

# THE FUTURE OF WARFARE

A talk given some years ago to interested organisations. Although dated, it still contains enough hard information gathered from that time to unsettle the complacent and jangle the nerves of neo-realists.

I try to write intelligent escapism for big boys with brains. Good thrillers need heavy research because they're "what-if" stories. This has uses. You can highlight facts the mainstream media soft-pedals. Some facts are too dangerous to tackle directly and fiction, being at one remove, can lift these into awareness.

Then fiction's often predicted the future with a better strike-rate than most economists, futurists and historians. (Remember Verne, Wells, Huxley, Orwell?) So it *can* help us look ahead. And what you'll hear tonight is based on research I've done for my books.

Now what would be the goals of a sane and compassionate world?

According to one UN Under Secretary General, these would be: "preventing wars, promoting democracy and eradicating poverty."

I'm going to focus on the future of warfare because it has a bearing on all three.

For fifty years, despite regional conflicts, we've had a nuclear-free zone. Because we've been coy about wrecking the world. Well nothing stays static long.

Many nations now have nuclear missiles. Apart from western nations, key suppliers of the technology are China, Russia and North Korea. We know plutonium's been flogged around the world. So dirty bombs, or worse, could come from anywhere.

But let's examine the most powerful nation in the world.

The American strategy used to be - in order - preventive defence, deterrence, then military conflict. But now that others have matched their technology, the order's reversed.

Their Nuclear Posture Review now states that missile defence is not about homeland security but about avoiding a forced withdrawal from offensive action if they're threatened. This they call "freedom of action" and it implies first-strike.

What currently worries their planners are short to medium range missiles. They now want to deploy a new range of low-yield nukes - to match limited threats in scale.

The cold war was simple. Two big players. But now there are terrorists, rogue governments, nihilists, religious fanatics. And you can't meet them with a military dinosaur.

Conventional war needs cumbersome high-tech hardware from aircraft carriers to B2

bombers. It targets radars, launch control centres, submarine docks, silo fields.

But when the small-fry get triggerable fission, they'll send it by truck, shipping container, or a low-tech delivery system from near offshore.

Even a small-scale conventional war has the big guys hamstrung. Because the media spin's now as important as the conflict, as you see from the rise of the camo-clad embedded journalist. Surgical strikes - such as those in Bosnia - have to be vetted by lawyers. And you dare not sustain a casualty because of the CNN factor.

But an enemy with run-down technology and government controlled media won't pussyfoot around. It'll take the hits and fight the dirty war the big guy can't.

This problem is termed asymmetric war.

Then there's the IW threat - information warfare. It could disrupt everything - traffic, power plants, banks, funds transfer, transportation, communications - could paralyse strategic world capitals.

But surely AMERICA has a whole bunch of intelligence agencies? NORAD, the NRO, the CIO, NASA, the NOAA. Then there is the intelligence community. The CIA, NSA, DIA, the ECHELON system. It goes on...

Their current SPACE-BORNE SURVEILLANCE includes over twenty separate systems. Yet it's also losing its monopoly in space. Many other countries have satellites to augment guidance systems for their ICBMs. In wartime, America had a system to deny GPS to aggressors. But even that's subverted. China new GPS satellites get around this and they're increasing their space presence to counter this threat. Europe has Galileo and so on. All academic because, all space-bases systems are vulnerable to attack.

In fact, the second American dinosaur is their intelligence community. You can get too clever.

As well as the challenge of fibre-optics and encoding there's the sheer volume of signals. The information services are marvellous at collecting. But the sheer volume of material means only a fraction's ever analysed. (9/11)

Some American commentators say that the billions poured into NSA satellites would be better spent on HUMINT or human intelligence. For instance, terrorists rarely communicate in conventional ways. So now we have a whole host of increasing restrictions. Freedom becomes more mythical with every attempt to preserve it.

But back to the Pentagon's hawkish new policy.

Speaking of East Asia, a vitally important economic region with a third of world population, the US Commission on National Security put it like this: "Either we remain engaged at greater *short-term* peril... or we disengage at the potential cost of greater *long-term* peril to everyone."

Translation, "lets hit em before they get too big."

Whatever happened to non-proliferation?

Non-proliferation treaties are wallpaper. Treaties only work when there's self-interest on both sides and most are covertly broken because of the fear-factor. Political history's no more than temporary alignments. No one cares to admit it but - allies don't exist.

In other words America's losing it and arms control's stalled. Oh yes. The government's massaged Congress about a missile shield and other guff. Star-wars and the airborne laser was supposed to be the next thing after stealth and precision munitions and able to shoot down missiles in the boost phase. But they faked results, skimped tests. The hardware was immature. But it was an economic cash-cow for the munitions industry, a device to funnel billions to prime contractors. And remains a pipe-dream because the real-time stopping power will be just a third of incoming. In other words, two thirds of enemy missiles will get through.

