Chapter Nine

The Systems of Postmodern War

New types of warfare do not eliminate older and even primitive forms.
—Janowitz (1971, p. 417)

Total war itself is surpassed, towards a form of peace more terrifying still.
—Deleuze and Guattari (1986, p. 119)

The Paradoxes and Structure of Postmodern War

While planning for apocalypse is continual, on the level of actual combat postmodern war so far has been characterized by limited wars, destabilizations, revolutions, and the odd midintensity conflict. “Warfare has probably reached a period of major change,” historian David Chandler says for, “Conventional wars . . . will concede primacy in the spectrum of warfare to guerrilla and revolutionary struggles in which the political and psychological factors predominate over the military” (1974, p. 20). But the evidence actually suggests that, despite the lip service given to the importance of politics, rhetoric about “political and psychological factors” has often been followed by policy based on technoscience and illusions about managing war. If anything, it is war that has replaced politics, not politics war. The possibility of total apocalypse is always waiting in the wings, after all. Even in the realm of peacemaking, it is assumed that military force is required. Postmodern wars take place between two supposed impossibilities: apocalyptic total war and utopian peace.

On the one hand, apocalyptic war must be prepared for, in order to prevent it, which makes it inevitable. On the other, this danger of war raging out of control empowers a militant peace effort, that can become, for some of the military, a surrogate, the moral equivalent of war. Meanwhile, in the

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vacuum, wars continue—cobbled together of various fragments of older discourses from modern, ancient, and even ritual war. This makes for a confusing situation.

The one quality that every postmodern theorist will ascribe to postmodernism is fragmentation. This is the obvious surface "structure" of postmodern war, although there seem to be patterns hidden within the chaos: one is the thread of real war; the other, "the simulation of war and peace." The coexistence of these two different dynamics generates a whole spectrum of contradictions and tensions. From the CBN war(s) that can never be waged (but what's to stop them?) to the extreme technophilia of computer war versus the appropriate technology of people's war and on to lower intensity conflicts that are purely rhetorical and economic.

This period cannot last very long. Statistically some sort of apocalypse is likely, as proliferation continues. But on the ground, where real war is happening peace keeps breaking out. So what are the paradoxes that come out of this? Among the most interesting are the following:

- The main moral justification for war is now peace.
- The main practical justification for repression is the fight for freedom.
- Security comes from putting the very future of the planet in grave risk.
- People are too fragile for the new levels of lethality; machines are too stupid for the complexity of battle. War is becoming cyborgian.
- There is a continual tension between bodies and machines. In purely military terms, machines such as tanks, planes, ships, missiles, and guns are more important than people. But in many countries the human soldiers are much more valuable politically.
- The pace of battle is set by the machines, but it is experienced by the humans.
- Advanced weapon systems are neither machines nor humans, but both: cyborgs.
- The battlefield is really a battlespace. It is now three-dimensional and ranges beyond the atmosphere. It is on thousands of electronic wavelengths. It is on the "homefront" as much as the battlefront.
- The battlespace is also often very constrained. Many targets may not be attacked. Even in war zones the full fury of postmodern weapons is reserved for special killing boxes, free-fire zones, politically acceptable targets, and the actual battleline, if any.
- Battle now is beyond human scale—it is as fast as laser beams; it goes 24 hours a day. It ranges through the frequency spectrum from ultralow to ultrahigh, and it also extends over thousands of miles.
- Politics are so militarized that every act of war needs political preparation and justification. There is only the most limited war space where all important decisions are made on military grounds. Wars can
only be won politically. Through military means the best that can be accomplished is not to lose.

- Obvious genocide, now that it is technologically easy, is morally impossible, for most people—though clearly not all.
- The industrialized countries want colonialism without responsibility (neo); they want empire without casualties.
- Some people in the nonindustrial and industrializing regions want western technology without Western culture; others want both; others want neither.
- Soldiers are no longer uniform. They range from the DoD officials in suits to the women doctors at the front lines, with spies, flacks, analysts, commando-warriors, techs, grunts, desk jockeys, and the like.
- The traditional “male” gender of warriors (soldiers, sailors, and flyers) is collapsing, although it was never absolute. Women can now serve in almost all the subcategories of postmodern warfare except for those dedicated directly to killing (and this is changing as regards combat pilots).
- Civilians, and nature itself, are usually more threatened in battle than the soldiers are.
- New styles of war are invented but old styles of war continue.
- With information war (aka “cyberwar” or “infowar”) the most advanced practitioners are the most vulnerable.
- War itself proliferates into the general culture.

