

Social Darwinism, Class Conflict, and War: A Call for New Tools of Analysis for the Contemporary Moment

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Introduction

War. It has followed humanity from the beginning.¹ Is it an expression of the inherent violence of life? Is today's military conflict merely a symbolic abstract of pre-civilization humanity's struggle for survival? Or is war something more nuanced and complex? With every major technological change in society has come a corresponding change in warfare.² The shift from hunter-gatherers to a more stationary lifestyle increased the requirements societies had of the land, and brought different groups into conflict over resources. The time of empires brought this same struggle for resources—and by extension, power—to a new level. No longer was war defined by simple small scale skirmishes between clans; now organized armies of professionally trained soldiers marched against one another under the command of generals who took no part in the actual fighting at the behest of rulers hundreds or thousands of kilometers away.

Modern industry brought with it more changes with the invention of refined gunpowder being magnified by the industrial capacity to mass produce weaponry on a scale the world had never seen before. The simple cannons, of the previous age, were replaced with easily reloaded guns on such a scale that they required railcars to move and could fire across entire countries. The arrow was supplanted by the bullet, and the devastation of the projectile was made usable with only a modicum of training. Modern imperialism only increased the desire to use the improved tactics and technologies with which nations could go to war: automatic weaponry, the militarization of flight, and eventually the capacity to destroy the entire world with nuclear weapons. Every new technology seems subservient to militant intent. At every age, humanity has seen fit to turn its ingenuity towards destructive ends.

What does this say about the way in which society has advanced itself in the past? Is war merely the most overtly violent tools of Spencer's 'social Darwinism,' and natural selection by the sword, bullet, and bomb? Or is war a tool by which Marx would say the ruling classes keep the oppressed classes distracted with fear and hatred? In short, is war an amoral, yet progressive influence on society, or is it a malicious, calculated, negative influence?

This paper intends to explore some of the many ways war is viewed by Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx (along with other social Darwinists and class conflict theorists) and specifically draw a distinction between inter-societal (i.e.

¹ For several comprehensive overviews of the history of warfare see: "The Cambridge History of Warfare" (Parker

² See "War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today" (Boot, 2006, Penguin Press) for a plethora of examples of how war has influenced and been influenced by the social advance of technology.

conventional warfare), intra-societal conflict (i.e. revolution or civil war), and asymmetric warfare (i.e. terrorism or guerilla warfare).³ It intends to analyze how social theorists, such as Herbert Spencer and Karl Marx, would view these different kinds of conflict, and how they would judge them based on their respective theories of social Darwinism and class conflict. To do this, this paper will first briefly sketch out Spencer and Marx's respective theories before diving into a subject-by-subject analysis wherein both theories will be applied as comparisons and contrasts to the subject at hand. The evolution of warfare will also be briefly discussed to help parallel the ideas of class conflict and social Darwinist 'evolution' within the narrative of history, and note how war is 'improving' at a dangerous pace. Finally, this paper will point out that contemporary sociology is largely unprepared for what the future holds for war and humanity in the post-national world of corporations, terrorist groups, and multi-national alliances, such as the E.U. and U.N. In doing so, the hope is to successfully convince any who would read this to focus on war in the modern world as a serious subject of sociological study.

Classical Perspectives: Spencer & Social Darwinism

Herbert Spencer draws parallels between the biological and the social worlds to justify his application of Darwinian evolutionary theory to societies (Ritzer, 2011, p. 136). Nature is seen as a body of life, and in the same way society is seen as a living organism. This idea—that many things are only separated by an order of magnitude—is not a new one; with this general concept dating at least as far back as (approximately) 380 B.C.E. with Plato's city-to-person analogy: "there [is] no difference between a just man and a just society" (Cornford, 1945, p. 131). While not new in principle, Spencer was one of the first to apply a purely biological tilt to the analogy. By claiming that society is like a body and that it contains aspects that are similitude to organic life (Ritzer, 2011, p.140); Spencer assumes that what is true in the natural world must be true in the social world as well. This is also where the term 'organicist' comes from: the equation of the social with the biologic via organic allegories (Ritzer, 2011, p. 34, 140). Spencer uses this biological-social parallel to assert that evolution does (and indeed should) exist in the social sphere in ways very similar to the way(s) in which it exists in nature—hence his bastardization of Darwin via 'survival of the fittest' (Ritzer, 2011, p. 136).

