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Hans-Peter Kriemann

Lessons Learned? How Wars Begin and How They End

This book addresses the fundamental question of how wars begin and how they end. The various articles are based on military history and political and cultural science, and offer multi-perspective insights into aspects of a changeful transatlantic history from the beginning of World War I to the present.

The debate on how wars begin and how they end has tragically become highly topical with the large-scale attack by Russian forces on the territory of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. A good thirty years ago, however, the perspective was quite different. After the end of the Cold War, contemporaries had hoped for an era of stability and unity, in which living together was to be determined by democracy, peace and human rights (Paris Charter, 1990). Francis Fukuyama took the view, in his book *The End of History*, that the liberal world order had now prevailed. However, the conflicts and wars that erupted almost at the same time quickly showed that the hoped-for peace dividend did not materialize. In early 1991, even before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Gulf War began, with a United States-led international coalition fighting against Iraq, which had invaded Kuwait shortly before. This distracted the Western public from another conflict: on 13 January 1991, pro-Soviet forces, supported by Soviet troops, tried to overthrow the young democracy in Lithuania. Moscow was not prepared to accept the independence of the Baltic states. This event is referred to as Bloody Sunday in Vilnius and exemplified a completely different problem that would prove to become a typical feature of and a central challenge for the intended stable and united Europe. It turned out that the Western states and Russia soon perceived a threat to their own security caused by the power struggles in East and Southeast Europe, which were accelerated by or resulted from the end of the bloc confrontation. This was true both for regional destabilization processes through the expansion of such conflicts and for the consequences for national security, for example, through massive refugee movements. In the resulting process, in which states and international organizations had to realign and reposition themselves within the international political arena, the question arose particularly for NATO as to which role it should play in a different world order of the future.

This was reflected in two important processes. NATO's eastward expansion, on the one hand, was to prevent the development of a security vacuum and incalculable security-related dynamics. This stabilization approach was also important in order to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction from the territory of former Warsaw Pact member states. On the other hand, Western policymakers soon

perceived military intervention as the most effective means to prevent and end armed conflicts, such as the ones in former Yugoslavia. In the summer of 1991, the fighting in Slovenia and the war in Croatia marked the beginning of a series of national wars that gradually affected the entire former Yugoslavia and threatened to destabilize Southeast Europe. Driven by the international attempts to handle the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992–1995, NATO subsequently became the most important enforcer of mandates within the scope of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Four years later, in 1999, the NATO air war against Serbia ended the humanitarian disaster in Kosovo, and, with a great effort, a stable peace order was established there. Subsequently, NATO-led troops secured the volatile peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in Kosovo with a 50,000-strong, well-equipped peacekeeping force each. The air war, which had been conducted without a UN mandate, also raised questions about the legitimacy and legality of the NATO air strikes. Dealing with such conflicts simultaneously posed an ethical problem and a problem regarding international law. An international process of self-reflection on the possibilities of protecting people from serious human rights violations and the breach of international humanitarian law, which had been initiated shortly afterwards by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, resulted in the adoption of a responsibility to protect (R2P) in 2005. This protection concept revealed an understanding according to which the protection of human rights increasingly took precedence over national sovereignty rights.

At that time, relevant Western policymakers assessed the large-scale stabilization operations in the Balkans as a successful concept and, thus, also as a yardstick for future large-scale state and nation-building missions. This perception changed in the course of the subsequent international engagement in Afghanistan.

The September 11 attacks against the United States in 2001 permanently changed the global public's international sense of security. The images of the burning twin towers have burned themselves into the collective memory. The subsequent deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), however, was not completed within a few years' time as hoped. Instead, it developed a dynamic that made it the largest mission in NATO history. But despite the immense political and military efforts of a NATO-led and dominated international community of states, the international commitment ended in a humanitarian disaster after almost 20 years on 31 August 2021. The efforts to stabilize Afghanistan in a sustainable manner had not been successful.