All these contradictions stem from the central problem of postmodern war—war itself. Unless war changes radically it will be impossible for war and humanity to coexist. So the old and conservative discourse of war has become wildly experimental and it has institutionalized innovation to an amazing degree. This process has included the colonization of much of Western science and technology as the war system keeps seeking ways to keep war viable. If weapons are incredibly powerful, make them smart. If combat is unbearably horrible for soldiers, make of them machines or make machines soldiers. If war cannot become total, expand it into new realms, war on your own public like the Argentine and Chilean military did in their “dirty” wars or, as is happening in the United States, with the war on drugs (and dealers and users). Practice bloodless infowar; make business war. Most horrifically, always be ready to destroy the world. If war is impossible, if peace seems to make sense, make ready for the most impossible war—nuclear.

But what gives the system its coherence? It seems that that coherence is not structural but rhetorical. Seen as a discourse system, it’s clear that certain key ideas, called tropes in rhetorical analysis, hold the system of postmodern war together.
The Systems of Postmodern War

The Tropes of Postmodern War

What are the primary characteristics of postmodern war? Even in the latest fad, cyberwar, the same basic metaphors are used with the same assumptions that motivated deterrence doctrine, counterinsurgency, and low-intensity conflict (LIC).

Increasing Battlefields: Lethality, Speed, Scope

The nuclear weapon is an example of this, but it should not be considered unique. Biological and chemical weapons can easily equal nuclear devices in lethality and dispersal. The distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons is also dissolving as technoscience works its magic on explosives and their delivery systems. Small clusters of “ordinary” conventional bombs (with new explosives), or single FAE (fuel air explosives) bombs can equal the destructive power of low-yield nuclear weapons. But they represent just a small part of the increased lethality of the postmodern battlefield that will have a killing zone extending 60 miles or more from any front in any direction, deep into space, and at any time of night and day (thanks to infrared and other artificial vision technologies). Because of the incredible growth in rates of fire, explosive force, and delivery system range, the deadliness of infantry weapons has expanded incredibly in the last 40 years.

Dr. Richard Gabriel estimates that war is at least six times more lethal in terms of firepower than it was in World War II. His estimates may be exaggerated, for they come from the military and the weapon makers, but the general thrust of his claim is beyond denying:

The explosive capacity of most modern weapons exceeds that of World War II weapons by at least five times. Rates of fire have increased by almost ten times. Accuracy has increased by twenty times and the ability to detect enemy targets has increased several hundred percent. . . . The overall result is that the ability of modern armies to deliver a combat punch has increased by at least 600 percent since the end of World War II. Military technology has reached a point where “conventional weapons have unconventional effects.” In both conventional war and nuclear war, combatants can no longer be reasonably expected to survive. (1987, p. 153)

These weapons are not only more powerful than in World War II, but they are much quicker now as well. The line between the quick and the dead is often a line between the machine and the human. Virilio and Lotringer argue that speed is central to war today, especially this contradiction between the speed of war and the unquickness of the human body: “There is a struggle . . . between metabolic speed, the speed of the living, and technological speed, the
speed of death . . . ” (1983, p. 140). Speed also is a matter of distance. The greater the speed, the greater the war measured in time to space.

A LIC battlefield is a country or region. The nuclear battlefield is the world. Netwar takes place in cyberspace. All extend into space, cyberwar most of all. U.S. troops are now expected to fight at night, to fight in the Arctic, to fight in real and simulated space. The battlefield is fragmented in reality and in the minds of the warriors and managers. Getting funding is as much a part of war preparation as planning and training. Protecting the military-industrial complex is as much the armed forces' goal as protecting their countries, if not more.

**The Strategy of High Technology**

Technology is America’s manifest destiny.

