

17C MODERN WARFARE ISSUES

Introduction

While conventional warfare before 1945 involved land armies, submarines, and bombers, warfare of the past decades has added enormous new threats and accompanying ethical issues. Modern warfare involves the potential of nuclear weapons, drones, and robots.

Bowen notes these features of contemporary warfare: [1]

For Western nations, wars are now undertaken more from choice than from the pressing necessity of territorial defense.

War has a protean nature: it readily takes on various shapes or forms... War now often involves non-state entities such as terrorist and insurgent groups.

Responsibility is increasingly being devolved to lower levels (than military leadership): politicians in general (and) civil servants...

Nuclear War

Since 1945, with the bombing of Japan that led to the end of World War Two, nuclear power and nuclear weapons have been part of our world. Detonation of a fusion-reaction weapon meant miles wide destruction with intense heat and even larger range deadly radiation. During the Cold War years (1947-1991), the US and the USSR had a tense and rocky relationship with regard to each side's nuclear capacity. Among the attempts to deal with the threat were:

Nuclear parity—each side would have an equal number of nuclear weapons, including missiles launched from bombers, ground silos, or submarines.

SALT- Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties -1971, 1979

START – Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties

NPT- Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty

MAD – Probably the strangest approach was Mutual Assured Destruction- a deterrence principle based on the principle that any nuclear attack by a superpower would trigger an overwhelming attack by the defender, assuring annihilation of both countries.

By 2020, 191 nations had signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, including five nuclear weapons nations.

The National Association of Evangelical wrote:

A growing body of Christian thought calls into question the acceptability of nuclear weapons as part of a just national defense, given that the just war theory categorically admonishes against

indiscriminate violence and requires proportionality and limited collateral damage. The very weapons meant to restrain evil could potentially destroy all that they were intended to protect, which begs the question whether they can be normatively employed toward a just end...

The world in 1986 was sharply divided between countries allied with either the United States or the Soviet Union. These two Cold War rivals possessed more than 65,000 nuclear warheads. Britain, France, China, India and Israel had also acquired nuclear weapons. The United States and the Soviet Union maintained many of their weapons on high alert, presenting an existential threat described by President John F. Kennedy as "a nuclear sword of Damocles, hanging by the slenderest of threads, capable of being cut at any moment by accident, or miscalculation, or by madness." There are several incidents where the world came perilously close to nuclear holocaust, and the danger is not yet averted...

In 1979, the NAE issued a statement that:

recognizing the possibility of armed conflict and even mass destruction, declared that within the membership are those who are committed to peace through strength and those who renounce the use of force as a matter of conscience. There was a call to urge our government to exercise reasonable restraint in the production and use of its military capabilities and to encourage other nations to do the same.[xii]

Again in 1982, we reiterated our call:

The National Association of Evangelicals board of directors expresses its deep concern about the threat of a nuclear holocaust and urges our national leaders to rededicate their efforts to obtain a meaningful arms control agreement that will scale down the nuclear arms race.

While the threat of armed nuclear conflict no longer captivates the public imagination as it did a generation ago, these weapons of mass destruction, now capable of being delivered in ever more sophisticated ways, continue to threaten humankind. Many argue that they weaken rather than strengthen our security. And so we prayerfully and boldly call on evangelicals to re-engage the national dialogue on nuclear peace and security in our globalizing age, making a distinctively evangelical contribution. We raise both biblical and pastoral concerns, and speak to policy issues, though with due restraint and humility. [2]

While not a pacifist and not in favor of unilateral disarmament, Billy Graham was later opposed to nuclear war:

The present arms race is a terrifying thing, and it is almost impossible to overestimate its potential for disaster. There is something ironic about the fact that we live in a generation which has made unprecedented advances in such fields as public health and medicine, and yet never before has the threat of wholesale destruction been so real -- all because of human technology...

Is a nuclear holocaust inevitable if the arms race is not stopped? Frankly, the answer is almost certainly yes. Now I know that some people feel human beings are so terrified of a nuclear war that no one would dare start one. I wish I could accept that. But neither history nor the Bible

gives much reason for optimism. What guarantee is there that the world will never produce another maniacal dictator like Hitler or Amin? As a Christian I take sin seriously, and the Christian should be the first to know that the human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, as Jeremiah says. We can be capable of unspeakable horror, no matter how educated or technically sophisticated we are. Auschwitz is a compelling witness to this.

