Chapter Thirteen

War and Peace 2000

Between Horrific Apocalypse and Utopian Dream

Postmodern war seems to be coming to an end yet to be determined. Currently, war's prospects oscillate between two very different poles: some form of horrific apocalypse or the even less likely possibility of general disarmament and peace.\(^1\) A dynamic fluctuation between them might mean a limited nuclear war or biological attack, with deaths in the millions, that would precipitate a general reevaluation of political realities. Without that "shock treatment" scenario we can expect a low level of continual horrors leading (at best) gradually to the kind of fundamental changes necessary for humanity to survive. It is almost a choice between a postwar world and a postcivilization one. However the conversation, the discourse of postmodern war goes, we will all have some say.

Postmodern war is a discourse for two reasons. First, its unity is rhetorical. It is by virtue of the metaphors and symbols that structure it, not by any direct continuity of weapons, tactics, or strategy between its various manifestations. A central metarule is "change." Once postmodern war ceases its incessant mutation it will no longer be postmodern war, and it may not be war at all. Second, it can be described as a culture. Ideas, material artifacts (especially weapons), people, and institutions are all jumbled together. The working out of what actually happens to this jumble very much resembles a conversation, all the more so since much, but certainly not all, of what happens is done with words, either written or spoken, and since the main actors (though not the only ones) and most of the judges (especially of definitions) are humans.

Looking at war as a discourse helps explain some of postmodern war's novel features. The most important of these is the centrality of information to power and rhetoric to knowledge. A discourse analysis also points to why shifting rules about bodies-machines and about gender are so crucial to understanding postmodern war. Finally, the discourse metaphor helps reveal some things about the possible future of war that are not readily apparent,
such as illusions of control that might lead to apocalypse, or the restructuring of military missions that validate peacemaking.

Information, Rhetoric, Power, Knowledge

In an analysis of power Michel Foucault quotes J. M. Servan, who in 1767 wrote a "Discourse on the Administration of Criminal Justice":

A stupid despot may constrain his slaves with iron chains; but a true politician binds them even more strongly by the chain of their own ideas; it is at the stable point of reason that he secures the end of the chain; this link is all the stronger in that we do not know of what it is made and we believe it to be our own work; despair and time eat away the bonds of iron and steel, but they are powerless against the habitual union of ideas, they can only tighten it still more; and on the soft fibers of the brain is founded the unshakable base of the soundest of Empires. (quoted in Foucault, 1977, pp. 102-103)

Servan was arguing for the forging of a link between the ideas of crime and punishment; much as links have been forged in the discourse of the U.S. military between high technology and victory and between scientific progress and military superiority. Foucault saw this form of "ideological power" as being superseded, or at least supplemented, in the last few hundred years by a new "political anatomy," which focused on the body as the ultimate object to be controlled, and made up of an economy of "punishments" and rewards. Cutting off the hands of thieves or torturing criminals and dissidents or mutilating their corpses gave way in much of the world to scientific prisons and criminal psychology. Today, it is the guardian of democracy, the United States of America, that has the highest percentage of its own citizens incarcerated.

In a similar way the discourse of the postmodern military is based not just on chained logics of "information = victory" and "more bombs = more safety" and the traditional "enemy = evil" and "us = good." There is also an array of particular subthemes (cyborgism, epistemophilia, technism), each one a discourse in its own right, that elaborate on these links and form a working economy of inducements and punishments that insist things must be the way they are.

This economy is not just the main discourse logic and the explicit and implicit arguments outside the central themes, such as the claims that the Strategic Computing Program (SCP) may not be good military policy but is great economic policy (for competing with the Japanese) or great scientific policy (for the love of knowing). There are reasons and connections that work on deeper levels. Beneath the rule that says "high technology equals military
power” are the meanings of “high technology” and “military power” themselves—meanings in the sense of the metaphors and other tropes that form the dictionary and speaking meanings, and meanings in the sense of the emotions triggered by the terms themselves and their associated concepts.

In the discourse system, the connections between subjects, institutions, artifacts, and actual discourses are usually unexamined metarules. One of the most important of these is metaphor. It is clear now that metaphors (and all powerful tropes) are often metarules. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out in their book *Metaphors We Live By* that the “essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another.” They go on and argue that if one defines metaphor broadly, then “human thought processes are largely metaphorical” (1980, pp. 5–6). Therefore, the metaphors we use to communicate our thoughts often play a major role in structuring them as well. That is one important reason to pay close attention to the dominant metaphors of postmodern war. Metaphors also delimit in many ways what we can think and feel. This is just as important a reason to pay attention to them.

Looking at the genealogy of postmodern war, it seems that changing the metaphors is one way of changing the metarules. The central metarule of war is its currency, human bodies. As they change in war, so changes war.

**Bodies, Machines, Cyborgs, Genders**

The man–machine system is more perfect than man or machine alone.