The thirty years since the end of the Cold War have been an ongoing learning process of trial and error for the NATO states and their partners. Just as threat situations and their perception by the Alliance community changed, the Alliance underwent an adjustment process that was driven by crises and conflicts. In the process, the security policy instruments also changed, especially regarding the manner of using military assets. This was accompanied by a change in the understanding of the legitimacy of such interventions. The questions for NATO behind these developments have always been: how to prevent the outbreak of armed conflicts and wars, how to contain and end such conflicts, and how to achieve sustainable stability.

Structure and intent of the conference and this book

The analysis of historical developments, and the explanations and possibilities of contextualizing current security challenges in our recent history can provide a valuable orientation in dealing with current security challenges in the understanding of a lesson learned. Historians and security policy experts have gathered at annual conferences of the Euro-Atlantic Conflict Studies Working Group (CSWG) of the NATO Partnership for Peace Program at different venues over the past 20 years to discuss their research, views and ideas with a focus on security challenges. At the same time, the format of CSWG Conferences is a means to intensify Euro-Atlantic cooperation and mutual understanding through the exchange between official military history institutions and academies.

The 20th anniversary of the CSWG Conference, which is the basis of this volume, was an outstanding event for all participants. In view of the developments in recent conflicts and against the background of the security policy changes relevant to its own history over the past thirty years, the CSWG deliberately chose the overarching topic for the conference to mark its anniversary: "From Peace to War, from War to Peace/Conflict Initiation and Termination: Implications for Policymakers."

The decisions that eventually lead to a war and conflict management are both complex processes. There are several interrelated levels and fields that are important for the actors, states and organizations involved. In terms of domestic politics, national actors are forced to legitimize their interests and the resulting behavior in the international arena. Intensive military commitment, in particular, is often closely monitored and assessed. However, the developments of military operations and their domestic implications are hardly predictable. In this area of conflict that arises from actions on the international and national level as well as from the employment of military forces, there are many other factors required to explain the developments and dynamics that may result from the employment of military forces. National history and culture as well as the manner in which experiences of violence in military conflicts are dealt with are instrumental for the security policy identity. In addition, the perception of threats and the feeling of security are decisive factors. However, these parameters are not solely determined by military factors. They also include interdependent aspects, such as geographical situation, climate, resources, the economy or refugee movements.

When the 20th CSWG Conference, on which this volume is based, was planned, and took place from 27 September to 1 October 2021 in Košice, Slovakia, nobody had any idea that a Russian attack on Ukraine was imminent. However, ever since the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, a paradigm shift toward a stronger role of national and alliance defense had become apparent. For the Alliance, this raises the question of whether the multilateral world order will continue, or if the current international positioning processes will lead to increasing regionalization.

The papers in this conference volume are based on presentations given at the CSWG Conference in Košice. The volume covers a period of one century in 17 essays. It addresses political, social and cultural causes and processes relevant to the

beginning, course and end of armed conflicts and wars. It focuses on the interests of the actors, their logic of action and takes different perspectives to examine structures and dynamics from the outbreak of World War I in 1914 to the present day. The essays, which are dedicated to rather different wars and conflicts, are arranged according to the conference program.

Incalculable – How Old and New Wars Begin

The first section of our conference was dedicated to the fundamental and, we believe, timeless question that all decision-makers are confronted with: How should and can I behave in crises? This behavior is, in turn, based on premises and anticipations. In our context, this is linked to the central question of the predictability or unpredictability of wars and conflicts, as Clausewitz saw it, for example, who understood war as a contingency phenomenon.

Taking the Kosovo War of 1999 as an example, *Hans-Peter Kriemann* analyses the mutual influence of political conflict management processes, and military planning and capability horizons. He focuses primarily on the threat of military force and the associated credibility dilemma. He argues that the threat of military force to end armed conflicts may lead to incalculable dynamics which, paradoxically, can even increase the danger of an escalation of military force.

Mark E. Grotelueschen and Derek Vable then focus on executive behavior. They argue that in 1917, the US Administration was no longer able to use deterrence to an extent that would have allowed them to adequately protect their interests vis-a-vis the German Empire. According to the authors, with the subsequent declaration of war, the United States had forfeited its role as a mediator and, thus, the chance of an earlier end to World War I.