We're now talking not of terrorists or medium sized unfriendly nations but a full-scale high-tech nuclear ICBM attack.

But isn't that history now? Isn't Russia's just a degraded kleptocracy that can't even handle Chechnya.

Not quite. They have enormous missile capacity and are upgrading their missile sites. The superpowers were supposed to shrink their arsenals to a third by 2012. But they can withdraw at three month's notice, redeploy from storage any time. The rhetoric's non-proliferation. The reality's unstoppable spread.

And here's the US military's assessment on China, which by the way, is published fact. After China's charm-offensive with Taiwan, their subs will block key ports. They'll try for political reversal. If it fails, they'll attack the island with their missiles, then an invasion force. The US Nuclear Posture Review sees this as "an immediate or potential contingency." After that, could come a pre-emptive strike on the USA. Remember that China is now the manufacturing centre of the world, partly because of its cheap labour. Partly because they're bleeding the west of new technologies extremely fast. And, as the hawks in the US administration see it - excessive Chinese inputs could undermine the American defence base. They see China as a significant threat - a potential foe prepared to absorb enormous losses to achieve an imperial dream.

Is this suspicion justified? Perhaps. But Washington may not be calling it correctly.

Undeniably, from a military perspective, China is a growing giant. It's launched over fifty satellites and Russian technicians assist its missile program. If America tries to install their proposed missile shield protecting Taiwan, Japan and South Korea - China could flatten their bases. Apart from tactical missiles, China has the DF-31 - 8,000km range - the DF-41 - that's 12,000km - plus SLBM's (sub launched ballistic missiles). And 18 DF-5/5A ICBMs, each with 5 megaton capacity and a range of 13,000kms.

They'll reach Washington. So will their SLBMs. And China's new anti-satellite missile could cripple America's eyes in the sky.

China has solid fuel rockets. Hardened sites. Mobiles. And their silos are hard to spot so it's a highly survivable program. It has IBMs on the Qinghai and Tibetan plateaus and in Yunnan province to threaten South and South-East Asia. It has nine MIRVs in each DF-5 - which, being interpreted, means that their huge intercontinental missiles have multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles which can peel off and destroy several cities at once.

I should point out that an ICBM could take half an hour after launch to reach its target - particularly if launched from an SSBN or missile submarine near the coast of the targeted nation. That would give - say the US President - three minutes to respond to an attack.

Of course, a single American Ohio class SSBN houses 24 Trident ICBMs, each with eight MIRV or multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles. Translation: enough firepower to kill 50 million Russians. A single sub. And America has around 30 of these strategic missile subs. Russia has about the same number. China, Britain and France have SSBNs, too. This means that MAD, or mutually assured destruction, is not only possible. It could be inevitable.

Although the Pentagon publically maintains the usual lost-in-the-funhouse media misrepresentation of reality, inside the building - they acknowledge that national security's a myth.

Every way you look at it, it's checkmate for conventional war. This makes extremely wealthy people nervous. In case you hadn't made the connection - America's not a democracy. It's the world's most prominent plutocracy. Or, as the old phrase has it - the best democracy money can buy.

And soft war's the coming thing. There's now a proliferation of non-lethals, chemical and bio-weapons. Sivpol. Crowd control elevated to population control.

This is very useful to those who profit from Globalisation. As you know, loans to developing nations are based on sale of their infrastructure - such as electricity, water, telegraph systems and gas - to favoured cartels which then raise prices. The resulting riots caused by this - they call them negative externalities - are factored into the mix. After this, remaining national assets can be bought at fire-sale prices. Notice that the Australian government now wants control of water resources - the first step to lucrative privatisation. The sale of national assets for favours is a symptom of government veniality.

So soft war's the future - if plutocrats plan to survive.

From this perspective, people are units of consumption who need to be pacified and disarmed.

I'm now switching the focus to birth control. Because almost every problem we have - including the limitations of resources and rape of the environment is based on this elephant in the room - this problem rarely if ever mentioned because it is impossible to address without losing votes. Or business favour. Which pressure group, for instance, do you think is pushing Australian immigration?

From AD 1 to 1750, world population was a flat line - stable. It rose steadily, from 1950 until the chart became near-vertical. From the 1900s, the curve is exponential - the line on the chart goes straight up. It took a century to go from one billion to two. Twelve years to go from four to five. Now it's a million every four days. A second China in ten years. World population will double in fifty years.

And the more people, the bigger the fight over dwindling resources. Get rid of the nationalistic spin and wars are almost always about resources. So we either destroy ourselves or control population growth.

You might consider that the function of war. No. Disease has always killed more people. But now we live too long. We're victims of medical advances. So, failing a pandemic or nuclear catastrophe, how do we cull populations?