—Possony and Pournelle (1970, p. xxxii)

To try and deal with the postmodern changes in battle conditions, some armies choose old technology in quantity (the Chinese to some extent), others try for current technologies, and the U.S. military has chosen cutting-edge high technology. The U.S. military hopes to solve its problems (desires, missions, demands from politicians and the public) through the deployment of the very best high technologies and formal systems, both dependent on computerization. The U.S. military is explicitly committed to the assumption that it can only achieve battlefield superiority through high-tech weaponry. The militarization of space, the growing use of unmanned and semiautomatic aircraft, the automation of war on and below the sea, and the popularity of cyberwar concepts all show this.

U.S. strategic doctrine has been predicated on technological superiority since World War II. The same principles are being applied today. The strategy for general (so-called conventional and limited nuclear) war for the U.S. Army is based on AirLand Battle doctrine. The year before it became official, the Army Science Board reported that to make the AirLand Battle strategy possible it would be necessary to use high technologies in which the United States has a strong lead. An Army research team stated in 1984: “Future fighting concepts such as AirLand Battle 2000 . . . are largely based on technology” (U.S. Army, 1984, p. 20).

Specifically, the Army has picked five technoscience areas to concentrate on, four of which are directly AI (artificial intelligence) related: “very intelligent surveillance and target acquisition” (VISTA) systems, distributed command, control, communications, and intelligence (DC3I), self-contained munitions, the soldier-machine interface, and biotechnology (Lindberg, 1984).
The U.S. military is trying to use high technology to cope with “facets of the modern battlefield environment that will be deep, dirty, diffuse, and dynamic” (Gomez and Van Atta, 1984, p. 17). Only with technology, it is thought, can it meet the demands of battle for almost instantaneous actions and reactions, for high-quality intelligence and quick decision making in the midst of a chaotic multidimensional environment, for systems that can withstand high-tech weapons (including biological, chemical, and tactical nuclear), and to maintain military coherence in the face of what are expected to be extraordinary casualty levels ranging up to and including 100 percent dead in many units.

So infatuated with technology have certain parts of the U.S. military become that they even claim that not only will mastery of technology determine victory (instead of mastery of oneself and then the enemy) but that technology is actually driving tactics today:

Tactical incisiveness depends—and will depend—largely on our mastery in the application of the technology available to us and to our enemies. At present, technology is outstripping the military imagination so swiftly that available hardware will continue to define tactics for a long time. (Peters, 1987, p. 37)

Not only is high technology considered the key element of military tactics and strategy in the United States, its importance is also central to Russian doctrine and the military policy of many other countries, and not just industrialized countries either. Many undeveloped countries have made high-tech weapons their country's major social investment.

The Strategy of Political War

The reverse of the high-tech strategy is to make your military target a political victory. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call this “guerrilla warfare, minority warfare, revolutionary and popular war” and note that, while war is necessary in this strategy, it is only necessary as a supplement to some other project. Practitioners of political war “can make war only on the condition that they simultaneously create something else, if only new unorganic social relations” (1986, p. 121; emphasis in original). This is, after all, a very old form of war, dating back to prehistory. It contains many elements of ritual war, especially those that were borrowed from the hunt: stalking, hiding, waiting, deceiving, ambushing.

However, what makes this type of war particularly important in postmodern war is that it can defeat the strategy of high technology, as it did in Vietnam. The very same communications and computer advances that make cybernetic high technologies a basis for U.S. strategy today have removed
the temporal, geographic, and perhaps even emotional distance that politically allowed neocolonial armies to utilize a genocidal and racist physics- and chemistry-dominated "modern" version of the contemporary high-tech strategy. High technology can still be used to make brief colonial wars publicly palatable, witness the Persian Gulf campaigns, but extended genocidal wars and occupations are now well-nigh impossible politically, nationally, and internationally—unless they are defined as, or declared to be, civil wars (Bosnia, Rwanda, Chechnya, Tibet).

**The Changing Soldier**

Replacing men with machines has been official policy since World War II. Consider President Eisenhower’s New Look military policy with its slogan, “Substitute machines for men!” In 1954, Adm. Arthur W. Radford, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, announced that atomic weapons had become “practically conventional” (quoted in Millis, 1956, p. 303). Historian Walter Millis concluded, “The substitution of atomic weapons for uniformed manpower in the ground battle was eagerly accepted on all sides” (p. 314).