—*Druzhinin and Kontarov* (1975, p. 17)

It is actual bodies that are shaped by war. Writing about the Freikorps soldiers, the right-wing World War I German veterans who crushed the left in the early 1920s and fostered Nazism at the end of that decade, Klaus Theweleit remarks:

> The relationship of human bodies to the larger world of objective reality grows out of one’s relationship to one’s own body and to other human bodies. The relationship of the larger world in turn determines the way in which these bodies speak of themselves, of objects, and of relationships to objects. (1987, Vol. 1, p. 24)

Theweleit shows how the war cyborg became a dominant type in militaristic discourse after World War I. The rejection of the body that he notes in detail in the lives and writing of German protofascists is not a necessary part of cyborgization, but it is certainly a real temptation for many warriors. Even without the total rejection of the human, the line between the human and
the machine, body and object, has never been so vague as it is in contemporary man–machine weapon systems.

Outlandish as most of these military projects are, and strange as the concerns of philosophers might seem with our talk of the end of war and cyborg identities, it is important to remember that all this talk is based on a very mundane reality (when seen up close) of tax dollars, tens of millions of soldiers, millions of war machines, countless computer programs, and hundreds of thousands of working scientists.

It does not seem accidental that as the line between human and machine becomes vague there is growing confusion on the differences between male and female as well, especially in their relationship to war. Women have always been crucial to war, but it has seldom been admitted, by militarists or pacifists. Cynthia Enloe is a notable exception:

In each country military strategists need women. They need women who will act and think as patriarchy expects women to act and think. And they need women whose use can be disguised, so that the military can remain the quintessentially “masculine” institution, the bastion of “manliness.” (1983, p. 220; emphasis in original)

But women’s role is hidden no longer; now it is highlighted. Why should this be? A crucial factor in understanding the rules and metarules of any system of power/knowledge is to know what other discourse systems it is entangled with. In the case of postmodern war, already the intersection of science and war, there have been many signs that gender is also key. Science and war are clearly gendered as masculine domains. Within both, many subjugated knowledges take on alternative gender markings—either explicitly, as in the case of feminist critiques of science and war, or implicitly, as when emotion is counterpoised to rationality. Catherine Lutz describes in her work how permanent war, based in part on “the massive masculinity of the military,” produces the contemporary psychological ethic (1995).

So it isn’t surprising that computer weapon systems are clearly gendered as well:

They are “masculine,” in the full ideological sense of that word which includes, integrally, soldiering, and violence. There is nothing far-fetched in the suggestion that much AI research reflects a social relationship: “intelligent” behavior means the instrumental power Western “man” has developed to an unprecedented extent under capitalism and which he has always wielded over woman. (Edwards, 1986b, p. 40)

But the dynamic is actually a little more complex. Yes, the powerful machines are gendered male in most respects, but now the soldiers are less clearly defined. AI does seem to represent the social relations of postindustrial societies—as the machines are construed as masculine, the humans become
feminized or even neutered, especially the lower ranked worker-soldiers. In the context of postmodern war, this allows for the integration of woman soldiers into the military, which is crucial for practical reasons (their skills are needed) and social reasons (it is their right). They take on some traits gendered masculine; at the same time their fellow male soldiers seem "feminine," subordinated to officers and to powerful killing machines in weapon systems. While such coding of lower ranks as feminine has always existed to some extent, the traditional masculine identity of soldiers as killers used to dominate. Now the gender, as well as the sex, of soldiers is much more ambiguous.

It is everyone’s work, by and large, to make these killing machines. The vast high-tech apparatus of postmodern war is, in terms of size, potency, and projective power, the greatest work of humans ever. But it is a project that is managed, overwhelmingly, by men, and many of them know this and are proud of it. It is not an act of creation that is well regarded under many other discourse systems; but in most ways all other discourse systems are subordinate to those that frame and maintain postmodern war. This is because the system of systems, the metadiscourse that makes up human culture, is held hostage by war in a fundamentally new way. Now war is consuming the rest of culture through its ubiquitous discourse, destroying it as truly as any directly technoscientific wargasm might. Why is this?

The Causes of Postmodern War

The two most important causes of war that are usually ignored in war's own discourse seem to be (1) the character of technoscience and (2) the importance of emotions in how humans relate to technoscience and war. Greed (economics), ambition (human nature), and stupidity certainly play an important role in causing wars, but they don’t explain why war should continue when it threatens the human future.

Technoscience calls war into question (war will destroy the world) and simultaneously provides the rationales for continuing it (war can now be managed; war can be fought between bloodless machines). High-tech weapons, especially nuclear weapons, have also shifted the discourse of war in some crucial ways—freezing out world war and total industrial war, except in the budgets and imaginations of the armies of the world, and fostering dreams of painless “surgical” LICs.

