

RICHARD TEMPEST

WAR IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Today's global political environment is shaped by a full-scale land war in Europe, rising tensions between China and the United States, and a Sunni vs. Shia feud that has split the Muslim world. We live in an age of mass migration and climate change, quantum computing and 3D printing, populist movements and social atomization. Yet the traditional divide between kinetic (armed) and non-kinetic (diplomacy, propaganda, sanctions) action remains. So does the distinction between the tactical, operational, and strategic; the need for inspired leadership in combat; and the value of battlefield courage and comradeship. These are the topics we shall be exploring as we examine the future course of military events in the long (?) twenty-first century

WEEK ONE. "ONLY THE DEAD HAVE SEEN THE END OF WAR" (GEORGE SANTAYANA). Alexander, Caesar, Genghis Khan, and Napoleon would have agreed, though on a more pragmatic note, the latter once declared, "Even in war, moral power is to the physical as three parts out of four." This quasi-mathematical formula is a useful point of departure for our discussion. So, how do we quantify combat and all that is needed in order to win a battle, a campaign, or a war? The figure of the warrior understood in socio-cultural terms. What is the place of men and women in uniform, or retired military personnel, in twenty-first-century America? War as a factor in modern politics, culture, and social life, in a) States of Laws and b) States of Rules (totalitarian, autocratic, or hybrid regimes). Mike Minihan's memo. Early lessons from the Ukrainian front.

WEEK TWO. "THE TWO MOST POWERFUL WARRIORS ARE PATIENCE AND TIME" (LEO TOLSTOY). Is the West hedonistic, decadent, and "soft," as President Vladimir Putin believes? (Or satanic, as he also alleges?) The United States and China are the two global military actors of today. The rise of new regional military powers such as Japan (probably) or Turkey, India, and Brazil (possibly). Military-science thrillers, some published by the Pentagon, as an intellectual resource. SIGMA: science fiction writers who consult the US military. Gaming and warfare. The digitation and automatization of war and the introduction of new military technologies such as hypersonic missiles, smart-technology firearms, Laser Weapons Systems, and ADAPTIV camouflage. Futuristic military hardware: exoskeleton combat suits, armed robots, and micro air vehicles. The Space Force as the newest branch of the US Armed Forces: war has ascended into near-earth orbit. Yet most fighting still takes place on land, sea, and air. Finally, despite the new technologies and dimensions of death, Cicero's observation, "In time of war the laws are silent," continues to hold true.

WEEK THREE. "I DO NOT KNOW WITH WHAT WEAPONS WORLD WAR III WILL BE FOUGHT, BUT WORLD WAR IV WILL BE FOUGHT WITH STICKS AND STONES" (ALBERT EINSTEIN, ATTRIBUTED). The list of nuclear-armed powers comprises the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France, Israel, India, Pakistan, and North Korea, with Iran on the verge of joining. These countries' nuclear doctrines are an expression of their political cultures. A piece of undiplomatic dialogue: Putin's nuclear warning of 09.21.2022 ("we will use [...] all means available to protect Russia"), and US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan's nuclear

response of 09.25.2022 (such action would produce “catastrophic consequences” for Russia). For those who doubt that a single individual may change the course of history, the story of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan should give them pause. Is it likely that this century, or this decade, will see the use of nuclear weapons in combat? The specter of nuclear terrorism. Non-nuclear weapons of mass destruction: historic use and possible future deployment.

WEEK FOUR. “WAR IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LANGUAGE FAILS” (MARGARET ATWOOD). What can the generals and military thinkers of the past, from Julius Caesar to Sun Tzu, from Napoleon to Alfred Thayer Mahan, and from Orde Wingate to Mao Zedong teach us about war in the twenty-first century? All these leaders were accomplished communicators whose turns of phrase resonate across the ages. Who are the successful military commanders and influencers of today? Generals David Petraeus (United States) and Qassem Suleimani (Islamic Republic of Iran), and their impact on the practices of twenty-first warfare. What were Petraeus’s and Suleimani’s respective military philosophies? The poetics of military charisma.