Philipp Münch explores the question why the operation of the ISAF in Afghanistan became the largest, most intensive and second longest operation of NATO in its entire history, although at the beginning of the mission in 2001, both the United States and the majority of their partners had initially tried to avoid any involvement of the Alliance. On the basis of downgraded documents, primarily from the United States, he maintains that the relevant players within NATO, supported by influential national civilian and military decision-makers, pressed for an assumption of ISAF command.

Means and Ends – The Interaction of Political Thinking and Military Planning

Our second section is about the interrelation between political action and military thinking and possible resulting interactions. The three examples from the period during and at the end of the Second World War already illustrate the different ideologies and interests behind such behavior and how they can be interwoven.

Morgane Barey highlights the importance of domestic perceptions and the resulting attitudes for a state's foreign policy behavior, which can also be applied to explain the use of military force. After the French defeat in June 1940, the Vichy regime had focused on candidates loyal to them when selecting officers for the reconstruction of the French armed forces. With those candidates, however, they also took over the old doctrines and modes of thinking. As a result, it was this domestic perspective that made it impossible to achieve a fundamental military reform and, thus, a reconstruction of a demoralized French society in the spirit of the "Révolution Nationale."

Boyan Zhekov elucidates how political interests and military action can be intertwined. Based on newly available documents from Bulgarian and Russian archives, the author demonstrates how especially the Soviet representatives of the Allied Control Commission acted regarding the development and restructuring of the Bulgarian armed forces in the three years after the ceasefire signed by Bulgaria in October 1944.

The article by *Paul Lenormand* is another example of the reorientation process of the state in the setup of national armed forces that began after the end of the war. Using material from Czech and Slovak archives, the author examines the quantitative and qualitative ramifications of the ideological cleansing process during the reconstruction of the officer corps that began after the end of World War II. Similar to Morgane Barey in her study on the setup of the French officers corps after the French defeat against Hitler's Germany in June 1940, he identifies a major conflict between political loyalty and military effectiveness, in which the latter is to the disadvantage of politically promoted circles of the officer corps in both cases.

War Mortgage – After Old and New Wars Have Ended

Researching the manifold effects of wars and conflicts is a broad field, for it often takes a considerable amount of time to distinguish between cause and effect and to be able to explain them. This is certainly also due to the changing perspectives over the generations. Not only political and military aspects are affected. In fact, all dimensions of human life are at stake. With the nation-state as the point of reference, two very different contributions in the following section explain how both military action and the collective memory resulting directly and indirectly from it can have an impact on the later national constitution.

Blaž Torkar's case study explores what role the Slovenian partisan army played in the implementation of the program of the Slovenian national movement in 1945. Torkar works out what possible consequences the actions of the partisans had for the future disposition of Slovenia as a constituent republic of Yugoslavia. In the long term, some of the elements contained in the constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia also influenced Slovenia's process of gaining national independence in the early 1990s.

Beyond the research on specific actions in wars and conflicts, and endeavors to prevent them from the outset, more than before, attention should be paid to the ev-

er-present long-term consequences of such events. *Erin McCoy* explains in her study how potent the collective memory is also regarding government action in future conflict scenarios. She does not focus on what actually happened but rather on how events are remembered and, thus, evaluated. With reference to possible social and political consequences, she challenges whether the Vietnam War, in fact, ended with the withdrawal of the last US soldiers in 1975.

The Picture in the Mind – Imagined Wars

The central characteristic of military action can be described very well as a military planning horizon. After all, it is ultimately the experiences of the last war and the premises derived from them that are confronted with the contingency of this phenomenon. If no armed conflict occurs, such military planning remains a theory. However, this does not mean that they do not entail social, economic or other effects. In other cases, it is a successive trial and error learning process.

In recent years, historical research on intelligence activities has become increasingly more important. The article by *Matej Medvecký* can be located in the field of intelligence history. In his study, the author researches the functioning of the Czechoslovak military foreign intelligence service from 1945 until its dissolution in 1946. Their operational activities in defeated Germany were focused on preventing Germany from regaining military strength. The author concludes that despite the obvious importance of these intelligence operations, the Czechoslovak government had underestimated the capability of its military foreign intelligence service. The reasons for this were manifold and complex.