Postmodern war exists because it has managed to deploy a specific and limited definition of rationality and science as an institution to replace valor. The assumed rules of this system are arguments of cost–benefit analysis, taken from business management, from science and technology, and various other types of sharply defined and constrained rationality. The values are those of lethality (killing humans and destroying machines) and low casualties for
“our side.” The rhetoric pits the human enemies’ (the other) machines against “our” good technoscience. Patriotic rhetoric has become the rhetoric of technological power. Consider the spectacle of jets at air shows in tight formation, of grand shuttle launches and landings, of proud parades and public rituals welcoming the new weapons systems into the military fold. The celebrations become even more intense when the weapons are actually used, witness the technoeuphoria of the 1991–1992 Gulf War.

There is also a pronounced bureaucratic structure to technoscience’s character that is especially visible in postmodern war. Implicitly military technoscience, like all technoscience, is in many ways a bureaucracy (and a network of bureaucracies), with interests in perpetuating itself in the realm of budgets, projects, and so on. It is made up of the bureaucracies of the U.S. Congress, the White House, the computing and other companies, the research facilities, the military services and commands such as ARPA, and the standing forces themselves. Bureaucracies always hide behind their explicit rules and run on their implicit standards toward their unstated, obvious, goals of status, advancement, perpetuation, and power. These goals are as emotional as they are practical. This book has shown that conscious desires are augmented by unconscious impulses to cope with the extraordinary anxieties of postmodern war, to transcend human limitations such as corporeality and mortality, and to continue the satisfying masculine rituals of war.

In a very real sense technoscience is being developed unconsciously. Consciously each project is just another weapon system, another source of contracts, grants, and eventually military power; unconsciously such projects offer life (battle) without death, erotic machines in place of bodies, and war eternal. For humans to think of controlling postmodern war we must understand the various forces that drive it.

Geoffrey Blainey shows in The Causes of War (1973) that a key element in the vast majority of wars is the serious misperception by both sides that they could probably win what they needed from the war. Perception is largely psychological of course, despite its physiological basis. The emotional attraction technophilia gives high-tech weapons also means that those who feel it overestimate the power of these weapons. Belief in these weapons leads to the kinds of misperceptions that have caused most wars. Belief in high-tech weapons leads to more wars.

Many of the researchers discussed in this book point out that the relationship between humans and technoscience is an emotional one. Zoë Sofia calls it epistemophilia (1983); Robert Jay Lifton (1987) labels it technism and nuclearism; Langdon Winner (1986) has his technological somnambulism, and Hans Morgenthau (1962) speaks openly of power lust. In different ways they all argue that technoscience has been politicized, even eroticized. What is crucial isn’t this political and erotic content, however,
although technology has never been so intensely eroticized and politicized as it is in postmodern war. What is important is that the potent emotional seduction of postmodern war is being disguised as rationality, especially to its most fervent admirers.

They don’t just like technoscience and appreciate its usefulness, they love it. It is connected to their sense of power intimately. Consciously they expect, with the assistance of science and technology, to move mountains, speed to distant friends, watch pictures from the moon, the Amazon, and London, see bodies play and fight in slow motion, live longer, and smite their attackers. Unconsciously it goes even further. They dream they can create life and live forever. They fantasize that they can totally dominate the other—be it a human or the earth itself.

The fear that such power evokes can be blunted by denial or through doubling, the creation of emotionally immune “other” selves that are professional or cynical or ignorant. Or it can be dealt with, as Sofia, Carol Cohn, and Lifton seem to agree it often is, by turning it into a love for what is feared. The people who plan, build, and use these war systems are exactly the people who, day after day, think about and plan war. They live in a world of war where war becomes the best solution for every problem, including the problem of war itself. This isn’t obvious to outsiders because they aren’t considered “experts” on war. But it is the experts who have been seduced. It is the experts who have lost their judgment because of the very intimacy with war that their expertise is based on. The implication is that this cycle must be broken, internally if possible, externally if necessary, if war is to be understood instead of worshipped.

Whatever other factors are involved, it seems significant that so much emotion can be easily uncovered within this power-knowledge system that lays such strong claims to rationality, transparent rhetoric, and value-free logic. What is portrayed as a disengagement of the emotional from the rational actually seems more of a disengagement from embodiment. Thus cyborgization is ignored, because to notice it would be to notice the human body and how it is being changed. Meanwhile, the emotional is not actually disengaged so much as it is displaced in a number of different ways. It is turned back, in the form of erotic attachment and gratitude, onto the technologies and weapons that generate fear in the first place. As fear and loathing it is placed onto the others (the evil communists or Hitler-like enemy leaders or drug lords, on the logical level, and women and nature, on a more latent level). It is even displaced onto these high-tech war machines, granting them rhetorical embodiment and other human qualities even as the humans are portrayed as emotionless and are thus reduced to “thinking heads.”

Certainly in this discourse, on a rhetorical level, there is the displacement of responsibility, intentionality, even embodiedness. These qualities are transferred through metaphor and other figures of speech and image from
the human to the machines. Then these machines become the subject of the
text in the same way weapons are the subject of strategic discourse. Bringing
the machines into existence is the whole reason for these texts and projects,
as strategic discourse is built around what weapons are needed for security
and the way these weapons might be used. Nuclear weapons, for example,
are a necessity of strategic discourse specifically, as computer weapons and
applications generally are seen as an undeniable necessity for the whole
Western style of postmodern war.

