

# NON-WESTERN POWERS AND THE CHARACTER OF WARFARE IN THE EUROPEAN PERIPHERY

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## **Project description:**

While Western countries regularly intervene militarily abroad, recent years have seen increasing levels of military activity by non-Western authoritarian and weakly-democratic states in the EU periphery. Non-Western foreign interventions and domestic military operations have a profound impact on security dynamics of an increasingly fragile EU neighbourhood. Despite this, the patterns and character of resulting conflicts are ill-understood, especially compared to recent conflicts involving Western states (on which much of the recent conflict literature is based).

Indeed, since the end of the Cold War, and particularly after 9/11, political scientists, historians and military practitioners have debated changes in character of contemporary warfare<sup>1</sup>. Many of these observations, however, are drawn from recent Western experiences of intervention and ensuing insurgency/civil war dynamics (in Iraq, Afghanistan and the Former Yugoslavia, in particular)<sup>2</sup>. Recent conflicts involving Western states show patterns of strategically 'limited' war-fighting, time-restricted commitment to war, the promotion of Western political/governance norms and vast material power and technological asymmetries. These factors have in turn influenced, sometimes implicitly, inferences drawn about contemporary war. Historically however, Western states have tended to fight differently from both non-Western states<sup>3</sup> and non-state actors. As such, it is not clear whether observations drawn from recent wars involving Western powers will apply in cases where conflicts and protagonists do not necessarily share these characteristics. At present, knowledge of 'new interventionist'<sup>4</sup> conflicts involving authoritarian/weakly-democratic non-Western states is relatively underdeveloped in the literature and comparative studies that seek to draw findings across a range of cases are rare.

This project therefore conducts a comparative analysis of four EU-periphery conflicts (in Ukraine, Yemen, the Lake Chad region and Syria) that have seen the involvement of the most militarily active non-Western states in the wider EU neighbourhood (Russia, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Iran and Turkey). In particular, the fellowship will advance knowledge of: 1) how the character of conflicts involving non-Western military powers differs from existing conceptualizations of contemporary warfare (and each other); and, 2) how the character of these conflicts is comprehended conceptually both by actors involved, and by Western security actors (and how these conceptualisations differ).

The project has three main strands (although these overlap in practice):

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<sup>1</sup> Strachan, H & Scheipers, S. (2013). *The Changing Character of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Black, J. (2015). *War in the Modern World*. Abingdon: Routledge; Strachan, H. (2013). *The Direction of War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Gray, C. (2005). *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare*. London: Phoenix; Kaldor, M. (2013). In Defence of New Wars. *Stability*, 2:1, 1-16; Clarke, M. (2012). Does War Have a Future? In J. Lindley-French & Y. Boyer (Eds). *The Oxford Handbook of War*. [647-662]. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Betts, D. (2015). *Carnage and Connectivity: Landmarks in the Decline of Conventional Military Power*. London: C. Hurst & Co; Keegan, J. (1993). *A History of Warfare*. London: Pimlico.

<sup>2</sup> Knutsen, T. (2011). Contemporary Wars: Towards a Macro Level Approach. In K. Haug & O. Maaø (Eds). *Conceptualising Modern War*. London: C. Hurst & Co. [289-302].

<sup>3</sup> Gat, A. (2013). The Changing Character of War. In H. Strachan & S. Scheipers (eds). *The Changing Character of War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [27-47].

<sup>4</sup> Leonard, M. (2016). *The New Interventionists*. Retrieved from the ECFR website: [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_the\\_new\\_interventionists\\_6025](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_the_new_interventionists_6025)

<b>Strand One: Non-Western Powers and Contemporary Warfare</b>	<b>Strand Two: Violent Non-State Actors, Insurgency and 'Non-Western' Wars</b>	<b>Strand Three: De-Centering Strategic Concepts(?)</b>
<p>Objective: To examine the military actions of non-Western powers.</p>	<p>Objective: To examine the military actions of sub-state opponents in 'non-Western' wars.</p>	<p>Objective: To critically examine the concepts used to assess contemporary non-Western warfare.</p>
<p>Much of the recent literature on the changing character of warfare has focused on Western instances of war. This part of the project assesses therefore how non-Western states fight wars: What patterns do we see in non-Western powers' motivations for war? When they do go to war, do they fight in the same ways as Western states? Do we see the same war dynamics emerging from non-Western wars as we do from those recent wars involving NATO members?</p>	<p>Many of the recent studies of insurgency have concentrated on 'counter-western' insurgencies such as those in Iraq and Afghanistan. This part of the project assesses how violent sub-state groups fight against non-Western states. Are the tactics and strategies employed the same? Are the effects of mediatisation and power diffusion on insurgent strategies the same?</p>	<p>This part of the project considers the concepts we use to understand 'non-Western' wars. How effectively do Western strategic concepts such as asymmetry and hybridity capture conflict dynamics in non-Western wars? How do analysts in the different parts of the world use different concepts to assess contemporary warfare? How universal (or not) are Western concepts in their explanatory power? What other non-Western concepts deserve wider employment in the conflict/war studies literature?</p>