Moderator: Welcome to the Western Way of War. This is a weekly podcast series that tries to understand the issues around how to fight and succeed against adversaries in the 2020s. I'm Peter Roberts, Director of Military Sciences at the Royal United Services Institute on Whitehall. Every week I'll talk to a guest about the Western way of war. Has it been successful? Is it fit for task today and how might it need to adapt in the future? The podcast is only possible because of sponsorship of Raytheon UK, a subsidiary of Raytheon Technology, a British company that creates jobs in England, Wales and Scotland, contributing over £700m to the UK economy. Given everything we talked about in this podcast over the last 9 months, there is always a danger it can be overwhelming. I've been contacted by a few people who have been searching for a way to order it in their minds, how to align the Western way of war with political, legal, military, doctrinal, concetral (ph 01.10) and historical discussions we've had. I don't think it's fair for me to not suggest (inaudible 01.16). In this episode I want to talk about how we can describe the evolution of warfare, how it's been understood historically and how these understandings have impacted on the world. I want to do this by using Mary Kaldor's theory on new and old wars and the nuanced differentiation between them.

Old wars refer to traditional nation state warfare where militaries are focused on territorial conquest. These wars were centralised and financed by state machinery through taxation of the public. Old wars took place across 19th and 20th centuries and were fought over nationalistic and ideological reasons. The battle in these wars is the decisive element, with states military forces as the main target of warfare. New wars refer to warfare conducted by varying combinations of state and non-state actors. These wars are decentralised and the non-state actors involved include armed forces, paramilitaries, mercenaries, warlords and private security companies. New wars are fought in the name of identity politics and not in the name of ideology. Identity politics have arisen due to globalisation, increased communication and migration between countries. These are financed partially by the state and other eliciting means such as looting or kidnapping, smuggling, bribery and stealing. Violence is generally internal and targeted at civilians. The concepts in the theory provide an accessible way for us to understand and analyse warfare. It also allows for a relatively easy way to frame policy responses to the evolving nature of war. We need someone who can run us through this and reflect on how these concepts work against contemporary conflicts in Georgia, Ukraine, Syria and Iraq and those coming in the future. Who else could we ask but Professor Mary Kaldor herself?
Mary is the Professor Emeritus of Global Governance and the Director of the Conflict Research Programme at LSE. She has pioneered the concept of new war and global civil society. Her elaboration of the real world implementation of human security has directly influenced European and national governance. I didn't think we'd be able to secure Mary as a guest, but here she is and I'm delighted to be able to pose this first question to her. Mary, what does the Western way of warfare mean to you?

Mary Kaldor: It means what I meant by, 'Old wars,' which you very well described. It means the wars that were analysed by Clausewitz. It means wars that were in deep-rooted political contest between two states, or maybe more, in which the aim was victory and in which battle was the decisive encounter where the main people who carried out the war were regular armed forces and the war was financed by taxation. What Clausewitz argued is that these kinds of wars always tend to the extreme because the politicians want to achieve their objectives, because the generals believe they can only win by disarming their opponents and because fear and hatred is mobilised among the population. That's what he called the trinity, the combination of the generals, the politicians and the people. All of them have this deep inner dynamic to move to the extreme. The most extreme war that we lived through was the 2nd World War, where nobody knows exactly how many people died, but it could have been something like 70 million people.

Moderator: The contrast with that, with new wars that you wrote about since the breakdown of the Balkans, it was about the breakup of Yugoslavia and the experiences there that signalled a very different way that the West continued to engage in but they seem to have engaged in those new wars as if they were old wars?

Mary Kaldor: That's right. It might be worth saying something about the period in between. In a way, the revolutionary wars of the 1960s and '70s in Algeria, Vietnam, Malaysia, were a bridge to the new wars. They were political contests of a traditional kind in that both sides wanted to win and they had these deep-rooted ideological objectives. The revolutionaries wanted to overthrow the regime and the regime wanted to defeat the revolutionaries but they were fought in a very different way. I think they marked a break with the past because they were a way of getting around massive conventional forces. There was a realisation that the revolutionaries could never win in a straightforward battle so they had to have another strategy. Their strategy was primarily political. Their strategy was to try to control territory politically and to use military force to make that possible. They would go to the mountains or the jungles and create a safe haven and build up support among the population so they could move around the population, then they would try to harass their opponents. They would have a strategy of attrition. The hope would be that in the end the regimes would be defeated politically. Mau and the Viet Cong though you would have to end with conventional war. I don't know whether some of the revolutionaries afterwards shared that position.