This system seems to feed off the emotions it represses. Rational war
becomes the controlled hysteria of nuclearism, and then it threatens to
become a technological Thanatos, the death instinct Sigmund Freud
brooded over so much at the end of his days. When the roots of war’s ritual
attraction are considered, the connection of destruction to creation in
postmodern war makes at least psychopoetic and mythological sense. What
Susan Mansfield said about rituals certainly applies to war: “Two themes are
universally present in the ritual: death and fertility. Death dominates the
initial and central steps; fertility is a subtheme that emerges to dominate the
conclusion” (Mansfield, 1982, p. 28).

Death and fertility: postmodern war and its proliferation of military
technology; death beyond imagining and technoscience procreation,
man the father and mother both. Subconsciously the vast destruction of
war implies an equally vast fertility. Unfortunately, postmodern war only
breeds new weapons and new wars. As Zoë Sofia shows in her work
(1983, 1984), it is an emotional economy that is quite patriarchal: the
subject is always masculine, even when it is a machine; as the object is
always feminine, even if it is a 19-year-old soldier-boy. It is mediated, in
popular culture, through aliens, women combat leaders, cyborgs, and
intelligent computers. In war it is reflected in the shifting status of
humans and machines and the intense repression of intense emotions.
It is described by unbelievers, politically and rhetorically, as ritualized
ideology, the ideology of preparedness, digital realism, magic bulletism,
technism, nuclearism, epistemophilia, technophilia, short-term and vul-
gar rationality, mechanized thinking, and technological fanaticism. For
believers it is only natural.

Considering these powerful underlying emotional dynamics it is no
surprise that, to a large extent, the war managers only manage the system
physically and politically; psychologically it manages them. It generates
emotional needs and meets them. It offers power over death through
megadeath and artificial life. It offers the illusion of control that will only
dissolve for some under the hard rain of real war. It is a complete emotional
universe, as long as there is war and rumors of war and therefore preparing
for war. This is for the managers. For the soldiers, and for the civilians who
are now, all of us, the prime targets of nuclear weapons, smart bombs,
terrorists, or drug raids, it is a different matter. Most humans don’t have an economic or a psychological investment in war.

In concluding his article on the AirLand Battle manager, Gary Chapman, who served as a sergeant with the Green Berets in Vietnam, comments:

We might like to be able to “manage” the living hell that modern battle is likely to produce, but the chances of achieving that seem remote. We have decided to build military systems that outstrip our ability to understand war, which has always been the most chaotic and least understood human activity. Automating our ignorance of how to cope with war will produce only more disaster. (1987a, p. 7)

Where we don’t understand but pretend we do, where we refuse to acknowledge that we do indeed feel, there and then emotions take command. To challenge that command we must take political action, for in the realm of political psychology there is no effective therapy, only policy. Setting that policy is not a psychological act but a political one. Postmodern war is first of all, and last of all, a political issue.

**Changing the Future of Postmodern War**

Never before have so many people assumed that war as an institution has outlived its usefulness. John Keegan, at the end of his brilliant evocation of soldiers’ actual experience of the battles of Waterloo and the Somme, *The Face of Battle*, notes, “the usefulness of future battle is widely doubted.” He goes on say, “It remains for armies to admit that the battles of the future will be fought in never-never land.” Even though soldiers continue to “show each other the iron face of war . . . the suspicion grows that battle has already abolished itself” (1976, p. 343). In *A History of Warfare* he is even stronger, declaring that war cannot continue (1993, p. 391).

Technology has rendered war too dangerous, leading to changes in the discourse of war:

Where war was once accepted as inevitably a part of the human condition, regrettable in its tragic details but offering valued compensations in opportunities for valor and for human greatness—or, more recently, in opportunities for the ascendency of superior peoples—the modern attitude has moved towards rejection of the concept of war as a means of resolving international or other disputes. (Brodie, 1973, p. 274)

Brodie goes on to add that it is “especially striking” that the only acceptable argument for war now seems to be self-defense, “expanded by the superpowers to include defense of client states” and only in a few cases the “correction . . . of
blatant injustice.” This may seem a cosmetic change, for in “self-defense” and “justice” there is room to justify almost every war. But in terms of war as a discourse it is an important distinction.

War discourse now is dependent on the desirability of peace to justify war. It is an important contradiction. The claim that war is natural was perhaps the central assumption of almost all war discourse up until the twentieth century. Most “just war” theories assumed that, as some wars were just, they were therefore natural. Then war began to assume unnatural proportions, and for many people pacifism began to seem natural. Still, traditional war discourse, tied in closely with ideas of masculinity and self-worth, not to mention the physical consequences of losing as opposed to winning wars, is still being mobilized. Now the older images are being deployed along with the “peace through war” trope that George Orwell found so ironic (“war is peace”), to make sure war isn’t abolished or that it doesn’t wither away. And just as importantly, postmodern war is now framed through computer metaphors and weapons as a manageable contest of intelligent machines in cyberspace, making it a much less horrible prospect. So, in spite of the invention and the use of the most incredible inhuman weapons the danger and reality of horrible wars remains at the same extraordinary level that it has since 1939.