Millis noted another implication of the replacement of men by machines that was clear even in World War II: fewer and fewer men were doing the fighting (the teeth), backed by a growing logistical system (the tail):

Certainly, great numbers [of soldiers] were killed and maimed, yet most of the critical actions seemed to involve relatively few combat men. Thus, the Marines and naval forces who took Tarawa . . . suffered 17 per cent casualties—but there were only 18,000 engaged, out of the 15,000,000 or so whom the United States was to put into uniform. And Tarawa was the decisive action which most clearly foretold the end of the Japanese island empire. Where former wars had represented great clashes of men on extended fronts, here great numbers of men always seemed to be waiting on the sidelines, in support or training or the enormously swollen logistic services, while results of the greatest strategic consequence were achieved by relative handfuls—the famous “few” fighter pilots who defended Britain in 1940, the few who actually flew in the strategic bombers, who waded ashore in invasions, who manned the tanks at the spearheads of the armored divisions. This was the curious result of the introduction of the machine, not simply into war, but into every phase of combat. (p. 258)

Indeed, fewer soldiers were killed in World War II than in World War I. Millions of civilians died in the World War II, however. In the Vietnam War, the United States lost tens of thousands of soldiers, the Vietnamese armies lost hundreds of thousands of soldiers, and the Vietnamese nation lost several million people. In a nuclear war the percentage of military to civilian casualties will obviously skew still further.
Another implication of this is that actual fighting falls more and more to a strange mix of technical and special forces warriors. Jim Stewart notes in an analysis of the U.S. officer corps that "In the past, as many as 75 percent of all officers could reasonably expect to face the enemy with their troops. Now that number has dwindled to a handful of technical warriors" (1988, pp. 19–20). These "technical warriors" are different from the modern soldier in several significant respects, especially their gendering and their relationship to machines in general and weapon systems in particular. Some claim that technical warriors are genderless. As one female U.S. soldier in Saudi Arabia put it: "There aren't any men or women here, just soldiers." But it is more complicated. There is a sharp gender (as status) division between officers and enlisted personnel. Gloria Emerson, the journalist, was talking once to an enlisted man in Vietnam, "a mountain boy from North Carolina." He said that he thought officers "didn't really like women or want them around much." Besides, he added, "We are their women. They've got us" (1985, p. 7). Like subordinates, enemy is often marked as feminine as well.

One of the basic tropes of war is the hatred for the feminine. It's power should not be underestimated. Robin Morgan (1989) shows how this even operated among New Left guerrilla cells in the United States and Europe. Klaus Theweleit's Male Fantasies (1989) is an amazingly detailed exploration of this theme. However, in postmodern war there seems to be some shifting of this anger.

As soldiers become more like cyborgs, their gender identity becomes blurred. Cyborgs in general can be either masculine or feminine, although they are often more cyborg than either. Military cyborgs, on the other hand, are still pretty masculine. Since soldiers are also techs, the new masculine identity of soldiers is around mechanization, fixing machines, and working with machines, instead of the traditional masculine identity of physical force, easy access to violence, and the direct subjugation of other men and all women. Women had a hard time fitting into the old masculine category, but the "new male" version is easier to adapt to. It seems the female soldier's identity is beginning to collapse into the archetype soldier persona, creating a basically male, vaguely female, vaguely mechanical image.

The Erasure of Nature as a Category

Nature used to be a force that battles had to be planned around. While this is still true in part, witness the slowdown of air strikes caused by weather during Desert Storm, now weather is seen as a weapon. Perhaps this started with the firestorms of World War II. In Vietnam there were extensive efforts over the course of seven years to use cloud-seeding to cause flooding on the Ho Chi Minh trail (Shapley, 1974).

Just as weather becomes a weapon, terrain is seen as plastic. Thanks to
manga especially, the very earth or sea can become hostile. More U.S. soldiers were lost to booby traps and mines in Vietnam than to enemy fire. It is not surprising that some veterans returned hating the very land of Vietnam. In general, postmodern war is not an integration with nature, as ritual war was, or an adaption to natural circumstances, as was necessary in ancient war. It isn’t even the attempt to ignore nature, as many practitioners of modern war tried to do, most famously Napoleon and Hitler. In postmodern war nature becomes dominated enough to become another weapon, as with the Hamburg and Tokyo firestorms. Biological, chemical, and nuclear weapons are other examples of turning nature (biology, chemistry, physics) into weapons, but for erasure you can’t beat doctrines of cyberwar, which move most of the action into simulated terrain and human consciousnesses.