Many sociologists beyond Spencer have drawn similar analogies between nature and society, and this seems to be a theme in classical sociology, most likely because of the strong scientific influences surrounding the sciences during the time. Enlightenment science had supplanted philosophy as the best way of 'knowing the world', and sociology often would try to model itself on scientific models to ride on the coattails of that prestige (Ritzer, 2011, p. 9). As such, the philosophic city-to-person analogies of the past (i.e. Plato) were replaced with

³ This tripartite definition of war is one commonly used among defense and security analysts, see Lele (2014).

natural science allegories (i.e. social Darwinism and organicist allegory). Spencer's vision of social Darwinism then was one of amoral, naturalistic progress, where the weak should be exposed to the elements so to speak for to be weeded out (Clark, Graetz & Trahair, 1989, p. 290). Spencer was well placed to commentate on war, as he described two broad stages of society, the military society and the industrial society, with one being the stepping stone to the other (Ritzer, 2011, pp. 142-3).

Marx & Conflict Theory

Physical conflict is a central theme of Marxian theory, and it is unsurprising, as Marx sought to reify Hegel's dialectic by materializing it (Ritzer, 2011, pp.19-21, 152). The alienation of the worker from their productive activity, the product of said activity, their fellow workers, and even their own human potential within capitalism was a contradiction which "cannot be resolved merely in thought" (Ritzer, 2011, p. 162) and requires action: conflict.

The macro-level conflict of the Marxian dialectic is played out between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, that is, the owners of the means of production (factories, resources, etc.), and those which must sell their labour to survive (Ritzer, 2011, p. 169). This dialectic is—and has already been stated as—a material one. It is comprised often of physical conflict especially within a given region within which it is easier to organize and come to the realization of class consciousness, or a class which realizes it is a class for itself (Ritzer, 2011, p. 169). As such, Marxian conceptual tools lend themselves well to the analysis of what the author dubs intra-societal conflict, or conflict within a society.

As we will see in the following sections, while intra-societal conflict is at least potentially viewed in a positive light by Marxian theory, inter-societal (that is, conflict between societies) is seen as counter-productive to the creation of class consciousness, or the overthrow of the capitalist order. In either case, Marxian conflict theory has something to say about inter- and intra-societal conflict making it a useful tool to analyze those types of conflict.

Conflict in Many Forms: Inter-societal conflict

Inter-societal conflict is defined by the author as conflict between societies. For the purposes of this paper 'societies' and nations will be mostly interchangeable. The author refrains from interchanging 'societies' with 'nation-states' as when it comes to asymmetric warfare nations can be involved, but sometimes the state is absent.

Inter-societal conflict is also what one would conventionally think of as 'war.' This is the armed conflict between countries that has existed for as long as there have been countries. The two perspectives we will be drawing on most heavily in this paper, Marx's class conflict and Spencer's social Darwinism, come out on opposite sides of the fence when it comes to their interpretation of inter-societal conflict.

On the one side, Spencer would have a positive view of inter-societal conflict, albeit with several caveats. To put it into historical context, Spencer's 'survival of the fittest' organicist thought was paralleled at the time by military analogies which also dominated the theoretical field. For example, Gustav Ratzenhofer was a 19th century sociologist and military general for whom "the social world [was] essentially a battlefield of competing group interests" (Malešević, 2010, p.197). It is easy to see how Spencer's organicist ideas are compatible with military thought as Spencer's view of 'survival of the fittest' was very much oppositional. While much of organicist discussion of social evolution speaks to the slow pace therein and would usually discount the drastic and rapid changes brought about by military action, Spencer did not see military action as opposed to his ideas of organicism (Ritzer, 2011, p.140). On the contrary, he saw the defensive and offensive abilities of the military arms of societies as natural evolutionary points in the great social evolution (Ritzer, 2011, pp. 141,143).

While it is not a massive logical jump to connect Social Darwinist theories with militarist theories, it is important to note that Spencer saw war and militarism as a lower stage of societal evolution—the militant society which would evolve into the industrial society (Ritzer, 2011, 142-144). It was really other theorists, such as Kidd, that really lauded warfare as the forefront of social evolution (Clark, et al., 1989, p. 290).

