

Isolated Modernity

KALDOR M. (2015) NOVYE I STARYE VOJNY: ORGANIZOVANNOE NASILIE V GLOBAL'NUJU JEPOHU [NEW AND OLD WARS: ORGANIZED VIOLENCE IN A GLOBAL ERA] (TRANSL. A. APPOLONOV, M. DONDUKOVSKY), MOSCOW: DELO. 416 P. ISBN 978-5-93255-417-3 (IN RUSSIAN)

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This year The Gaidar Institute Publishing House has translated Mary Kaldor's book *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*. Being for the first time published in 1999, the book became a scientific sensation and was long and widely debated. Despite the fact that the book has already become quite old it is of a special contemporary interest since it can be addressed to the many large-scale conflicts which have begun in the last few years.

In her work Kaldor analyses how modern wars have changed in comparison to what used to be understood by war. In Chapter 1 "the old wars"¹ are analyzed based on the ideas of Clausewitz. Chapters 2–5 are devoted to the study of "the new wars." In Chapter 6 Kaldor proposes the means of the realization of cosmopolitan governance. Chapter 7 applies Kaldor's ideas to the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Chapter 8 investigates theories about the future.

Descriptions of the wars in Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan, which include personal experience and great amounts of data, support Kaldor's ideas and together with her suggested peacekeeping methods make the book stand out among other research on this theme. Kaldor vividly demonstrates how the difference between legitimate and non-legitimate violence, combatants and non-combatants, interstate and intrastate conflicts blurs, how the new war economy works, why battle results do not define the results of wars, and why attempts by western countries to stop these wars, being based on modern politics, are ineffective.

Her main thesis is that the new wars are based on exclusive particularistic policy. That is why she proposes inclusive cosmopolitan democracy as the main means to stop them; by restoring social consensus with the help of local social organizations which should be accepted as the only legitimate power, so that is they who are dealt with when establish-

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1. Since the novelty of *the new wars* is debatable it should be mentioned that terms *the old* and *the new wars* are used here in the sense in which Kaldor uses them herself.

ing peace. Otherwise the forces which are likely to prolong violence would be legitimized by international society and they would be unintentionally helped to reach their goals.

New and Old Wars is a practically oriented book promoting cosmopolitan democracy for governments and politicians. That is how Kaldor justifies her preference for the term *new wars* over *hybrid* or *multivariant wars* or *complex warfights* (p. 410). That is also why the book provides mostly factual information and little theorization (Kaldor only uses Clausewitz's and some of her contemporaries' concepts).

However, this is also a weakness of Kaldor's work. She agrees that the new wars and the old wars are ideal concepts, they can share many characteristics and their transformation is connected with the transformation of modern states. If she considered medieval or ancient wars, and theories of war and state it would be clear that they resemble the new wars and together with them differ from the old wars.² Decentralized power, a war economy based on robbery, a high level of popular involvement and a greater number of victims, the absence of rules regulating violence and separating combatants from non-combatants, and weak governing and state institutions all of these can be applied to the new wars and to the ancient wars, while for the old ones these are not relevant.

Both Kaldor and some of her critics, arguing whether the new wars are actually wars and if there still any wars going (Muller, 2004: 172), miss the point that the old wars (or modern age wars) seem to be quite uncommon. Their characteristics mostly occur during a short period of history the modern epoch and refer to a limited number of conflicts and are connected with the formation, development and expansion of modern state. At the same time as Newman argue all the characteristics of the new wars have been present in many conflicts throughout the last century (Newman, 2004: 179–180). Kaldor herself agrees that the type of old war described refers mostly to European wars (p. 56–57). This could be the root of the problem: Kaldor begins with an examination of *wars* and extends it to modern *conflicts* not including the old ones. That is why the term the new wars provokes the strongest critique of Kaldor's book.

"*New and Old Wars* falls short when addressing today's conflicts," says Benjamin P. Nickels in his review (Nickels, 2009). It also falls short when trying to theorize about civil wars or about features of the new wars in the past. It is not clear enough from Kaldor's book how to distinguish among contemporary wars, the new wars and the old wars; where to put revolutions and civil wars; and why this division is needed (Kalyvas, 2001: 99–118). It is probably not war itself but the number and intensity of conflicts which differ from the old wars which have changed since the end of the WWII (UCPD, 2014).

Nevertheless, *New and Old Wars* is still a success. What makes this book topical is that it predicts partially the characteristics of some of today's wars (Malantowicz, 2013). Thus, war with ISIS in Syria and Libya is a perfect example of the new war which includes particularistic policy as an ideological basis, terror, vague frontlines, and the robbery of local population as the main source of war finance (Zelin, 2015). The rise of ISIS has pushed Kurdish consolidation and a rise in autonomy of their regions in Iraq and Syria (Kajjo,

2. Edward Newman argues that it is the lack of data on earlier conflicts which, together with new means of war, gives an impression that a new type of conflict has emerged (Newman, 2004).

2014). The Kurds have restored legitimacy and social order on their territory and fought ISIS with some success. Even though they established their People's Protection Units on the national basis of the Kurd's struggle for independence and for the protection of Kurd-populated regions, they carry out tolerant, multinational and multireligious policy, cooperating with the Free Syrian Army (Muslim, 2014) and recruiting Arabs (Meseguer, 2013), Turks, westerners and Syrians, which is a good illustration of how Kaldor's idea of cosmopolitanism work. In addition, one cannot say Kaldor is wrong claiming that the new wars begin in so called failed states. Ukraine, Iraq, Libya and Syria³ were not failed states. However, they were incapable of maintaining balance and providing security and stability on their territories, therefore they were affected by external influences and internal conflicts (Torri, 2015).

All in all, Kaldor's critics cannot but agree that *New and Old Wars* contributes important insights to the study of the transformation of war. The book provides a useful scheme of how war has changed since the end of the Cold War and helps to organize ideas on this subject. New waves of violence issue many challenges against Kaldor's theory which will probably make some of its weaknesses more obvious. Nevertheless, Kaldor's critique of the current international peacekeeping system and her suggestions for cosmopolitan policies help us awaken to the fact that war is not what we once thought it to be, and our attitude and our approach towards it have to be revised.⁴

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3. These conflicts also prove that Kaldor's theory is far more effective than the ones of her competitors such as Huntington. His ideas turn out to be invalid referring to them since there are problems with legitimacy but not with the clash of civilizations.

4. Maria Chernyaeva in her dissertation investigates the significance of the new war thesis saying that it is not only the thesis but the whole debate provoked by it makes Kaldor's theory valid (Chernyaeva, 2010).

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