This is one of the central lessons of this story—war discourse is tenacious. It is deeply embedded in human culture in many different ways. Remember, war is older than capitalism, older than socialism. It is older than civilization. War has a life of its own. In Barbara Ehrenreich’s maxim, one of the main reasons we still have war is “War for war’s sake” (1991, p. 23). Discourses, like bureaucracies, are self-perpetuating. This said it is important to reiterate that war is not the same as human culture. There has always been antiwar sentiment as well. Most people who have ever lived never fought in wars of any kind. And, as this book shows, war has only survived by reconfiguring and reinventing itself. War may be an old and powerful discourse, but it is a limited discourse all the same. It can be eradicated from human culture, but only if it is challenged as war per se, not just in its current postmodern incarnation. War's centrality to masculinity, its claims to spiritual power, and its defining role in politics have to be confronted specifically or the discussion will just shift from its obviously insane aspects. Some say war can never be abolished, but the same was said about slavery. It to was a very old discourse, and yet now it is almost totally discredited. Abolition of war is possible. Lately, it has even seemed very possible in the abstract but not in practice.

Unfortunately, the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union does not mean peace is about to break out. On the contrary, the United States sees Russian decline as a green light for more military adventures or for even official declarations of pax Americana. In February 1992 it was revealed in leaked Pentagon documents (Tyler, 1992) that the DoD was planning for a
strategy aimed at keeping any other power from even playing a regional role in the world. Europe and Japan were mentioned as particularly dangerous potential rivals. Possible midintensity wars were foreseen in Cuba, Iraq, Korea, the Indian subcontinent, China, and the old Soviet Union, echoing the military's shift to mid- and low-intensity conflict that dates from at least 1988 (Klare, 1990). The one-superpower world justifies a $6 trillion spending policy for the U.S. military that would leave it with 1.6 million soldiers and unprecedented world military dominance.

Meanwhile, the old Soviet Union has already become a site for war itself, and in general the other schism's of the world, especially between poor and rich, remain as deep as ever. With the breakdown of the bipolar world order, the danger of regional conflicts and "small" nuclear wars increases (Ramezoni, 1989). The Soviet–U.S. Cold War has recently been called a "Cruel Peace" (Inglis, 1992). The contemporary "peace" of pax Americana is certainly no kinder. In the next few decades U.S. military interventions will no doubt continue, probably until some defeat convinces the government that war is still dangerous and unpredictable. Despite the pax Americana the chances of a horrible (high-tech, high-casualty) regional war have also increased in the new multipolar world, especially in the Middle East.

On the level of LIC, the replacement of men by machines with the hope that casualties will be kept down makes wars like Vietnam, Afghanistan, and those in Central America much more politically possible for the West. Illusions about managing war and the precise application of force in the form of jet bombers with smart bombs or the battleship USS New Jersey have also contributed to a number of bloody low-intensity adventures by the United States in Lebanon, Libya, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia–Herzegovina. Nothing has happened to dispel these illusions. Individual Western leaders will now be more tempted than ever to displace bad economic news or dropping popularity polls with raids on demonized nations, especially during election years.

When both sides have high-tech weapons they believe in, which could well be often since they are sold around the world, midintensity conflicts can easily result. Without the superpower rivalry more regional wars will break out between traditional enemies, and there will continue to be civil wars as well. Some of these conflicts could become small nuclear wars, if there is such a thing. Perhaps it makes sense to call them limited nuclear wars, since the number of weapons used would be limited and would probably stop below the threshold of global annihilation, although they may cause apocalyptic changes to the world's climate. The continued proliferation of nuclear weapons, as well as the spread of computer command and control, means that the chance that total war could start accidentally or escalate from a limited conflict remains as high as ever if it isn't getting worse.

Three Russian analysts, at a Sipri conference in Sweden on weapons
and AI in 1986, predicted that the growing importance of computers in war meant that it was very possible to start a "new round of the arms race based in large part on the military application of new information technology" (Kochetkov et al., 1987). This is exactly what many government leaders within the United States have called for, although with a focus on LIC under its latest label, cyberwar.

Another important way the high-tech weaponry can negate nuclear disarmament is also discussed in the Russians’ paper. New information technology, with the use of rapidly improving conventional explosives, has the potential of greatly increasing the lethality of the battlefield: “Thus a situation is created in which increasing the accuracy of conventional weapons becomes equivalent to increasing their explosive power up to the level of nuclear weapons” (p. 160). Hence, the United States can plan to win midintensity conflicts by deploying conventional weapons with the power of small nuclear ones, unless their opponent has similar weapons or biochemical weapons with equal effect.