Reducing births through government coercion isn't efficient enough. China's proved that. You're up against common instinct, traditional values. Bu the way, China has much to gain from flooding the world with people. For instance, the diaspora sends money back to relatives on the mainland. And there are at least 300 million unemployed so emigration's a safety valve against social instability. Now relate this to soft war.

Notice how more and more illegal immigrants wash against the shores of the world? Could emigration be used as a weapon?

Or would soft war involve sterilisation?

There's evidence that sneak sterilisation trials have been run in several third world nations, last time in Manila. But that's difficult if it becomes public knowledge, as well as expensive and political disaster.

Perhaps one day some nation will weaponise AIDS by marrying it to the flu virus - long considered the best bio-weapon airborne delivery system.

Yes, this is a slightly satirical talk. But don't relax.

The facts are stark. In fifty years, population growth will exceed food production. By the way, it takes a tonne of oil to produce twelve tonnes of grain. And production of accessible oil will peak in 2030.

Will starvation do the trick? You have people cooking each other in parts of North Korea now.

Failing an advanced technique that ensures death at forty, and given ethics that prevent us sterilising or infecting friendly nations, what's the solution.

Certainly not all-out nuclear war. That equals bio-system destruction. No. The practical way to control a nuclear armed foe is to do it without firing a weapon.

Use hard war as passive defence and soft war as a pre-emptive strike. But as you can't sell soft war to the electorate, it has to be a sneak attack.

Soft war. Think about it.

Some say the attack on Kosovo was designed to raise the US dollar against an encroaching euro.

I've now sprayed you with a great deal of information from current military sources, and emphasised two problems on a collision course - world-wide nuclear proliferation and the demands on resources of a doubled population.

I've suggested that soft war is increasingly a possibility. And I've said it will be covert. Something you won't immediately spot.

For instance, Western culture - our barrage of films and TV - is a tremendous soft war tool. Perhaps the best we have.

Another is Globalisation!

Let's quickly examine democracy's big brother, free market globalisation. Free for whom?

Supply-side economics, functioning without distortion or corruption, is effective. But its ideology is a veneer that covers a thousand abuses.

As Chairman of Intel, Andy Grove said, "The purpose of the new Capitalism is to shoot the wounded."

We're told that the profit motive can serve the public good. But do you buy that without qualification? Does free trade assist the poor, or create them?

Ask a coffee farmer in Ethiopia, the middle class in Argentina or the protestors in Venezuela, Bolivia and Nigeria.

Remember that America has an oil tycoon President who was funded by Enron and elected by alleged vote rigging in Florida. Be aware that the IMF is 50% owned by the US treasury. The philosophy of the IMF, World Bank and WTO which can be taken as a triumvirate, is basically liberalised financial markets, smaller government, privatisation and the rest... This, in practice, translates as a savage reduction in government services and social security. According to one Nobel prize laureate, "repression and economic liberalisation are bedfellows."

In April 2000, the World Bank gathered nearly 1000 executives and bureaucrats in the Hague to discuss the privatisation of the world's water systems.

By the way, their five measures for a flexible private sector workforce are:

- Reduce salaries and benefits.
- Reduce pensions.
- Reduce job stability.
- Reduce employment.
- Increase working hours.

Sound familiar?

Now we know from the supermarket chains that a monopoly fleeces customers at one end while squeezing suppliers at the other. And Napster shows that intellectual property rights have everything to do with corporate control.

GATS (general agreement on trade and services) has a plan to establish an international agency to veto or regulate the government decisions of individual nations. This agency, unlike parliaments, will hold closed hearings. One of its aims is to remove restraints on business. So that the public good becomes victim to the most "cost effective" way to deal with - say - pollution, transport safety, contaminated water. The rationalisations are inevitably supported by well compensated academics.

We know that contamination credits are an idea spawned by the business community. That while petrochemical cartels, such as BP paint their retail outlets green, they've done everything possible by misinformation and years of procrastination and denials, to pay lip service to new greener technologies while stonewalling all attempts to introduce them. But, just like everything, Globalisation will reach its limits and self-destruct.

Lets come back to the goals of a sane and compassionate world.

Preventing conflict, promoting democracy and eradicating poverty.

And what do we have? ...Violence. Plutocracy. Exploitation.  
A thousand evils sugared with fine words.

The future?

Predicting the future's hazardous. Because things happen in ways we never thought of.

But I believe we could agree on one thing. Areas of nuclear contamination.

If it can be done, it will be done. Just too much stuff out there. Too many egos. And too many chances for snafus in systems and chains of command.

Some time, somewhere, something or someone will snap.

Yes, the threat of nuclear winter or eco-death is a tough sale politically. But get people spooked about an enemy attack and the attitude flips.

That's why nations from America to Korea and Pakistan are playing with the matchbox now.

As the hair ad says: "It won't happen overnight. But it will happen."

Unless...

And, for the unless - I welcome your questions.