As nature becomes weapons, community can become a weapon as well. It is then called bureaucracy.

**Bureaucracy**

John Kenneth Galbraith called bureaucracy the major cause of the Vietnam War. “It was the result of a long series of steps taken in response to a bureaucratic view of the world.” He added that “our problem is essentially one of bureaucratic power, of uncontrolled bureaucratic power which . . . governs in its own interest” (Galbraith, 1969b, p. 15). Some analysts give great weight to the way a bureaucracy makes decisions, often labeled *groupthink* (Janis, 1972). Others trace the intimate connections between technology and bureaucracy. For example, in his cultural analysis of what made the United States go to war in Vietnam, Loren Baritz places a heavy emphasis on technology and the bureaucracy it leads to. “Technology demands rationality in the place of individuality,” is his premise. He goes on to deduce that

When the technological mind is turned to the problems of organizing human activity, the result is bureaucracy. This means that an office is created with a predefined function and then a person is sought who meets the specifications of the office. Standardization, technology, never rely on the talents or inspiration of officeholders for solutions. The result, again in its purest form, is impersonality, procedures rather than on-the-spot intelligence, authoritative regulations, not people with authority. (1985, p. 33)

Computer scientists such as Terry Winograd and Marvin Minsky have pointed out that AI programs bear more of a resemblance to how a bureaucracy thinks than to how any individual thinks. Herbert Simon’s work started with models of organizational thinking, and from those he has gone on to
create models of AI. Could this be part of the mutual attraction between AI and officialdom? No doubt. But like so much of postmodern war it is not the only explanation. The attractions between the AI dream and the lords of postmodern war are varied and flourishing. The next few chapters are detailed examinations of some of the more significant examples. But before going on to them it would be valuable to look closely at how the U.S. military feels about contemporary war as demonstrated through their rhetoric about the most likely form: low-intensity conflict.

**The Rhetoric of Low-Intensity Conflict**

The Joint Low-Intensity Conflict Project Final Report (JLIC) itself places great weight on the importance of rhetoric (U.S. Army, 1986). At one point the authors quote a British commando colonel to the effect that words are better weapons than bullets:

> Persuading a man to join you is far cheaper than killing him. Words are far, far less expensive than bullets, let alone shells and bombs. Then, too, by killing him you merely deprive the enemy of one soldier. If he is persuaded to join the government forces, the enemy becomes one less, but the government forces become one more, a gain of plus two. (p. 7-1)

They go so far as to claim that the biggest problem the United States faces is rhetorical! The struggle over certain definitions will decide whether the United States or the terroristic “other” prevails in the LICs of today and the near future. To wage its side of this fight the Pentagon has institutionalized the collection of information and the defining of key terms around low-intensity war (Preface, p. xi).

Still, the real problem seems to be the very discussion of it:

> As Americans we consider democracy to be the best form of government, but it is not always the most efficient. The cumbersome decision-making and consensus building process inherent in a democracy can be too slow to respond to dangers before they become critical. This is especially true for threats that are uncertain or ambiguous. (p. 1-1)

In the face of “uncertain” and “ambiguous” threats, this confusion about war, the military feels compelled (by its own perceptions and arguments clearly) into acting. The threat to democracy of the growing complexity of LIC, and its increasing intractability (because of legislative and other constraints), compels the military to respond in undemocratic ways. Inevitably, too much democracy is one of the problems:
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Massive increases in political participation may actually increase instability if the government is overwhelmed by conflicting demands. Democracy may increase the level of conflict in society without providing adequate institutions for its resolution—especially given the virtually intractable problems third world countries face. (p. 11-4)

Democracy may well have to be destroyed in order to save it.

It is a domestic struggle in the end, a battle for the homefront. Through rhetoric, conflict can be made “natural,” and the United States can be defined as an inevitable “arena for struggle” (p. 3-4). And how is the struggle carried out in the United States? Rhetorically. In the “arena” of discourse.