As if this were not bizarre enough, Marvin Minsky has pointed to another problem military computing might lead to—insane fighting machines:

The first AI system of large capability will have many layers of poorly understood control structure and obscurely encoded “knowledge.” There are serious problems about such a machine’s goal structure: If it cannot edit its high level intentions, it may not be smart enough to be useful, but if it can, how can the designers anticipate the machine it evolves into? In a word, I would expect the first self-improving AI machines to become “psychotic” in many ways, and it may take many generations ... to “stabilize” them. (quoted in Forester, 1985, p. 562)

So it is important not just to reduce the level of nuclear weapons but also to control the military use of high technology, in general, and information technology, in particular, or nuclear disarmament will be meaningless.

One of the other main themes to emerge in postmodern war is that technologies have unbalanced the distinction in war between the rational and the emotional. While this is in many ways a false dichotomy (and not one of my creation), it is a central image of war discourse and one that has restrained war somewhat. As long as it was accepted that war was in many ways irrational it could never be assumed that it was predictable and controllable. Pretending that emotion has been eliminated from war is a necessary precondition for the illusion that war is nothing more than a particularly severe form of implementing a rational policy. So how can the discourse be changed?
Deconstructing War

While war discourse is certainly not totally under our control, we humans can intervene in the system physically or verbally in ways that help restructure that very discourse. For example, war is not peace, it is not machines that die in war but people, and the real motivations for war are never the official ones. Just explaining these elements of postmodern war deconstructs much of its justification, if the explanations are believed and taken to heart. Such an intervention can be thought of as changing the rules of the conversation or, better yet, the metarules of war’s discourse. This book has pointed to four basic ways these rules about the rules might be reconfigured:

1. Actual physical constructions such as machine guns, nuclear weapons, naval bases, and computers can shift the rules of a discourse. While material objects and events don’t specifically determine any discourse, they play important roles. They have a great deal to say. Some things and events can’t be ignored; others are evocative of particular ways of thinking. This is not technological determinism. Humans choose to make particular technologies and they choose to seek answers to particular scientific puzzles. These choices are complex, and they have ramifications of their own. Perhaps some choices make others easier, but they are never inevitable.

2. What is said or written (be it scientific theories, conventional wisdom, definitions, or other rhetoric) can have a direct effect on the discourse rules. This is especially true of any reflexive conversations, conversations about the terms of conversation, since they are about the metarules themselves. It is with words, especially texts now, that the weight of traditions is inscribed on the bodies of believers and nonbelievers alike, leading to physical actions and reactions that are particularly important elements in the postmodern war discourse.

3. Human actions, the actual physical deployment of bodies, can strongly impact the rules of the discourse. When people act with or on bodies, other humans take note. War is actually the best example of this (Scarry, 1985). As Hugh Gusterson points out in writing about the Gulf War, “In matters of contemporary war the human body can be both a blank page awaiting the violent inscriptions of power and, when its subjectivity escapes subjection, a source of embarrassment and resistance to that power” (1991, p. 45). War is all about what can be done to bodies. But protesting, buying, selling, loving, hating, creating, dreaming, and many other interesting and important statements are also only made by human bodies.

4. Human institutions have their own “say” in the discourse. In part this is because the human bodies institutions deploy, the things the humans in the institution say, and the material objects and powers of the institution, all contribute directly to the discourse. But it is also because the institution
itself, whether it's a church, a business, a university, or an army, organizes its own part of the discourse field.

Together, these categories not only explain in part how a discourse system is modified over time to maintain its hegemony but also how it is changed from without, perhaps even converted to a new regime of truth, by the insurrection of subjugated knowledges. How this takes place specifically may be the most important issue of all.

**Constructing “Truth”**

If this “regime of truth” is going to change, Michel Foucault argues that it must be through the “insurrection” and “reappearance” of subjugated knowledges which will have the effect of “changing . . . the production of truth” (1980, p. 133). What might this mean?

Let us consider two examples. First, in the instance of Vietnam, a number of factors came together to eventually reframe the Vietnam War as it was understood in American culture. From a noble attempt to preserve democracy it became an insensitive, if not evil, attack on a distant land. The rules that were used to justify and explain the war were influenced by all four of the forces just mentioned, so that eventually they came to discredit the war. The struggle over the meaning of the Vietnam War is not over. Vietnam has become a rhetorical figure in itself, and the conflict over exactly what it proves and implies may last for decades. The dynamics of such a struggle are very complicated. They range from the portrayal of Vietnam veterans in popular culture through a fascination with what contemporary presidential candidates did during the war to technical debates about strategic bombing.

A key part of this process is showing how certain metarules that are sacred in discourse in the United States (freedom, justice, and the American way) do not really lead to the rules that framed discussion of the Vietnam War. In turn, the metarules themselves can be questioned and even changed, slightly, in the very process of remaking the Vietnam discourse.

