

THESES

1st Lieutenant Balázs FORGÁCS

**TODAY'S CULTURES OF WARFARE
(THE THEORY AND DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES OF WARFARE IN MODERN
AGES)**

Summary of PhD thesis

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The definition of problem

History and war are inseparable: human societies, once other means were exhausted, have invariably turned to violence to prove their respective points. Looking at the history of warfare, however, one is struck by the fact that while war has been universal, the individual peoples and their military leaders have used resources in highly varied ways to achieve military ends. This is understandable: the parties in conflicts belonged often to different civilizations, and often had very different conceptions of leadership, manoeuvre and engagement. It can be demonstrated that – as most other things – warfare has been, and is still, imbued with cultural patterns. If this is indeed so, it is both a legitimate and a potentially productive enterprise to investigate the cultures of warfare. Cultures of warfare, it will be shown, are in fact impacting current military affairs, the boundaries separating them, however, have become more porous recently..

The Aims of the Research

In Hungary, the question of cultures of warfare was taken up by Jenő Kovács in the greatest detail, notably in his monograph *The Military Strategy of Hungary*, where he attempted, among other things, a survey of this issue area. While Kovács did not have the opportunity to prepare a comprehensive treatise on this subject, the value added of his approach can clearly be identified by investigating contemporary conflicts and defence issues. The aim of my research became, accordingly, to proceed with a more thorough survey of cultures of warfare and demonstrate the explanatory power of the concept for analyses of modern defence studies.

Methodology

The thesis attempts to work its way through to the concept of cultures of warfare proceeding primarily through induction and analogy, taking the use of the instruments of force in general as its starting point. The justification for this procedure is that behind the differences in cultures of warfare there exists a common core, war itself, understood to refer to violence used for political purposes. International military theory has adopted a definition of war that rests on this assumption, following Clausewitz who concluded that „[w]ar

therefore is an act of violence to compel our opponent to fulfill our will.” Throughout my dissertation, I refer to war in this manner. Taking this notion as a starting point permits defining a clear focus for the investigation, which permits making distinctions among the various cultures of warfare. This consists in asking the question of what uses of force characterize them and how these preferences are reflected in ideas about the relationship between politics and military issues.

The thesis attempted to investigate the above questions by drawing on two types of source material, theoretical works by military and political thinkers and memoirs by distinguished war leaders. It follows from this that the thesis is primarily a product of library research and does not include references to archival materials, given the overwhelming significance of printed sources for analyzing questions of military theory – certainly as far as the past two centuries.

The Structure of the Dissertation

The primary goal of the dissertation is to go beyond sketching an evolutionary history of cultures of warfare by reconstructing the theoretical foundations, the main theses and characteristics of these cultures, and, second, to argue for the gradual disappearance of the once sharp boundaries separating them. These goals determine the structure of the dissertation as a whole.

Chapter 1 provides a summary of the historiography on cultures of warfare. Proceeding from a survey of influential early modern theorists (Machiavelli, More, Montesquieu), I attempt to build an argument that modern military theorists were conscious of at least elements pointing towards a theory of cultures of warfare. I argue further that the broadening of the concept of strategy during the Cold War logically led to attempts to define cultures of warfare, a task taken up in the context of the Hungarian defence problematique by Jenő Kovács. Based on this survey, the chapter’s conclusion presents the hypothesis for the research and the theoretical foundations for an investigation of cultures of warfare, derived from a Clausewitzian perspective on military affairs.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the warfare of movement, drawing mainly on Fuller, Liddell Hart, de Gaulle, Guderian, Triandafilev and Tuchatchevsky. Following this survey, the section also presented a taxonomy of the various streams of theorizing, distinguished by their axioms and theses, and the instruments of force as derived from these.

Chapter 3 present theories of wars of attrition. This chapter relies heavily on Liddell Hart's theorizing on the subject, complemented by major contributors to the fields of aerial and naval warfare (Mahan, Corbett, Gorshkev, as well as Douhet, Trenchard, Mitchell and Szentnémedy) whose individual conceptual universes were also studied with the purpose of identifying key conceptual building blocks. This survey permitted as especially fine-grained reconstruction of thinking about using force for political purposes and the instruments available for it, due to the emphasis of the school on this aspect of warfare.