Moderator: Mau also allowed to go between the two. You could escalate towards conventional and back down if it wasn't required. It was flexible and implemented in different ways. Che Guevara used it in a very different way, but the same idea of a long revolutionary war.

Mary Kaldor: Exactly and they still thought of themselves as regular soldiers. Apparently, in the Red Cross archives, there's a message from Che Guevara asking how does he treat his prisoners of war according to
the laws of war, which you would never imagine happening in contemporary wars. Then what happens is, you develop counter insurgency strategies to counter this. I think there’s always been a division between what are called population centric and enemy centric counter insurgency strategies, although in a way they’ve both been enemy centric in the end. The population centric one was trying to win hearts and minds. The basic argument was if, as Mau said, the revolutionary is the fish swimming in the sea, then we've got to poison the sea, or control the sea. All kinds of techniques which were developed during that period are used in new wars. I'm thinking of things like population displacement, actually moving the population, which is something that started in Malaysia with the strategic hamlets. The use of herbicides and other area destruction weapons so that people can't make a living. Pseudo gangs, which came out of General Kitson, trying to create people that looked like the guerrillas but were on the other side. That was the heart of the low intensity wars of the 1980s and the strategy, for instance, of the Mojahedin who were fighting the Soviets in Afghanistan. In a way, new wars came out of that but it was as though both sides where pseudo gangs.

The aim in the new war was political control of (TC 00:10:00) territory, but you did it not so much through hearts and minds as through population displacement, making sure the population is loyal to you.

**Moderator:** I guess we still see that in places like Syria and eastern Ukraine. There is a huge amount of population displacement, of psychological control, right?

Mary Kaldor: Yes, I think that's the main tactic in contemporary wars. I think that's why we have such an enormous increase in refugees and displaced persons because the main tactic is to get rid of the opposition in areas so you can politically control it. I think it's a bit associated with the introduction of democratic elections, which is quite paradoxical, but I think that was certainly the case in Bosnia, in order for the Serb and Croat nationalists to win the elections, they had to have compliant populations, so you had to get rid of everybody who wasn't going to vote for you.

**Moderator:** We see it in Africa, in South Sudan, we've seen a number of places where it's happening, even with insurgent groups around Lake Chad, we see huge amounts of mass population displacement, enormous movements of people. This pattern is not limited to parts of Eastern Europe or the Balkans, it's widespread.

Mary Kaldor: Absolutely. That's a central tactic, now we've got to tactics. I think the new wars began soon after, and perhaps in Africa a bit before, the end of the Cold War. In a way, the left, right conflicts mutated into these new wars which are no longer and I think that's the key central logical difference with the old wars, they're no longer really deep-rooted political contests. What they are is a way of life. I often say it's a social condition. What the groups fighting these wars discover is that they are maintaining power, they're gaining from violence itself, rather than from winning or losing. They're gaining politically by displacing people but it's not just a matter of displacing people, to keep people loyal you have to generate an ideology based on fear and you can only do that through violence. You only create this them and us feeling because people are afraid they're going to be killed by the other.
Moderator: I keep going back to the 10 warring states in China, in the period where Sun Tzu came to the fore as the great philosopher warrior, where you had this idea of population control, of mass cleansing, of not ideological but a move towards the identity and power of a single tribe that needed to take over all the others, in this case the Han tribe or others. This is a long-running concept in human history, it’s very present throughout what we know about warfare.

Mary Kaldor: It is present. I think it has a very specific globalised aspect now. I think the difference between new and old wars is not a difference in empirical terms between what's new and old, it's a difference in logic. It's a different between wars that are about winning and losing and which battle is crucial and wars which are a method of organising society, a method through which certain groups gain in political and economic terms and therefore rather tending to extreme, they tend to persistence. They're incredibly difficult to end.

