of US
Enemy wants them, US not
Implication: Defeat more difficult
Valid distinction has gone dangerously awry
Implies cannot achieve victory
Not done in Afghanistan or Iraq
Enemy more ready to assert himself - Iraq
But must defeat enemy

6. WINNER PAYS REPARATIONS
Then – Loser pays (WWI)
Now – Victor pays (WWII)
WWII changed paradigm
Afghanistan, Iraq e.g.s
“You broke it, you fix it”
→ Implications: Paying losers makes war less likely

7. ALLEGIANCE NOW IN PLAY
Then – geographic
loyalty assumed to rulers
Now - political
British “Croakers,” Lord Byron, in Napoleonic Wars
Boer War, Algeria, Vietnam
Loyalty a matter of choice
Political, not social
Many Iraqis want US victory
“I love you,” one young girl yelled in English at U.S. soldiers in northern Iraq soon after the war began in 2003
Some Am’ns want US defeat
March 2003: Nicholas De Genova, a Columbia University professor:
“U.S. flags are the emblem of the invading war machine in Iraq today.
… The only true heroes are those

5. HELP THE ENEMY ECONOMICALLY
Then: Deprive enemy of means
Siege, boycott, sanctions
Now: Offer economic aid
Oslo – enfranchise the poor
“Sunshine Policy” in Koreas
who find ways that help defeat the U.S. military. … I wish for a million Mogadishus” (an ambush in Somalia in 1993 that killed 18 U.S. soldiers)

Hasan Akbar in 2003: “You guys are coming into our countries and you’re going to rape our women and kill our children.”

→ Implications: Governments must appeal to own and enemy populations
   Moral, political dimensions more important

8. APPEASEMENT IS RESPECTABLE
   WWI lead to anti-militarism
   Appeasement looked like solution
   Munich, WWII, Cold War reversed this, emphasize toughness
   But now have returned to 1920s

9. PUBLIC OPINION CRUCIAL
   Put several factors together:
   Disparity in strength
   Unwilling to name enemy
   Regimes, not countries
   Free-floating allegiance
   Appeasement is respectable
   And public opinion emerges as key factor
   Topsy-turvy logic
   Weakness is strength

Death is desirable
Goal to provoke Western power to over-react
when West fights non-West, the outcome on the battlefield is a given. That settled in advance, the fighting is seen more like a police raid than traditional warfare. As in a police raid, modern wars are judged by their legality, the duration of hostilities, the proportionality of force, the severity of casualties, and the extent of economic and environmental damage.

10. VICTORY RARELY THE GOAL
Then: Victory was paramount goal
   • Sun Tzu, about 350 B.C.: “Let your great object be victory.”
   • Raimondo Montecuccoli, 1670: “The objective in war is victory.”
   • Karl von Clausewitz, 1832: “War … is an act of violence intended to compel our opponent to fulfill our will.”
   • Winston Churchill, 1940: “You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of terror, victory, however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there is no survival.”
   • Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1944: “In war there is no substitute for
victory.”

- Douglas MacArthur, 1952: “It is fatal to enter any war without the will to win it.”

Common assumption: War ends with one side defeated
It gives up on its war goals

Now: Goal of victory virtually absent in all three wars

Slogans: “There is no military solution” and “War never solved anything.”

Barack Obama in July 2009, asked to define a U.S. victory in Afghanistan, offered this mush:

I'm always worried about using the word "victory" … when you have a non-state actor, a shadowy operation like al-Qaeda, our goal is to make sure they can't attack the United States. … What that means is that they cannot set up permanent bases and train people from which to launch attacks. And we are confident that if we are assisting the Afghan people and improving their security situation, stabilizing their government, providing help on economic development so they have alternatives to the heroin trade that is now flourishing.

Instead: Negotiations
   Vietnam; Oslo; Koreas

Implies: Wars go on without closure

CONCLUSION - PROFOUND CHANGES

Increasingly murky
   Who's on which side
   Who combatants are
   What the goal is

Defeat & closure less attainable
   Wars drag on longer
      Koreas, Iran-Iraq
      AIC, Iraq, War on Terror

Prediction – just the start
   More changes to come