Chapter 4 presents guerilla warfare and its chief characteristics. It addresses its historical evolution, while also surveying major theoretical contributors (Clausewitz, Lenin, Lawrence of Arabia, Mao Ze-Dong, Tito, Giap, Che Guevara and Marighella), attempting also an ideological profiling of these theorists inasmuch as necessitated by the attempt to reconstruct their thinking about the subject. By way of this undertaking, the chapter also addresses the important question of how far guerilla warfare overlaps with terrorism and what distinguishing features may be identified. Finally, it is in this chapter that I engage the question of to what extent terrorism can be described as a new culture of warfare if interpreted on the basis of a typology of the use of force.

Chapter 5 of the thesis deals with demonstrating the features of various cultures of warfare in contemporary and recent armed conflict. I investigate the Yugoslav wars, the second and third Gulf Wars, the war in Afghanistan, the conflict in Georgia, and the Israeli-Arab wars, with a special emphasis on the instruments of force used in these clashes. My analysis here seeks to prove that boundaries between the cultures of war are becoming porous as far as these instruments go, yet the century-old cultures of warfare do live on in contemporary form.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis, providing a summary of the contributions the dissertation makes, the evidence presented in support of the hypothesis and the claims implied by it, while also reiterating the disappearance of boundaries between cultures of warfare to construct a sufficiently nuanced image of contemporary armed conflict. Recommendations for future research aim at promoting further investigations of relevant subject matter not treated in the thesis.

Appendices 1-3 provide an Academic biography of Jenő Kovács, a list of his publications as well as tables and charts used to distinguish among cultures of warfare.

Conclusions

In my doctoral dissertation I undertook to investigate the concept of cultures of warfare. In generating my hypothesis, I attempted to open up a vista for examining whether this concept, as defined by Jenő Kovács, has analytical value, and whether the boundaries separating the various cultures as described by Kovács are still discernible in contemporary armed conflicts. I have come to the conclusion that questioning cultures of warfare as a way to better understanding current wars is a legitimate procedure also due to the multi-faceted transformation of conflict occurring in our age (primarily as a result of new instruments being deployed for combat). The subject matter of my dissertation, therefore, reveals itself as well-suited to an analysis of armed conflicts, even if categorizing facts does at times carry the danger of schematic thinking. Thinking about armed conflict in the framework of a general theory of the use of force does bring us closer to discovering and understanding the fundamental aims of warfare.

Academic Contributions

The thesis proposes following scholarly contributions to the discussions about its subject matter

5. A survey of the historiography of cultures of war from a history of science perspective, complemented by a specific Hungarian genealogy of thinking about the subject (following Jenő Kovács).

6. After a survey of the literature on the individual cultures of warfare, these are related to the corresponding schools of strategic military thinking, including their thesis and concept of war.

7. Through a survey of the most significant armed conflicts of the recent past, the thesis demonstrates the analytical validity of the concept „cultures of warfare”, while also directing attention to the increasingly porous boundaries separating the individual subtypes.

8. Using unprinted and printed sources, the thesis contains a reconstruction of the military theoretical work by Jenő Kovács, with special emphasis on his concept of cultures of warfare, a professional and Academic biography, and highlights both his research findings and how these fall in with contemporary developments in the theorizing on war and warfare.

Recommendations for Practical Usage

The thesis undertook to take up the Academic work started by Lieutenant General Jenő Kovács, more specifically the most important aspect of his research. Continuing his unfinished oeuvre will certainly provide tasks and challenges for much future research into War Studies. The concept of cultures of warfares certainly deserved sustained scholarly attention. Extending the present research to cover a greater sample of French sources would contribute to a more nuanced image of its subject matter, especially with regard to the historiographical work contained in it. Further research could also contribute to a more thorough self-contained, rather than comparative understanding of cultures of warfare, covering the dimensions of politics, geography and anthropology, as well.

In terms of practical applicability, the method used to analyse cultures of warfare may be put to use to uncover logics of decision-making and operational goal-setting by parties to armed conflicts. In practice, this contributes to the optimal selection of the most suitable instruments and their optimal use if the situation were to demand it. Preparing for future armed conflicts always begins with reflecting on past and present wars, of which this dissertation represents an instance, and contributes to the groundwork required for drawing up the comprehensive preparatory strategies for armed forces. Finally, the methodology of the dissertation lends itself to a case study-type investigation of individual NATO member states and of how their native cultures of warfare condition the international military roles and postures these states have adopted.

The oeuvre of Jenő Kovács, more specifically the question of cultures of warfare has been taught at ZMNE for years in various graduate and post-graduate programs. The dissertation, following the necessary alterations, could function as a course text for students participating in these programs. Given the interdisciplinary approach adopted in the dissertation, it could perhaps also command sufficient attention to be published as a scholarly monograph.

