



*Mary Kaldor. New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Globalized Era. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2nd Edition, 2007 (1998).*

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Second editions make for second chances and second thoughts. A case in point is the reissue of New & Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Globalized Era by Mary Kaldor, professor and co-director of the Centre for the Study of Global Governance at the London School of Economics and Political Science. The book's "central argument," Kaldor writes, is that "during the the [sic] last decades of the twentieth century, a new type of organized violence developed, especially in Africa and Eastern Europe, which is one aspect of the current globalized era" (1). 'New war,' as she dubs it, differs from both the preceding 'old war' and the contemporary Revolution in Military Affairs, which is nothing but state-of-the-art 'old war.' In this second edition, Kaldor continues her effort to articulate a model of organized violence that captures our current way of

war.

New & Old Wars consists of six substantive chapters (Chapters 2–7) framed by a preface, introduction (Chapter 1), and conclusion (Chapter 8). Chapter 2 surveys ‘old wars,’ paying particular attention to the thought of Carl von Clausewitz and the relationship between warfare and the rise of the modern nation-state. Chapter 3 is a case study of the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–1995), which Kaldor describes as “the archetypal example, the paradigm of the new type of warfare in the 1990s” (33). The next three chapters explicate facets of ‘new wars’ on display in the Balkans prototype. Chapter 4 looks at ‘new war’ politics, especially globalization, identity politics, and the cosmopolitanism–particularism divide. Chapter 5 studies ‘new war’ economic and military features, such as means of finance, privatized forces, and patterns of violence. And Chapter 6 sketches the proper international response to ‘new wars,’ especially the need for cosmopolitan politics, cosmopolitan law-enforcement, and reconstruction. The last substantive chapter (Chapter 7), an entirely new addition to the second edition, examines the current Iraq War as a ‘new war.’

Kaldor’s book contains important insights that have been borne out over time. The author sees ‘new war’ politics, economics, and violence as stemming from weak governments, and she deserves credit for her early appreciation of the dangers posed by failed states. Her appeal for a cosmopolitanism that is not only smarter (more principled, more versatile, etc.) but also tougher—her advocacy of ‘cosmopolitanism with teeth,’ so to speak—merits attention as well. As a former chair of the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (13) who remains critical of NATO’s handling of Kosovo (139–143), Kaldor has no illusions about internationalism and its perils. “Cosmopolitan law-enforcement may mean risking the lives of peacekeepers in order to save the lives of victims,” she writes. “This is perhaps the most difficult presupposition to change. International personnel are always a privileged class in the new wars. The lives of UN or national personnel are valued over the lives of local people, despite the UN claim to be founded on the principles of humanity” (138). New & Old Wars also benefits from a vivid style, often rich in variegated details. For example, Kaldor argues that ‘new wars’ “epitomize a new kind of global/local divide” generated by globalization, and she goes on to give a memorable description of the inter- and intra-national gap “between those members of a global class who can speak English, have access to faxes, the Internet and satellite television, who use dollars or euros or credit cars, and who can travel freely, and those

who are excluded from global processes, who live off what they can sell or barter or what they receive in humanitarian aid, whose movement is restricted by roadblocks, visas and the cost of travel, and who are prey to sieges, forced famines, landmines, etc.” (5).

Kaldor grapples with complexity in ways that occasionally confound and contradict her book’s general framework, but the results more than compensate for the confusion. One example is the enlightening distinction she draws between revolutionary wars and ‘new wars.’ Revolutionary wars (irregular wars, guerrilla wars, insurgencies, etc.) in and of themselves muddle Kaldor’s binary and timeline, because they emerge during the ‘old’ Cold War but carry “harbingers of the new forms of warfare” (32). ‘New wars,’ meanwhile, are a standalone outgrowth of this halfway house. Like revolutionary wars, ‘new wars’ elevate popular support over territorial conquest. Unlike revolutionary wars, ‘new wars’ base politics on identity rather than ideology, and they mobilize popular support through group resemblance rather than party adherence. Hence in ‘new wars,’ political control is achieved through ethnic cleansing. Territories are purged of their minorities, using population displacement techniques that counter-insurgency forces developed in reaction to revolutionary warfare. Hearts and minds are now won through fear and hate, for the purpose of mass murder and forced migration. ‘New wars’ have directed their fury “not against opposing sides, but against civilian populations” (53), such that the “undesirable and illegal side-effects of old war have become central to the mode of fighting in the new wars” (106).

New & Old Wars falls short when addressing today’s conflicts, however, because Kaldor papers over some messy facts to salvage her central schema. For example, to retain the ‘new war’ model, Kaldor stretches reality to make Iraq look like Yugoslavia. The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina followed the Yugoslav state’s decade-long disintegration, largely an internal affair starting in the late 1970s (see 34–46). Hence Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, the author asserts, “was showing all the signs of incipient state failure” in 2003, and it too was teetering on collapse from within when the U.S.-led “invasion simply condensed that process into a short three-week period” (158). Kaldor later undermines this awkward and unpersuasive argument by implying that America could have avoided war through negotiations with Iraq’s firmly entrenched dictator

(see 170). The effort to link the July 7, 2005, London bombings to ‘new wars’ through gestures toward the importance of television and the Internet (see vii) is even less convincing, and insistence on the book’s basic structure eventually leads Kaldor to her least credible claim of all, her explanation of Washington’s motives in the 2003 invasion. The Iraq War, she declares, was really “designed to keep alive an idea of old war on which American identity is based, to show that old war could be upgraded and relatively pain free in the twenty-first century” (171). U.S. leaders prefer high-tech conventional conflicts and American identity owes something to fighting them, but surely Washington is not launching attacks solely to preserve an abstract category (‘old war’) that actually defines what it means to be American.

With the second edition of *New & Old Wars*, the author takes the opportunity to affirm the comprehensiveness of her model, but the reader is left with doubts that all new wars are ‘new wars.’ Instead, one closes the volume with the sense that the very events encouraging the book’s reissue have outstripped the book’s framework. Ultimately the second edition’s primary value lies in this tension it creates over the scope of the ‘new war’ model. But whether she has identified traits of all—or only some—of today’s conflicts, Kaldor’s evolving book remains a useful tool for organizing thoughts on organized violence.

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