To return to the biological metaphors of Spencer, inter-societal conflict (i.e. conventional warfare) would represent conflict outside the 'body' of society, or conflict with other 'bodies.' The organic metaphor here would be of physical adaptation to the outside environment. Again, conflict is not necessarily desired by Spencer, but is sometimes necessary to defend, or advance, the cause of the body (the society): "[w]ithout war large aggregates of men cannot be formed, and...without large aggregates of men there cannot be a developed industrial state" (cited in Ritzer, 2011, p. 143). Further to this: "[w]e must recognize the truth that the struggles for existence between societies have been instrumental to their evolution" (cited in Ritzer, 2011, p. 143). This evolution is accomplished at the expense of other 'bodies' (societies). War is seen by organicists and proponents of social Darwinism to a 'competition for life,' and thus is designated as a means of social evolution (Malešević, 2010, p.203). Theorists, such as Sumner, go as far as to claim war-between-nations (inter-societal conflict) is a constructive social force (Malešević, 2010, p.204).

On the other hand, class conflict theory as elaborated by Marx would denounce inter-societal conflict as a distraction from class consciousness at best:

[T]he capitalist pits one worker against another to see who can produce more, work more quickly, or please the boss more. The ones who succeed are given a few extra rewards; those who fail are discarded. In either case, considerable hostility is generated among the workers towards their peers. This is useful to the capitalists

because it tends to deflect hostility that otherwise would be aimed at them. The isolation and the interpersonal hostility tend to make workers in capitalism alienated from their fellow workers. (Ritzer, 2011, 162).

This distraction of the proletarian worker from the real cause of their alienation is precisely what takes place during inter-societal conflict—merely on a larger scale. Worse still, soldiers' sacrifices affirm and justify the society/regime they fight for (Malešević, 2010, p.205). Participation becomes tacit consent. Instead of the workers of a factory hating the workers of a competing factory, the workers of an entire nation hate the workers of another. Instead of losing one's time to work, one expends one's life to the juggernaut of war. Marx would oppose fighting for the state as "[c]apitalism...is not simply an economic system; it is at the same time a political system" (Ritzer, 2011, p. 163) which makes up the modern state. Theorists of class conflict such as Mosca also support Marxian opposition to inter-societal conflict as having a standing army geared towards inter-societal conflict allows a minority to hold military power which in turn can be used to oppress the lower classes (Malešević, 2010, p.201).

Other conflict theorists tend to agree with Marxian logic here with the Austrian theorist Franz Oppenheimer describing the state as "essentially an organization of violence that emerges as a result of violent conflict through which the dominant group subjugates the defeated group" (Malešević, 2010, p.199). Georg Simmel described it well: he believed that war reduced considerations of those fighting it. Money, fame, consumerism, all lost relevance to those involved in war, and the focus of life is reduced to black and white: us versus them, back to the basics, survival of the fittest (Malešević, 2010, p.205). This reduction in consideration precludes the development of class consciousness⁴—the understanding of the class as a class and the realization of 'class goals'—not by the development of false consciousness, but rather a lack of consciousness as bare necessity takes over.

Intra-societal conflict

The next form of conflict is intra-societal which is defined as conflict within a society. Civil war, class war, and revolution all could fall under this designation. The author is aware that within the care of civil war especially it is possible that there is conflict between two nations within one state, but the point here is to retain the idea of 'internal conflict' as opposed to 'external,' i.e. conventional warfare.

Despite his 'survival of the fittest' ideas, Spencer was actually quite conservative. It was not a radical meritocracy that he advocated, but rather a

⁴ For a full description of class consciousness and false consciousness see pp.54-55 of the Penguin Dictionary of Sociology. A class with false consciousness is what Marx would call a class in itself while a class with class consciousness would be a class for itself (Ritzer, 2011, p.169).

'survival of the most socially lucky.' The rich and powerful were the 'fittest' by right of birth often, rather than effort. This is a criticism that Marxian thinkers could easily level at Spencer and his ilk. Despite this seeming contradiction, the fact remains that Spencer and social Darwinists like him opposed the kind of radical social mobility and upheaval represented by internal, intra-societal conflict. Lester Ward drew a distinction that I believe Spencer would wholeheartedly agree with: he (Ward) saw revolution as detrimental to social evolution—because it destroyed society from within—but he saw warfare as beneficial because it was a proving ground for the most 'fit' society (Malešević, 2010, p.198). As noted previously, Spencer at the very least saw inter-societal conflict as acceptable, if not desirable. The opposite is true about intra-societal conflict; however, Spencer's view of society decries intra-societal conflict as dysfunctional and running counter to the proper functioning of said society (becoming a 'body at war with itself') and thus is opposed to it.