So in the U.S. military’s own estimation, discourse is the crucial domain, and weapon, in postmodern war—a weapon that must be “forge[d]” out of the various voices of “interests” in the United States. The problem is partially one of definition, as noted earlier. But it is also described more candidly. It turns out to be the Vietnam syndrome, and they name it themselves (p. 3-4).

The military also performs its own discourse analysis of the definition of LIC as distorted by the Vietnam syndrome:

The United States is poorly postured institutionally, materially, and psychologically for low-intensity conflict. Much of the problem concerns the very meaning of the term, which emerged as a euphemism for “counterinsurgency” when that term lost favor. . . . Largely as a result of Vietnam, the mood of the government and the nation has shifted away from wanting to deal with “dirty little wars.” . . . [The United States's] preoccupation and loss of faith in itself as a result of the Vietnam War encouraged our enemies to be bolder and discouraged our friends, who came to doubt our wisdom and our reliability. (p. 1-9)

This is not just a general complaint. The report argues that these discourse rules apply to real policy and hinder its execution. They cite the proinsurgency support for the Contras. One of the main problems with the assistance for what the Pentagon liked to call the “Nicaraguan resistance to the Marxist–Leninist Sandinista regime” was public interest:

Intense scrutiny of political, moral, and practical aspects of United States assistance by the media, United States policy makers, and the public has resulted in a general inconsistency in the type, amount, and availability of United States assistance. (p. 2-2)

But it turns out the heart of this “political” and “moral” problem is technical (“practical”) after all; it is the invention and spread of electronic media:
The advent of electronic media has brought the gruesome aspects of political violence into the living rooms of millions of people worldwide. The result has been instant recognition for formerly unknown insurgent and terrorist groups. In addition, media coverage has led to an intense scrutiny of United States policies and actions. (p. 2-2)

It is a theme that this study continually returns to. Technology determines politics. Technoscience is politics by other means. It is related to the problem of “Western conscience” (presumably the “Eastern conscience” doesn’t have the same difficulties). Technoscience causes problems, which the Western conscience is bothered by. The thought of doing something about technoscience is never spoken officially; technoscience will solve the problems. But the conscience is pesky, so perhaps it can be minimized. Therefore, from the military perspective it is the “modern news media” that remains the main obstacle:

Protracted war troubles the Western conscience. It causes people to doubt their purposes and to assume that the enemy may have a just cause. Protracted conflict also increases the ambiguities of the situation, and the modern news media will bring these ambiguities home for public debate, exacerbating the uncertainties and compounding the difficulties of involvement. (p. 4-13)

Manipulating the media therefore becomes a crucial part of any low-intensity military operation:

The media exerts a powerful, if indeterminate, influence on public opinion, and this can have an impact upon operations, either for good or ill. Political and military leaders must consider the media’s role and develop appropriate programs and relationships that will sustain operations. (p. 6-12)

The report goes on to claim the media and the Pentagon should cooperate. But on whose terms?

It turns out that the plan is to use the press as much as possible. Volume II, Low-Intensity Conflict Issues and Recommendations, is classified. In its unclassified table of contents we find, Section H: Public Information and Support, Issue H1: “The Need to Use Media Coverage and the Free Press to Further United States Operational Objectives” (p. ix). Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf admitted doing this during the Persian Gulf War.

So, if the main issues are rhetorical, what of the central term, LIC, itself?

Low-intensity conflict is neither war nor peace. It is an improbable compilation of dissimilar phenomena that, like the Cheshire cat—which
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seems to fade in and out as you look at it, leaving only its mocking smile—bedevils efforts at comprehension. (p. 16-1)

The term "low-intensity" suggests a contrast to mid- or high-intensity conflict—a spectrum of warfare. Low-intensity conflict, however, cannot be understood to mean simply the degree of violence involved. Low-intensity conflict has more to do with the nature of the violence—the strategy that guides it and the way individuals engage each other in it—than with level or numbers. (p. 1-2)

These definitions are both from the same report. This obvious tension, even disagreement, about the meaning and definition of LIC is considered a serious problem: "No single issue has impeded the development of policy, strategy, doctrine, training, or organizations more than the lack of an approved definition of low-intensity conflict" (p. 1-2). Finally, after "years" of work, the Joint Chiefs approved an official definition:

Low-intensity conflict is a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, and psychosocial pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low-intensity conflict is generally confined to a geographic area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and the level of violence. (p. 1-2)

Notice how the definition must be formal, like a computer language. The longer definition hashed out by the project is an even greater reflection of this. It includes five major subcategories: Insurgency; Counterinsurgency; Terrorism Counteraction; Peacetime Contingency; and Peacekeeping.