The impact of the new technology of television (including satellites) has been remarked upon by almost every observer of the Vietnam War. To this day military officers and conservative columnists advocate total news management (as was done with the Grenada invasion), because of the role of TV during Vietnam. It is hard to convince people of one thing when something quite different is on the news every night at 6:00 P.M.

On the level of what is said, a whole array of different versions of what was happening in Vietnam came to the fore, helped greatly by exposés of official lying and deception. Crucial voices in this insurrection of subjugated knowledges came from those who actually fought there (such as Vietnam
Veterans Against the War) and others such as AID (Agency for International Development) workers or exiled Vietnamese, who could speak directly from experience. The great value of direct experience is one of the key metarules of Western political discourse, especially in the United States, going back at least to the Protestant validation of the individual's experience of God.

When it comes to the application of bodily force as a statement of subjugated knowledges, the best examples are the hundreds of thousands of antiwar protesters. Their main statement was often just to go out into the street. Sometimes they got themselves put in jail as well, a symbolic and actual rejection of the dominant discourse. Other actions were aimed directly at the war system. Some were violent (bombing), some not (blocking trains, resisting the draft). The dominant discourse, of course, responded with bodily force of its own. What is important in these struggles is not who wins the body war but whose version of that war becomes dominant. The appeal is often rhetorical in word or image: a flower in a gun, a burning flag, a burning girl running down a street.

In the case of Vietnam, the uneasy acceptance of the liberal thesis that Vietnam was a mistake (as opposed to the radicals' version that it was business as usual or the conservatives' belief that it was right and necessary, just not carried through) is still being challenged from all sides.

Another, related discourse struggle, still far from over, is around the central subject of this book, the discourse of the contemporary military. On the level of artifacts, the reality of bombs that choose their own targets, computer displays in many colors, machines that talk, and all the other little working projects, there is powerful support for the military's discourse, even though the actual usefulness of the deployed weapons is problematic and the possibility of future weapons as promised is small. Artifacts are powerful arguments. They are evocative of meanings beyond any logical reasons because they appeal to unarticulated erotic, aesthetic, and mythopoetic desires.

In the arena of what is said, however, there is great importance in what is not there. Within the discipline of AI, with most of its rules and metarules taken directly from the discourse system of science, the continual failure of military AI proponents to produce what they say is possible is very important. Already in AI's short history failures to produce scientifically reproducible results have led to major shifts in the field, specifically in the case of a number of early research programs and the abandonment, by the military, of most natural language research in the late 1950s.

Within the military it seems only war, a great maker and unmaker of bodies and artifacts, can shift the discourse substantially. Vietnam made the Pentagon more careful politically but more extreme technologically.

The insurrection of subjugated knowledges still takes place on the physical level as well, of course. For example a woman named Katya went
into the Vandenberg Air Force Base and smashed some computers for the Navstar system, part of the World War IV command-and-control network set up by the Pentagon with secret Black Budget funds. At her trial people were not allowed to mention "Nuremberg," or "International Law," or "First Strike." Even white roses were banned in the court because she chose the anti-Nazi resistance group of the same name as her symbol. She reached a few hundred people deeply with her act and thousands more read about her or saw 30 seconds about her on TV. The economy of punishments paid her back with three years in a cage to try and forge the link in all our heads: protest = prison. She has moved to subvert such an equation by earning early release and then graduating from Harvard Law School. Meanwhile, others took their hammers to military computers—such as Susan Rodriguez, found guilty of second-degree burglary and felony vandalism for using a sledgehammer on 55 computers at Physics International, which holds numerous military contracts (Gust, 1990; Martinez, 1990).

Dominant discourses are always shifting to take into account new events, and yet they are always trying to keep their metarules in force, such as "There will be war." But some of the most effective forms of metarule change can also be found in the continual struggle of subjugated knowledges. Such rule changes mark clearly the tautology that these power–knowledge systems that seem so out of control are the creation of human will whether we admit it or not. All of these forces in discourse can be deployed, either to benefit the continuation of the dominant discourse or in the insurrection of its subjugated knowledges.

It is important to notice that it is subjugated knowledges, not a single knowledge. No one person or theory will deconstruct this system and exceed the bounds of what we can consider possible. Foucault points out that the subjugated knowledges are many, their liberation and the breaking of the present power–knowledge system being a question of the politics of truth:

It's not a matter of emancipating truth from every system of power (which would be a chimera, for truth is already power) but of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time. (1980, p. 133)

Redistributing power, for that is what Foucault is saying, is a matter of politics. And, everyone seems to agree, war is politics. But looking more closely it seems that something has happened to change this. The current system of postmodern war is "just the opposite of politics" Virilio and Lotringer claim (1983, p. 170). But leave it to Michel Foucault to turn Clausewitz totally inside out. For Foucault (1980), politics and power are "war continued by other means." He charts three implications from this thesis: First, that
the role of political power ... is perpetually to reinscribe this relation through a form of unspoken warfare; to reinscribe it in social institutions, in economic inequalities, in language, in the bodies themselves of each and every one of us. (pp. 90-91)

Second, that the political system is "the continuation of war." Third, that "the end result can only be ... war." Two other French theorists, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, even go further and argue that the "war machine," as they call it, has "taken charge of ... worldwide order" (1986, p. 133). If one accepts their claim (and I am ambivalent about it) that there is a "war machine" (I would say discourse) that is independent of the needs of states and other institutions, you'd have to agree that the current militarized world political system is a sign of its great success. There is certainly evidence that politics are now dominated by war.