1st LT Balázs FORGÁCS's publications about thesis' subject:

Articles:

1. War and Cultures of Warfare. (Háború és hadikultúrák) In.: Új Honvédségi Szemle, October 2002., 130-139.p.

2. About the Geopolitical and Geostrategical Analysis. (A geopolitikai – geostratégiai elemzésről.) (published with Prof. Dr. Szternák Györggyel) In.: *Felderítő Szemle*, December 2007., 24-39.p.
3. *Memoirs and Cultures of Warfare.* (Emélikiratok és hadikultúrák) In.: *Társadalom és Honvédelem.* 3-4./2007., 151-164.p.
4. Order or Disorder in Guerilla warfare? (Káosz vagy rend a gerilla hadviselésben) In.: *Kommentár*, 1./2008., 88-100.p.,
5. *Cultures of Warfare in Our Days.* (Napjaink hadikultúrái). In.: Szelei Ildikó (edited):) *Conference of Doctorans of Military Sciences 2008.* Volume of Conference, ZMNDU, Bp., 2008., 101-110.p.,
6. *The Development of Cultures of Warfare in Europe. A Military Theoretical Approach to the Basics of Cultures of Warfare.* In.: *Enjeux de sécurité et problématique centre-périphérie.* Programme de la journée d'études de l'Atelier VI (*) III Sorbonne-Nouvelle, Paris, 29. November 2008. (Volume of Conference – under edition)
7. *In memoriam Jenő Kovács.* In.: *Hadtudomány* (under edition)
8. *The Historiography of Culture of Warfare's Concept I.* (A hadikultúrák fogalmának historiográfiája I.) In.: *Hadtudományi Szemle* (under edition)
9. *The Historiography of Culture of Warfare's Concept II.* (A hadikultúra fogalmának historiográfiája II.) In.: *Hadtudományi Szemle* (under edition)

Presentations:

1. *The Clausewitz's Concept of the War and Appearance of Instruments of War* (two kinds) in the *Cultures of Warfare* (A háború Clausewitz-i fogalma és eszközrendszerinek (kettős jellegének) megjelenése a hadikultúrákban.) (presentation) III. Eötvös Conference; Eötvös József Collegium, Budapest, 28. April 2002.
2. *The Cultures of Warfare and Modern Strategy.* (A hadikultúrák és a modern stratégia.) (presentation) *The place and role of the security and strategic studies in the university.* (scientific conference); Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University, Budapest, 6. November 2002.
3. *The Ocean as a Strategic Instrument in the Indirect Warfare.* (A világóceán, mint stratégiai eszköz az indirekt hadviselésben.) (presentation) V. Hungarian Political Geography Conference, University of Pécs, Pécs, 6. October 2006.

4. Cultures of Warfare in Our Days. (Napjaink hadikultúrái.) (presentation)
Conference of Doctorans of Military Sciences 2008., 22. May 2008.
5. The Development of Cultures of Warfare in Europe. (presentation) Enjeux de sécurité et problématique centre-périphérie. Programme de la journée d'études de l'Atelier VI (*) III Sorbonne-Nouvelle, Paris, 29. November 2008.

Curriculum vitae

Personal data:

Birth place, date: Kalocsa (HUN), 9. February 1979.
 Workplace: Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University
 Kossuth Lajos Faculty of Military Sciences
 Department of Security and Defence Policy
 Military rank: first lieutenant
 Status: assistant professor
 Address: 1083 Budapest, Tömő utca 23/C fsz. 1., HUNGARY
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Qualifications

2008: Staff Officers' Military Terminology Course (ACT.223.12.)
 2005: Security Policy in Central and Eastern Europe Course
 2004: Security and Defence Policy Expert
 (PT D/BL 003127 875/790/24/2004.; grade of dipl.: excellent)
 2002: arts graduate, major: history
 (PT E 007990 771/2002; grade of diploma: good)

Language skills

State accredited language examination; Language: military English; advanced (C1)
 combined (C) (CE130-10516 932098),
 State accredited language examination; Language: military French; intermediate (B2)
 combined (C) (661828)

Career:

2003: Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University
 Department of Security and Strategic Studies
 assistant lecturer
 2004: Mathias Corvinus Collegium, lecturer
 2009: Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University
 Department of Security and Defence Policy
 assistant professor

Military career:

2008: professional, first lieutenant

Honours:

2008: III. class of Honvédelemért Kitüntető Cím (HUN)

Membership:

2003:

Hungarian Association of Military Sciences

Scientific regard:

2002 spring:

Scientific Conference of ZMNDU's Students (ITDK)

Section of Military History

I. place and surcharge of President of ZMNDU