The wars and conflicts after 1990 made it necessary to develop new international strategies of conflict management. This was accompanied by a process of self-reflection by the international community to come to an understanding about the future role of the United Nations. It is often forgotten that such basic issues have accompanied the United Nations since its foundation. In this regard, this article can be understood, in the best sense, as a historicization of the role of armed forces under the changing conditions of such conflicts. *Prokop Tomek* takes the Czechoslovak delegation of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission on the Korean peninsula as an example to address the question of how such missions can contribute to peacekeeping.

Jordan Baev analyses the escalation dynamics of the bipolar bloc confrontation in the last hot phase of the Cold War by taking an intelligence operation of the Warsaw Pact as an example. Military careers were built under the conditions of an autocratic leadership in the Kremlin, which was incapable of reform, by taking increasingly rigorous action against the United States. According to Baev, the example under examination led to a psychosis of the relevant decision-makers and, therefore, carried the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy if the worst had come to the worst.

Non-military Factors – The Domestic Dimension of Conflicts

To understand armed conflicts and wars, it is essential to look at the interests and motives of the actors. In this context, state action is to a large extent also an expression of the social constitution. Therefore, domestic political reasons are very important drivers of state actor behaviour. In this context, it is often also important who the key decision-makers are.

The article by *Daniela Șișcanu* focuses on the Romanian national political debate following the beginning of the Great War in 1914. Her essay sheds light on the way Romanian elites looked after national interests. The two emerging movements of Ententophiles and Germanophiles shared the common perspective of a national settlement, but tried to sway public opinion in favor of their own position regarding an entry into the war.

Petr Janoušek also describes the outstanding role of individuals as important decision-makers in conflict management processes. The author uses important milestones in the foreign and security policy of Václav Havel, the president of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic and, in a later term of office, of the Czech Republic, immediately after the end of the Cold War, and interprets his behavior against the backdrop of his experiences and resulting values.

In terms of chronology, the article by *Orit Miller Katav* finally carries this volume into the period after the end of the Cold War. The author examines the complex field of Israel's foreign and security relations with its neighboring countries. She uses the case of Israel returning the Naharayim and Tzofar enclaves to Jordan's King Abdullah II in 2019, as stipulated in the peace agreement of 1994, to take a closer look at the relations between the two countries. She reconstructs the underlying complex events that resulted in the peace agreement, the subsequent handover of the enclaves to Israel and, eventually, their return. She critically examines which steps the various Israeli policymakers could have taken to fulfill the clauses of the peace treaty.

Who is the Enemy? – Changing Typologies of War

At the end of the Cold War, the international community was confronted with forms of warfare that were different than previously in many respects. Initially, it was attempted to illustrate this phenomenon academically with the help of the model of new wars; later, it was continually developed using the approach of hybrid wars. *Peter A. Kiss* uses the historical example of the Kashmir conflict of 1947 to raise the question to what extent this is a new phenomenon at all, and examines which elements of the current explanatory models only appear to be new, for example, due to the use of modern technology.

The Present

The volume concludes with a topic that gets far too little attention, and is, however, quite depressing. *Ruth Amir* examines the employment of child soldiers in several exemplary cases. She argues that it is necessary to address the tactical employment of child soldiers by prevention, demobilization, disarmament and deterrence throughout the conflict and not only after the cessation of hostilities. She highlights the importance of the process of international criminalization and the hurdles involved, as well as the shortcomings that still exist. Such a juridification process can only be one instrument in dealing with urgent situations. The abuse of boys and girls as child soldiers can only be terminated in a sustainable manner if the problem is tackled at its roots: bitter poverty and ethnic conflicts.

Lessons Learned

The essay by *Slatávka Otčenášová* is the first of two articles in this book – the other was written by Erin McCoy – which are dedicated to the importance of historical awareness for the collective memory and, thus, for a collective identity. She uses the representation of World War I in Slovak school history books throughout the 20th century as an example to explain how depictions, which were occasionally simplified and characterized by normative ideals, contributed to the development of enemy images. And yet history books for school teaching are not only an organic part of historiography, but also the most widespread medium for conveying historical knowledge.