Moderator: Whilst we've seen this rise up of new wars, we also now see a rise of, we could maybe foresee old wars coming back, where you have the idea of great power competition, of competition and coercion between Russia and US, or Russia and NATO and then between China and US. We get to a stage where we see the language that returns to this idea of victory, defeat, superiority, being framed as an ideological struggle rather than a realist one, less about the population and more about who has primacy over, in this case, the trading world. Do you think there's something to that, or does that not conform to how you see it?

Mary Kaldor: Yes, I do. It's weird. I think it's become an imaginary old war. I hope it will always be an imaginary old war. I think that after World War 2, the only real war we could have on that model at a global level would have destroyed civilisation. That's what a nuclear war would have meant. Even in the 2nd World War, people did make certain gains. There were huge losses and the losses were much worse than the gains, but the Soviet Union I don't think would have survived without the war. At the beginning of the war they did terribly badly and the German invasion was successful, then they did this gigantic effort of moving everything to the east, the defence industry and it was an extraordinary achievement. It made central planning and socialism work in a way it hadn't worked before the war. I think the way to understand the Soviet system is as a sort of war system, where you have centralised planning all aimed at victory and that's what it was like in the East European communist states. It was centralised, there was very high levels of military spending and it was all about fighting the Cold War with the West. The Cold War was a way of sustaining this kind of model.

Moderator: And of organisation societies. It typifies it.

Mary Kaldor: Exactly. I think the same is true in the West. We go on imagining. Soldiers still say, 'This is what we're really here for. We're here to fight a proper war. These others wars that are going on are lesser wars. The real war is the one we're going to fight, with Russia, or China.' It does serve certain purposes. It helps increase the legitimacy of the state. Don't let's forget that states in Europe and America were always built on warfare from the beginning. In the 17th century, military spending was something like 80% of state budgets. The purpose of the state was to go to war. The legitimacy of the state is so wound up with the military sector and soldiers and our investments in technology, so the imaginary war does also serve a real
purpose. In some ways it's a bit similar to new wars, I define it differently, in that it is part of our way of
organising our world. What's really alarming now is the cyber attacks, that somehow geopolitics is being
operated. Again, that's very new war-ish and the Russians use this term, 'Non-linear war.'

**Moderator:** Chinese fighting in an informationised war. These are the concepts of fighting that they're
coming out with.

Mary Kaldor: Exactly. That element of new wars is also very important. In new wars, you can do a lot to
frighten people using new technologies. You don't need to kill as many people as you did in old wars.

**Moderator:** It's that Machiavellian choice between being feared and being loved. I want to go back to this
transition between old and new and new and old. When you talked about the revolutionary wars, the
'60s, '70s, Algeria, Vietnam, Malaysia, particularly where you had the West fighting old war styles against
a new war adversary and failing dismally most of the time, we could go back further. If you go back to the
Russian Revolution, you have what was then a very new war, about organising society, about the drivers
(ph 19.31) of society, but that moved very clearly into the old war didactic (ph 19.38) that you talk about.
This idea of the mass of population seeking decisive battles. Napoleon moving into the Prussians,
conquering of Italy, rape and pillage of treasure. This shift between the two has not just been a one-way
thing from old to new wars, but we have seen it go the other way, haven't we?

Mary Kaldor: (TC 00:20:00) You mean from revolutions to war?

**Moderator:** Yes.

Mary Kaldor: I think they always were. You always did go from revolutions to war. If you think about the
major old war periods of the last 200 years, the Napoleonic War started with the French Revolution, then
you had the 1848 Revolution and you got the Franco Prussian War and you have the American Civil War,
even the 1st and 2nd World War. I think in the 1st World War people were terribly nervous about pressures
from Suffragettes, Trade Unions and uniting everybody in a war effort was a way of addressing that problem.

**Moderator:** On the one hand we've got great ideas about what some people call great power competition,
this idea of competition between uber powers as they exist economically and militarily. On the other hand
we have a very definite discussion that's happening about human security, something that is very
different. It fits within the new war rubric but it's slightly different, right?