WEEK FIVE. “MY POWERS OF EMPATHY, MY ABILITY TO REACH INTO ANOTHER’S HEART, CANNOT PENETRATE THE BLANK STARES OF THOSE WHO WOULD MURDER INNOCENTS WITH ABSTRACT, SERENE SATISFACTION” (BARACK OBAMA). Traditional, insurgency, and asymmetric warfare in a historical and contemporary perspective. Terrorism as a military and cultural practice; as violent communication. The War on Terror as a form of two-way messaging between the civilized and the nihilistic. The TV series *Generation Kill* (2008) and the movie *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012) as cultural statements; as an analytical resource. Is victory against Islamofascist terrorism possible? (And is the term “Islamofascist” optimal?) How the War on Terror became a geostrategic detour and, ultimately, a dangerous distraction for the United States and its allies. But then, events have the ability to cure such distractions (sometimes). State sponsors of terrorism ca. 2023

WEEK SIX. “IT IS SAID THAT THE WARRIOR’S WAY IS THE TWOFOLD WAY OF PEN AND SWORD, AND HE SHOULD HAVE A TASTE FOR BOTH WAYS” (MIYAMOTO MUSASHI). The cultures of the US, Chinese, and Russian militaries: a point-by-point comparison. Operations Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Iraqi Freedom, and their entropic endings. *Top Gun: Maverick* (2022): a middle-aged Tom Cruise takes flight. Don’t forget the demographics! or are the children of the rich and powerful prepared to serve? The second Chechen war, the Russia-Georgia War of 2008, Russia’s annexation of the Crimea in 2014, and its ongoing intervention in Syria. The Special Military Operation in Ukraine. The armed standoff on the Chinese-Indian border. China’s expansion into the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. The US Army’s Active Defense, AirLand Battle, and Full Spectrum Operations doctrines and their foreign counterparts.

WEEK SEVEN. “VICTORIOUS WARRIORS WIN FIRST AND THEN GO TO WAR, WHILE DEFEATED WARRIORS GO TO WAR FIRST AND THEN SEEK TO WIN” (SUN TZU). The rise of China, its armed buildup, and geostrategic doctrine. The historical parallels with the hubristic quest for *Weltmacht* (world power) by Wilhelmine Germany in the early twentieth century. The People’s Liberation Army vis-à-vis the Chinese Communist Party. China’s *Wolf Warrior* (2015; 2017) movie franchise and what it tells us about that country’s decision-makers and -followers: *Wolf Warrior 2* was the highest-grossing non-English film of all

time. China's *Wolf Warrior* foreign policy. The historical outcomes of that country's previous imperial projects, and the likelihood it might use force in the future, particularly against Taiwan. Are China's online nationalists a factor in the communist regime's dispensation of power?

WEEK EIGHT. "THERE ARE BUT TWO POWERS IN THE WORLD, THE SABRE AND THE MIND. IN THE LONG RUN THE SABRE IS ALWAYS DEFEATED BY THE MIND" (NAPOLEON). Just and unjust wars in today's world. Another look at Russia's invasion of Ukraine: Putin as warlord. Should we evaluate the progress or regress of his Special Military Operation as a replay of the Second Battle of Kharkov (1942) or the Battle of Kursk (1943) in World War II, or are such analogies too glib and uninformative? Putin vs. Zelensky. The arc of danger: scenarios of future armed conflicts from the Middle East to the Pacific. Will the United States retain its position of military superiority in the twenty-first century?

THE RESOURCES LISTED BELOW ARE ALL FYI

READINGS

Elliot Ackerman and James Stavridis, *2034: A Novel of the Next World War* (New York: Penguin Press, 2021)

David Fisher, *Can War Be Just in the Twenty-First Century?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

F.X. Holden, *Future War Novels (Kobani, Golan, Bering Strait, Okinawa, Orbital)* (Kindle)

Anthony King, *Urban Warfare in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2021)

Jeffrey A. Larsen, Kerry M. Katcher, *On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014)

Jerry Lewis, *The 2020 Commission Report on the North Korean Nuclear Attacks Against the US: A Speculative Novel* (Boston/New York: Mariner Books, 2018)

Linda Nagata, *The Last Good Man* (Kula, HI: Mythic Island Press, 2017)

Trina Marie Phillips and August Cole (ed.), *Visions of Warfare 2036* (Norfolk, VA: Allied Command Transformation, 2016)

P.W. Singer and August Cole, *Ghost Fleet: A Novel of the Next World War* (Boston/New York: Mariner Books, 2015)

ONLINE ITEMS

United States Marine Corps, *Science Fiction Futures; Marine Corps Security Environment Forecast: Futures 2030-2045* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, 2016),

https://www.mcwl.marines.mil/Portals/34/Documents/FuturesAssessment/Marine%20Corps%20Science%20Fiction%20Futures%202016_12_9.pdf?ver=2016-12-09-105855-733

https://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2012/fc_ipr/visions-of-warfare-2036.pdf

VIEWINGS

Generation Kill (2008)

Top Gun: Maverick (2022)

Wolf Warrior (2015)

Wolf Warrior 2 (2017)

Zero Dark Thirty (2012)