To a proponent of class conflict, intra-societal conflict is both good, and necessary for the evolution of society's power structure. This contradicts social Darwinist views, which would—as previously noted—view intra-societal conflict as a threat to maintain society's overall power structure. Italian sociologist Gaetano Mosca noted that the class that bears arms will time and again enforce its will upon the class that bears the tools of industry (Malešević, 2010, p.201). This indirectly references Spencer's mention of militant societies and how under military rule the individual is owned by the state (Ritzer, 2011, p. 143). Here we can see that even theorists with generally opposing views on society still manage to pick up on historical trends. This is one of the strengths of sociology: it can ideally engender an acceptance of historical fact, but leave room for theoretical disagreements.

From a class conflict perspective, it makes sense that one would be a proponent of violent change. Corrupt society cannot be reformed, but must be destroyed before it can be rebuilt (Malešević, 2010, p.205). The conflict theorist Sorel thought class conflict was necessary and that violence was the lifeblood of progress equating strikes to warfare (Malešević, 2010, pp.204-5). Here we can see that the military analogies and parallels exist on the class conflict side of things as well ('class warfare', etc.). As such, the focus within class conflict theory would be on the conflict within a society as being the positive shaper of change.

Asymmetric Warfare

While nothing 'new' per-se (guerrilla tactics and insurgency have been practiced in various form for millennia), asymmetric warfare seems to

wear a new face in the modern day.⁵ With the ideological and technological changes wrought during the 20th century, asymmetrical warfare emerged as prevalent social phenomena. The imperialism of the age saw troops armed with rifles and cannons marching against tribal groups armed with bows and arrows, and made the technological gap obvious. In response to the overwhelming superiority of western Imperialist military technology, the only thing that could be relied on was the land. Resistance to Imperialism in many places took the form of guerilla warfare. Terrorism and insurgency were seen as the only effective option against occupation (Ramanathapillai, 2008, p. 116).

While much work in international studies and by 'security experts' has gone into the study of asymmetric warfare in the guise of terrorism, it is clear that the conceptual frameworks, given to us by Spencer and Marx, are inadequate to analyze such a form of conflict. Marx's favour for conflict was explicitly intra-societal, and Spencer's was explicitly (and conditionally) inter-societal. The closest that can be gleaned of their opinions would be the world of the likes of neo-Marxists. The 20th century sociologist Lester Ward invented a concept of synergy which is not unlike Marx's dialectic, and applied it in a very militaristic way seeing war as a natural part of social interaction as well as the primary catalyst for social change (Malešević, 2010, p.198). In this way, it is possible to conceive of asymmetric warfare in particular—and warfare in general—as a potential tool for revolutionary change. This is; however, a bit of a stretch as asymmetric warfare is distinct from inter-societal warfare which is the topic being discussed by Ward. The lack of specific sociological analytical tools readily available necessitates the brevity of this section, and inversely the length of this paper as it is precisely the point that author is attempting to make that our current frameworks of understanding are outdated for this aspect of the contemporary world.

The Evolution of Warfare and Birth of the Military-Industrial Complex: Warfare, then & now

Violence has not disappeared in the wake of mainstream sociology's change in focus away from large scale conflict; however, on the contrary, the 20th century post-WWII continued to contribute to 250 new wars and 200,000,000 deaths making it the bloodiest century in human history (Malešević, 2010, p.206). This shows the massive impact of war and the need for sociology to focus on all

⁵ Ajey Lele agrees that asymmetrical warfare is nothing new but has taken on a new form post-9/11 noting that "it has been observed that the character and nature of war itself is changing, particularly amid the wars between states and non-state actors" (Lele, 2014, p. 98). He goes on to state that "[a]symmetry means the absence of a common basis of comparison in respect to quality, or...capacity" (p. 99). Further, that "[i]n the post-modern warfare era, the character and nature of war is being altered by technological, social and cultural advances. At the same time, it has been observed that warfare is beginning to be dominated by unconventional tactics" (p.100) particularly in the form of terrorism.

levels and types of conflict, but specifically war as a social thing in and of itself as opposed to simply a catalyst or end result of some sort.