Included within the category of Peacetime Contingency are many violent actions (although they use the euphemism "conditions" that are "short of conventional war." Some of the specifics mentioned are "strike, raid, rescue, recovery, demonstration, show of force, unconventional warfare, and intelligence operations" (p. 1-3; cited from TRADOC Pam. 525-44). These are obviously options usually for the "local" arena, the second crucial battle site:

The local arena is crucial because of two significant developments: the emergence since World War II of a number of new, independent states whose sociopolitical stability is often fragile; and the growth (in various societies) of groups, often with international connections, that are dedicated to radical change through violent means. (p. 1-4)

To explain this threat, the report uses a strange mix of historical and Manichaean assumptions. First, the problem is the instability caused by the postmodern collapse of colonialism and the resultant crisis of modernization.
Because "all societies have varying degrees of instability at various times" and "modernization and rapid development can seriously undermine traditional values, patterns of organization, and older forms of social cohesion," and since "nation building and rapid economic development are disruptive by nature," there is "the basis for instability and violent change."

But, along with the historical view that "these [are] inherent features of the modern world," coexists the claim that evil is real, in the form of "groups dedicated to bringing about a radical change of power regardless of the sociopolitical conditions of a given society." Why do they want to do this? Remember! According to the DoD, "the presence of legitimate grievances is only an excuse." Do they do it for love? For money? No, for the sake of "terrorism" pure and simple (p. 1-5).

And how is this force, terrorism, defined? "Terrorism consists of a series of carefully planned and ruthlessly executed military-like operations" (p. 5-3). Why is there terrorism?

Terrorism is carried out purposefully, in a cold-blooded, calculated fashion. The men and women who plan and execute these precision operations are neither crazy nor mad. They are very resourceful and competent criminals, systematically and intelligently attacking legally constituted nations that, for the most part, believe in the protection of individual rights and respect for the law. Nations that use terror to maintain the government are terrorists themselves. (p. 5-3)

At the same time, powerful constituencies cannot be offended. What good are nuclear weapons or even armored divisions against terrorists? The other threats have to be remembered. So, the report notes carefully that

The Soviets are the great menace and much of United States policy and the raison d'etre of United States international involvement derive from this threat. Budgets and programs, the meat and potatoes of influence in government, depend upon it. Furthermore, the United States public's normal penchant for isolationism and self-absorption—its inertia, short of clear, immediate, impending crisis—is overcome only by conjuring with this menace. (p. 1-10)

How honest, and how revealing now that the Soviet Union is no more. Where's the "menace" to come from if the Soviet Union is not a threat? What "reason for existence" (is it less obvious in French?) for the military then? Why would they get their "meat and potatoes" from the taxpayers? Why "conjuring"? Because people still don't see! They don't understand! "No constraint . . . is more powerful than our inability to comprehend the threat that faces us"(p. 1-10) the report proclaims. So the United States must prepare for a world that is
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perplexing and dangerous. As a superpower in the nuclear age with an economy largely dependent upon an extensive, vulnerable overseas trade system, this country faces challenges that are far more troubling and complicated than those that it faced before World War II. (p. 1-1)

U.S. interests are global. So, by being the dominant world power, the United States is in a "more troubling and complicated" position than before World War II. Because it is the world's dominant trader it is "vulnerable." The better things are, the worse they are. Every revolution is a threat to Pax America:

Insurgency poses an open and direct threat to the ordering of society. . . .

For the United States, with extensive global interests and an economy increasingly reliant on a stable world order, the chronic instability in the third world is a serious concern. (p. 4-1)

So even LIC becomes a threat, yet successful peace would mean the end of postmodern war.