Mary Kaldor: It fits within the new war rubric in that, human security is the way to go if we want to seriously
address new wars. It's also about addressing terror. One of the things that's happened to the Western way
of war is the American-led effort to fight terrorism with traditional war methods, which I think has been
hugely counterproductive. We've had 20 years of the War on Terror and the terrorist threat is much greater
than it was 20 years ago. I think human security is the only way to go. I have a very specific understanding of
human security, which relates to how you address contemporary wars. What human security is about and
that everybody agrees when they define human security, is that it's about the security of individuals and the
communities in which they live, rather than about the security of the state. It's also about our security from a range of threats, not just military or violent threats, but also economic threats, the threat of disease, pandemics, climate change. In a curious way, I think over these last 2 years we've seen the importance of human security grow by virtue of the fact the governments feel they are responsible for the health of their citizens. We see our heroes and heroines, our health workers and care workers and even the soldiers. The soldiers have been helping the vaccination and testing efforts, that to me is human security.

Moderator: It doesn't fit into a natural way we've got of sorting out our problems. Whilst we can all acknowledge the intellectual attraction of the individualisation of acts of violence, of making it even about communities, of drawing it down to a local level, trying to understand the impacts of it and working for the best result that we can for communities and individuals, we can't just always sort our problems like that. It's difficult to think about how we would organise for that kind of engagement.

Mary Kaldor: That's what I'm really interested in. This is where I have a specific take on things. I'm interested in what it means for the military. I've given you this overall argument but for example I'm now thinking about what it might mean in Afghanistan. I think what it means is, in these real conflict situations such as Syria, Ukraine, the objective is not to defeat the enemy, or that's the secondary objective, the objective is to protect people. The objective is to prevent the loss of life. Under the laws of war, we're not supposed to kill civilians but if military necessity dictates and there's no other way of reaching the military objective, it is permissible. With human security it's never permissible. Thinking this way, which is very much the way the police think as opposed to the military, thinking this way is one of the ways to address contemporary conflicts. I think the problem about contemporary conflicts is that we've got very much an old war mindset, so we think the way to solve these conflicts is either to reach a compromise, a top-down, peace deal or to defeat one side or the other, so one side wins. That's what the Russians and the Iranians are trying to do in Syria, or we have a humanitarian idea that we're going to create humanitarian space between the sides and help the population, but none of these work. Why? If you intervene militarily, because people have an interest in continued violence, it just accelerates the violence.

If you try to negotiate from above, if you can, because there are so many armed groups it's difficult to get them together and to agree, but they will only agree if they're assured a position in government. What that means is, they might not fight against each other, but they never were very interested in fighting against each other, what they will do is continue their predatory activities against ordinary people. That's what's happened where peace agreements have been reached. Bosnia is the best peace agreement we know of and it took enormous commitment of NATO troops and more money per head of the population than martial aid after the war, 6 times more and still, if you go to Bosnia today, it feels as though the war hasn't ended. It's a really dysfunctional society, so that doesn't work. Humanitarian assistance doesn't work because the main violence is against the civilians. It's really difficult to separate the sides. What's more, the money that goes in feeds the political economy of the conflict. We need a very different approach that's a much more holistic approach but puts at the centre how to make the situation safe for ordinary people. A lot of the tools that we have we might use but we'd use them in a different way.
Moderator: It strikes me, from what you're saying, if you were to use the military in one of those ways, the buzz words that people are talking about for a form of the military today, mobility, readiness and lethality, these are just not things, particularly the last one, that you would contemplate when thinking about how you address problems of human security?

Mary Kaldor: I completely agree. I read in the paper today that General Sir Nick Carter was defending the cuts in armed forces on grounds that what really matters is the increase in lethality. Actually what matters is people on the ground who could protect people. Thinking about Afghanistan, I don't think they necessarily need to be British soldiers, they could be Afghan soldiers and police that NATO is training. What actually needs to happen is something similar to what General Petraeus did in Baghdad. The way he reduced violence in Baghdad was through something like 300 local agreements and having the security forces on the ground to sustain them. It didn't last because it wasn't linked to the national level, but that's the kind of thing I'm thinking of. You need lots of local agreements, a local presence, lots of efforts at development, justice, governance, all of these things the development people do. There is a role for the military, but that role is very different from the Western way of war.

Moderator: Thank you.