How can this "politics as war" inversion be broken? One obvious way is through language, by directly intervening in the discourse system. Michael Shapiro argues for this: "To enlarge the realm of politics—to politicize more aspects of human relations—one must analyze language as a domain of political relations and thereby use it rather than be used by it" (1981, p. 233). It is clear that it is crucial to reveal the political and other purposes hidden in technical forms and claims of technological inevitability. Rhetorical and philosophical interventions, if they can find a hearing, certainly can be effective in changing a discourse based on the emotion of no emotion, the rhetoric of no rhetoric, and the politics of no politics, but it probably will not be enough.

We must go further with Foucault's reversal of Clausewitz. If the end of war is to come, and the end of the war = politics equation, politics as we have known it in a world of war will have to end as well. This points to the importance of the antipolitics, or the new politics, of the antiwar movements, the peace movements, and the other social movements of identities and issues. They are seeking to create a political discourse that is unconnected to war.

Yet it is also inevitably connected in some ways, especially by inversion or negation, for war is an integral a part of the current dominant Western discourse. That is why many have argued for a strategy of subversion. James Fallows, for example, suggests that what may be needed is what William James called for, an "intellectual and emotional equivalent of war," namely,

a way to talk out feelings about masculinity, about national pride, about the proper balance between force and moral example in international relations, without turning our military into a game board on which those feelings are secretly played out. (1982, p. 183)
Fallows is saying that the metarules around masculinity, nationalism, and the morality of force are negotiated and defined through military policy, instead of in the culture as a whole. It is a dangerous situation. He goes on to quote Larry Smith's call for "an analytical road map" that would differentiate disagreements "based on facts" and those "based on assumptions." But he warns, "it will never be neat and pretty." What he is calling for is a discourse analysis that keeps the metarules separate from instances everyone can agree upon. Perhaps it could lead to an unmediated discussion, but it seems unlikely. People have to share premises to reach agreements; otherwise they talk past each other. The real important issues aren't the facts, they are the assumptions. Different assumptions produce different sets of facts.

This analysis has tried to look at the assumptions behind the facts, at the ways some facts help shape assumptions, and how we might relate to all this complexity, and even change it. I agree with Smith when he admits, "It will never be neat and pretty."

**Beyond Neat and Pretty**

The technical-military discourse, which wields such power over our lives, is defended with incredible rhetorical venom as rational and logical and it is defended with professional, institutional, and other methods concretely. Yet, it is really not disengaged intelligence so much as disembodied/decapitated reason. The actual distinction is not between the rational and the emotional but between epistemologies. There is the dominant theory of knowledge that is alienated, unaware of its emotional dynamics and closed because it claims universality for one specific (hyper-logical-rational) way of knowing. And there are others that are not hegemonic, that are engaged, limited (by preunderstandings among other factors), but always open because of their explicit denial of universality in an ironic understanding of their own irony that goes beyond a sense of absurdity and beyond despair:

> What you have in the absurd is a passage clear through irony to a despair so awful that it becomes blackly comic instead of darkly tragic. It's very much a part of what I would call the postmodern atmosphere, where even the gestures, intellectual and artistic, of modernism seen insufficient to register the apparent absurdity of contemporary actuality. (Fussell, 1989b, p. 8)

This is perhaps because the absurdity is only apparent. Underneath the absurdity of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughter House Five* and Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* there is an awful sense of vertigo. They expose a void; the gap between our sensibilities and the reality of postmodern war. Transcendence will be found in closing that gulf, not in mining it for new wars.
In one of Foucault's last interviews, he used a metaphor for seeking truth that corresponds to the process that most activist peace groups use in their decision making. They call it "consensus" and it is based on traditions such as Quaker meetings and women's consciousness-raising groups. Foucault calls it "dialogic." The basic elements of both are the same: the refusal of the "enemy" dualism, the insistence on mutual rights, and the acceptance of limited "difficult" truths instead of allegiance to a "just cause" (Foucault, 1984, pp. 381–382). This begins by recognizing that there are no sources of unmediated truth. Both war and peace can be labeled natural, but what is important is that either is possible. In choosing, the value of living human bodies specifically and the living environment in general should be weighed against ideological and personal furies. And this judgment must be by everyone, not just the elite individuals and institutions that dominate contemporary societies.

It is a matter of survival. The Sarajevos of 1914, 1944, and 1995 should never be repeated. War is very strong. We must be stronger.