Rhetorical Psychodynamics

We live in and through the act of discourse.
—George Steiner

There is no meaning without language games; and no language games without forms of life.
—Ludwig Wittgenstein

Man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun.
—Clifford Geertz

This language, this official-technical discourse that is the justification and rationalization for a very important and expensive military and scientific program, is supposed to be logical and free of rhetoric and emotion. Instead, the text is full of emotionally evocative figures of speech and images. Often in the case of technical material, the argument depends on this rhetoric or on the flowcharts, graphs, and other scientific tropes used, especially the hypertechnical language of bips, mips, gflops, mflops, and so on.

In many crucial ways, the perspective evident in postmodern war discourse is a case study of what Zoë Sofia (1984), discussed earlier in Chapter 5, has termed "The Big Science Worldview." Some of its key components are as follows:
- **Epistemophilia**—the “obsessive quest for knowledge.” It is certainly a common theme in military rhetoric, and it is the basic passion of all hard science fiction and, of course, of all science. While this passion for knowledge is not necessarily always a bad thing, as with all loves it can go wildly out of control.

- **Upward displacement** is most clearly seen in the extraterrestrial longings of the military’s desire for militarizing space. It is the sacred high ground. It also is reflected in their boundless faith in “high” technology.

- **Half-lives** are desirable. Types of half-lives include inorganic intelligence (especially artificial), cybernetic organisms, aliens, and other semiliving subjects such as ghosts. Society’s fascination with such creatures includes the military and science. Cyborgs are central here.

- **Cosmology recapitulates erogeny** is a fancy way of saying that how people view the world reveals what they think and feel to be erotic. In this light, military futurists, who believe mainly in technoscience and future war, have a similar erotics to the Italian Futurist art movement that wrote odes to the machine gun. F. T. Marinetti proclaimed in the *Futurist Manifesto*:

  We will glorify war—the world’s only hygiene—militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for and scorn for woman. (quoted in Lifton and Humphrey, 1984, p. 60)

- **Logospermatechnos** is that the mind breeds real brainchildren as myths and technologies.

There are other perspectives with their own epistemologies in computer science. While “The Big Science Worldview” is dominant in AI, there is also an alternative theory of knowledge that can be clearly seen in the debate among computer scientists about the viability of the Strategic Computing Program (SCP) and the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

The rules of evidence that count in this debate are quite different from the rigid replicability and experimental claims of the physical sciences. AI is a science of the artificial, not the natural, and especially it is a science of unions with the artificial. A good example of some of the applicable metarules can be found in the technical debate among computer scientists about military AI. It isn’t really an empirical debate; rather, it is creative and experiential.

Against the claims of some AI scientists that these military projects can indeed be made, others respond that they represent technological hubris, that their own experiences show that such projects will fail. For an argument the dissenters are as likely to tell a story as to cite a study. Certain stories of interesting computer bugs are used often. Favorites are (1) the rising moon sets off Early Warning System; (2) Apollo and shuttle software failures; (3)
DIVAD (Division Air Defense System) computer-controlled cannon aims at a review panel of VIPs instead of its target drone. The effect of these perspectives can be seen in the official Eastport Study Group report (1985), which admits in the section “On the Nature and Limitations of Software Research” that

if one wants to decide which software development technique is most appropriate for a particular subset of the battle management software, one can not make an objective assessment; it will rely at least partially on anecdotal evidence and the subjective judgement of experienced people.

(1985, pp. 46-47)

This is because with software design “issues of how humans can comprehend notations, express computation in them, and exchange complex, detailed information with one another are paramount.” The report points out on the next page that

assessments of software development techniques have been largely qualitative. Indeed many of the well-known papers in the programming languages and operating systems disciplines have a distinct flavor of literary criticism. (p. 48)

This emphasis on language and interpretation is part of the infomania of postmodernism. Along with mathematics, really a language for many computerists, natural language is at the core of computing, especially AI research. Computer languages, mathematical-logical, are a lingua franca of many a postmodern neighborhood today, especially in the military community.

But this is not just talk that will be understood in any human community. It is the street talk of the neighborhoods of high science, the latest technologies, and postmodern warriors. It is language that shapes policy and policy makers. It is language that yearns for new life and real power from the formal artificial languages that form the computer programs of the SCP. What kind of life does this discourse shape? What webs of significance does it spin around us? What meanings from this particular game and the forms of life it plays with?

The remaining chapters will explore its possible futures, and the forces that will determine which comes into being.