Along with the scale of conflict, the way in which war is waged has changed greatly in the last century. The turn of the century brought a new form of warfare: total war. Total war is defined as armed conflict between large nation-states in which populations and resources are rationally and extensively organized for conquest (Ashworth, 1968, p. 407). Along with this change in scale came a change in how the soldiers on the ground viewed enemy combatants. For most of human history you had to get within spitting distance to kill someone effectively. Not so in the world of mortars and sniper rifles. At the beginning of World War I, the troops knew the enemy was human: they could hear them eating, talking, and laughing across no-man's land (Ashworth, 1968, p. 408). War had not yet taken on the pervasive dehumanizing nature that was soon to come. However, this last vestige of 'honour' (if it can be called thusly) was not to last long. After the first Christmas, the intent of the social elites was clear: to dehumanize the enemy and alienate the soldiers from their fellow men. The ruling class expectation of war was for 'our boys' to utterly destroy the enemy, both physically and morally (Ashworth, 1968, p. 409). This was a bourgeois imposition of 'Othering,'⁶ and it is easy to see from this where class conflict theorists draw their ire at inter-societal conflict. War becomes just as alienating and dehumanizing as labour—but even more violent and deadly. Soldiers leave their proletarian existences back home simply to join the proletariat of the trenches. This was total war, and it was to shake the world.

It wasn't simply the relation between human fighters that was changed in this evolution of combat, but also the relation people had with their environment. In ancient times, the focus of war was simply to defeat the enemy army, and certainly didn't resemble the 'scorched earth' policies of the 20th century; for there was a nearly universally shared respect—indeed often a sacred respect—for the land's ability to provide (Ramanathapillai, 2008, p. 114). Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism all revered the land, and the followers of all these religions acted accordingly (Ramanathapillai, 2008, p. 114). It was not only 'eastern' religious traditions that held respect for the land; Abrahamic religions, such as Islam, had strict rules about warfare: banning doing harm to non-combatants (Qur'an, 2:190), condemning using more than the minimum necessary force (Qur'an, 2:1), and decrying the killing of innocents as tantamount to murdering the entire human race (Qur'an, 5:32). With parallel 'rules of war' within the Christian tradition as well one can be forgiven for thinking there was something approaching containment, or restraint surrounding the conduct of warfare in the past.

This began to change with the inception of more and more effective ranged weaponry and more and more aggressive imperialism. Ranged weaponry made

⁶ By this the author means the sharp distinction drawn between in-group (the 'us') and out-group (the 'them' or 'Other') where it becomes easy to dehumanize the 'them' as a result of 'them' being positioned so far from 'us.'

combat more and more impersonal (Ramanathapillai, 2008, p. 115) and aided in the drive by the elites to dehumanize the enemy. It is easy to convince someone to fight a beast and easy to convince someone that their fellow man is a beast when they cannot see or hear otherwise. Comparisons to beasts and other dehumanizing language increased in prevalence during the Imperialist era with such well known notions as the 'White Man's Burden' to 'civilize the savages' being the intellectual and ideological staple of the day. This combination of dehumanizing language and ideologies, and the increasingly impersonal nature of military technology greatly changed the face of war.

The increasing prevalence of asymmetric warfare during the 20th century was met with a 'scorched earth' policy on the part of Imperialist aggressors. The Vietnam War is a good example of this wherein the U.S. inflicted massive collateral damage by destroying hundreds of thousands of square kilometers of rainforest with napalm and 'carpet' (saturation) bombing (Ramanathapillai, 2008, p. 118). The aftermath of any similar war is obvious for decades to come with unexploded ordinance and land mines littering the once-battlefield. Indeed, the massive use of napalm in Vietnam made the term 'scorched earth' quite literal in the most gruesome way imaginable.

No longer could war be neatly contained; it would drag on for years with no clear end in sight. More and more the wars of the 20th century spread to effect dozens of regions simultaneously (Ramanathapillai, 2008, p. 118). This created massive refugee problems and entire generations who are 'shell-shocked' by war. All of these consequences seem ripe ground for sociological research, and if this brief catalogue of the leaps and bounds of military innovation and escalation doesn't add a sense of urgency to the initiation of that research, not much will.

The military-industrial complex

Since the Second World War, the concept of total war had taken its toll not just morally but economically. The world has since shied away from engaging in total war. Instead, we see nations, such as the U.S., engage in 'perpetual war.'⁷ This means they are not following the definitions of total war (focusing all aspects of the society towards the war effort), but instead they have replaced the magnitude of total war with a lesser degree of seemingly endless conflict. This is where such concepts as the military-industrial complex come to the fore for when perpetual war is engaged in there needs to be methods in place to focus a certain portion of industry on military ventures which then gives a large portion of the economy over to the vested interest in conflict.

⁷ A term used by the author, not derived from outside sources.

The military-industrial complex⁸ can be characterized by massive peace time defence spending by a nation-state and an increased militarization of foreign policy (Brunton, 1988, p. 599) both factors feeding into each other and allowing a perpetual state of building for, engaging in, and rebuilding/preparing for war. It is no wonder then that perpetual war is a modern phenomenon then as it is only made possible after the resources and will are in place for a military-industrial complex to take hold. U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower was one of the first to identify and conceptualize the M.I.C. (Brunton, 1988, p. 599), but this didn't seem to prevent it from taking hold; on the contrary, it seems that the U.S. has been dominated by it ever since.