The lordship of Christ reminds me that we live in a sinful world. The cross teaches me that. Like a drop of ink in a glass of water, sin has permeated everything -- the individual, society, creation. That is one reason why the nuclear issue is not just a political issue -- it is a moral and spiritual issue as well. And because we live in a sinful world it means we have to take something like nuclear armaments seriously. We know the terrible violence of which the human heart is capable...But I cannot see any way in which nuclear war could be branded as being God's will. Such warfare, if it ever happens, will come because of the greed and pride and covetousness of the human heart. But God's will is to establish his kingdom, in which Christ is Lord. [3]

Theologian John R.W. Stott wrote that while unilateral disarmament was unreasonable, all-out nuclear war was not a consideration:

Whether or not our conscience can accept a distinction between limited and unlimited nuclear weapons, we should be able to agree that the latter should be renounced and abolished as soon as possible...(B)ecause of the enormous overkill of the superpowers' current arsenals, to reduce them substantially would not appear to entail unacceptable risk... [4]

Current concerns involve

- Nuclear weapons use by North Korea, a dictatorship not bound by any treaty
- Use of "dirty bombs"- a combination of conventional explosive device and nuclear radiation material.
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Land Mines

If nuclear weapons are the crisis of the wealthier powers, then the epidemic of military mines is the crisis of poorer nations. The criteria of jus in bello dictate, "Weapons of war should be, by design, highly controllable and relatively limited in their destructive effects." The eight to ten million mines still buried in Cambodia, on the other hand, are primarily designed to injure horribly whoever might stumble onto them. And since their destructive power can last for a century or more, hundreds and thousands of civilians will be maimed and killed long after the related conflicts are forgotten.

Mines have traditionally been used to block or slow military advances, halt enemy infiltration, or help protect defensive positions. In southeast Asia, however, mines are often scattered anonymously with no regard for marking their location or for any military purpose. Hidden in agricultural or residential areas, those mines are used primarily to cause terror among the civilian population. [5]

Twenty-first Century Warfare

Drones

Issues in modern warfare have taken most of us by surprise. The scenario of army versus army in the field has been replaced by technological combat observed and directed from a screen half a world away.

What is the morality of using drones to carry out directed kills of a nation's top enemy leaders? The movie "Eye in the Sky" made this type of warfare extremely visual and personal.

- What does warfare at a distance mean?
- What if a well-designed drone can not only make a distant region totally visible but could also deliver a missile pinpointing a building or even a person?
- Who should decide if such a missile should be launched?
- How can we stop a suicide bomber-who will certainly cause the death of dozens of innocent citizens without injuring others nearby?
- What is the morality of risking the death of an innocent individual civilian to eliminate a major threat?
- Can we imply apply a cost/benefit analysis to human life?

These are the kinds of questions we need to be discussing.

Drone attacks should not become the default choice in counterterrorism strategy but kept as a last resort. And great caution should be exercised in the way that the United States is effectively putting in place precedents that others will appeal to in their use of armed drones in the future. Finally, the policy and process for using drones in targeted killing must not undermine the vitality of America's democratic institutions and public life. [6]

Robots on the Battlefield

Robots have been used by the military for a number of general and specific tasks: [7]

- Bomb disposal
- Transportation of supplies
- Mine clearance
- Firefighting
- Surveillance and reconnaissance
- Targets and training operations
- Search and Rescue operations

One of the most important roles of military robots is to assist in search and rescue missions. These military robots provide critical support in finding missing or captured personnel.

Search and rescue robots are advantageous since they can often go where humans can't—whether underwater, through floods, wildfires, or over mountains. [8]

Robotic Soldiers?

Will we see the development and use of robot soldiers for the battlefield?

Should a robot army engage in battle with human soldiers?

Would a robot army opposing a robot army reduce to the feel or skills of a video game?

On the land battlefield, there are credible roles for autonomous systems. The coming ability of robots to synchronize weapons, share information and make tactical decisions would provide real advantages to any commander. That, however, depends almost entirely on the ability of the controlling computer systems to resist hacking.

Governments, corporations and individuals know that a nerd working in his basement or on a government-sponsored team can disrupt their networks or hold them for ransom. As long as the defences lag behind the hackers, we must not assume that battlefield systems would be able to resist attack. If one robot were to be compromised, their synchronized systems could all be breached, and the effects would be deadly to those deploying the robots. Soldiers, human soldiers, are still more effective.

There is a developing and important role for robots, of course. They can reduce the load soldiers must carry. They can greatly facilitate logistical supply and resupply. They soon will be able to collect the information commanders need and share that information quickly with units under command.

But humans remain essential. Only a human, imperfect as he or she might be, can make moral judgments; only leaders can send soldiers into battle and decide which strategy and weapons to employ. Gas warfare, used freely from 1914 to 1918, was not employed in the Second World War. No robot could have made such a decision—yet. And a good thing too. [9]

The concept of sending human troops against metallic, almost-indestructible robot soldiers is frightening to all who consider it.

For years, roboticist Noel Sharkey, a professor at Sheffield University in England, warned that computers may be better than humans at some tasks, but killing is not one of them. Sharkey and his colleagues became increasingly alarmed that technological advances in computer programming and sensors would make it possible to develop systems capable of selecting targets and firing on them without human control.

They warned that autonomous weapons systems would be able to process data and operate at greater speed than those controlled by humans. Complex and unpredictable in their functioning, such systems would have the potential to make armed conflicts spiral rapidly out of control, leading to regional and global instability. Autonomous weapons systems would be more likely to

carry out unlawful orders if programmed to do so, due to their lack of emotion and the fact that morality cannot be outsourced to machines. [10]

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