In the modern day less and less of the international realm is being dominated by the nation-state and more and more dominated by non-nation actors (Bhabha, 1999, p. 11). This only increases the influence of the M.I.C. as the peacetime procurement of military goods is mainly done through private interests (Brunton, 1988, p. 600) which are by definition non-nation actors. This takes power away from the nation-state and puts it into the hands of private multi-national corporations who adhere to the laws of no land, beholden to no single state. How does this effect war? War becomes a form of 'make work' project and lines the pockets of private interest. In short, war becomes a business, not much different from any other: just a series of numbers, transactions, expectations, and—most insidiously in this case—a desire for growth. While the concept of war profiteering is not new the scale on which is it embarked upon within the clutches of the M.I.C. is new.

How would Spencer and Marx view the M.I.C. through the lenses of their respective theories? The social Darwinism of Spencer would rebuke this focus on militarism as a bastardization of the industrial society (Alfred, et al., 1989, p. 290). The conflict theories of Marx and others would decry this as a further distraction from any chance of proletarian uprising; for if the nation-state cannot be overcome then how can anyone expect the proletariat to be able to overcome something as massive, decentralized, and intangible as a multi-national corporation?

Conclusion

Neither Spencer nor Marx could have fully anticipated the contemporary world and indeed they are would both likely recoil from it for their own reasons. Spencer because of the power elite's (to use C. Wright Mills' term⁹) use of military expenditure as a way to consolidate and continue their power (arguably preventing a fully 'industrial state' due to the continuance of the trappings of the

⁸ Henceforth 'M.I.C.'

⁹ For a nuanced discussion of the concept of the 'power elite,' a loose, yet powerfully interwoven, tripartite of men and women of power within the economic, political, and military social spheres, see: C. Wright Mills. (1956).

'military state'). Marx for the same reason, the continued existence—and proliferation—of war and its industries does nothing to raise the proletariat out of their oppression; it only gives them another bourgeois avenue to die in.

The post-WWII rejection of war as even a consideration of mainstream sociology (conflict on a macro-level), and the subsequent focus on micro-level conflict—as well as the partition and narrowing of fields of study, is leading us into a lag of knowledge on warfare (Malešević, 2010, p.206). This is dangerous because it leaves us unprepared for the possibility of major war, and deluded when war does happen because it doesn't bear a resemblance to the conflicts of the past (the case-in-point of this would be how seemingly unprepared the world was for the rise of asymmetric warfare in the 20th century, and the modern face of 'terrorism'). This robs sociologists of major tools of analysis necessary to understand and critique ongoing and future conflict. In effect, it leaves society in general—and academia in particular—in a dangerous state of ignorance which could very well bite humanity in the rear if we do not devote time and study to warfare on all levels.

We have seen that the modern world is perhaps not how either side of the organicist/class conflict theorist divide might have suspected it would turn out, and because of this the conceptual tools which they provide are ill-suited to a nuanced analysis of modern military conflict. This is particularly the case for asymmetric warfare, which blurs the line between inter-societal and intra-societal conflict, pitching all sorts of actors against one another. This is perhaps the most terrifying realization of them all: we are not right, or wrong, we are ignorant, and in so being, blind to potentially catastrophic dangers. This lack of complex conceptual frameworks with which to analyze the war in the modern world shows the need for dedicated research and theory-building in relation to the world's interwoven fabric of conflict, especially between nation-states and non-nation actors (asymmetric warfare).

Sociology has plenty of tools with which to study the origins and aftermaths of such conflicts, but rarely is the conflict itself analyzed as a unique, phenomenological thing. Hopefully the author has made a successful case for such an undertaking, and others will take up this cup before the world changes for the worst in potentially irreparable ways. Ending on a very Marxian note, it is not always beneficial—especially in regard to topics of such gravity as war—to attempt complete detachment from the object of study. Sometimes it can lead to a situation where emotional detachment allows for the downplaying of otherwise critical areas of study; such as war. Indeed "to Marx it was impossible and, even if possible, undesirable to be dispassionate in...[the] analysis of...society" (Ritzer, 2011, p. 153). Let yourself feel, allow your conscience to point you in the direction of a problem, and then clear your head and set about analyzing—and hopefully aiding in remedying—the problem.

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