

## The Organization of Military Violence in the 21st century

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There is a degree of consensus among scholars that the character of warfare has substantially changed over the past three decades. The empirical studies indicate that most forms of warfare are in steep decline and that civil wars have replaced inter-state wars as the dominant form of organised violence in the late modern era. However these findings have been interpreted very differently. Some scholars argue that 'the new wars' have become more brutal, less restrained, more chaotic and decentralised resulting in a greater number of civilian casualties. These new wars are linked to the globalisation processes and the general view is that as the unrestrained proliferation of globalised economy intensifies so will these new forms of warfare. In contrast other scholars insist that all forms of organised violence are on the wane. They make case that there are fewer wars of all kind, that warfare in general, including civil wars, have become less lethal, more localised and shorter than in previous historical periods. Moreover they argue that the very institution of warfare is gradually but definitely becoming redundant and that in the near future our descendants are likely to live in a war-free world. This paper challenges both of these perspectives and articulates an alternative interpretation. The aim is to develop a *longue durée* sociological analysis that focuses on the macro organisational social context and explores the dynamics of the war-state-society nexus over the past centuries. I argue that warfare is not becoming obsolescent and that 'new wars' are unlikely to completely replace inter-state warfare. Instead my analysis indicates that there is more organisational continuity in the contemporary warfare that either of the two dominant perspectives are willing to acknowledge.

# **'Management is the Gate', But to Where?**

## **Rethinking Robert McNamara's 'Career Lessons'**

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An historical narrative is provided on the career of Robert S. McNamara, former President of Ford, U.S. Secretary of Defence, and Chairman of the World Bank. Based on a thorough exposition and deconstruction of historical, academic and journalistic sources the paper makes three contributions. Firstly, it considers why McNamara - a major figure in the disciplines of history, politics, and security studies - is largely missing from *management* history, despite being one the most high-profile managers of his generation. Secondly it argues that where McNamara does appear in management literature the discussion has been historically inadequate; the limited management literature on McNamara typically makes questionable statements about his actions and approach, using him as a 'lightning rod' to selectively discredit 'outdated' forms of administration or 'bureaucracy'. Thirdly, the paper notes that management and organizations have in significant ways not moved beyond McNamara's approach. Many of the fundamental imperatives and conundrums of commercial, governmental, and warmaking organizations that impacted McNamara's career persist today, problematizing ideological prescriptions about transcending his 'legacy'. The distancing of today's 'best practice leadership' from the 'bureaucratic' forms of administration associated with McNamara in the 1960s is therefore more rhetorical than real.

## Sustainability: Of Mass Destruction

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### Abstract

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The term 'sustainability' is derived from the Latin *sustinere* (*tenere*, to hold; *sus*, up). To sustain can mean a host of different things, but at the heart of it is the maintenance, support, endurance and resilience of systems. In ecology and biology, sustainability is seen as the ability of a system to remain resilient, which predominantly implies the maintenance of biological diversity and productivity. For a forest to be sustainable, for example, it needs to be able to support various tree species at various heights and of various structures, providing a home for a variety of animal species that perform various functions to keep the forest resilient to external shocks, such as weather changes and fires, for example.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the term 'sustainability' started to be increasingly used to include not only ecological and biological meanings, but also social and economic dimensions. In conjunction with the political and social upheavals of that time, a range of environmental movements – of different political colours – emerged, pointing to the contradictions between capital's logic of compound growth on the one hand and planetary sustainability and human well-being on the other. What is needed, they argued, was a radical rethink of how we humans relate to nature as well as to each other, implying a different conception and practice of 'economy'. 'Economy' should not simply be about keeping shareholders happy and mindlessly following GDP growth figures, but, instead, recuperate its lost sense of the original Greek *oikonomos*, which is about keeping one's house and household in good order. Humanity's house is Earth, and in the age of the Anthropocene we humans, through our power of knowledge, have developed a distinct responsibility to keep our planet healthy and in good order.

Through a series of key events in the 1980s and 1990s, principally the 1988 Brundtland report, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, sustainability was gradually transformed from its earlier, distinct and politically radical, meanings to something much more vague, open-ended and business oriented. This development has allowed most corporations, particularly those with a global reach and with significant reputations risks attached, to incorporate 'sustainability' into their marketing and operational discourses from the early 2000s onwards.

For example, on 20 March 2014, BAe Systems, the UK's biggest defence company and weapons manufacturer with a market capitalization of around £13bn and over 100k employees worldwide, published its 200 pages long 2013 Annual Report. 'Sustainability'

features strongly in it, for example saying that: 'Sustainability of our reputation and our licence to operate is an integral part of the Group's business model. It is focused on embedding responsible business behaviours and placing emphasis not just on what the Group does, but how it is done' (p. 62). Under the 'sustainability' heading, the company features everything from integrity to the diversity and personnel development of its workforce, and from human rights considerations to corporate governance and stakeholder engagement. From an environmental point of view, BAe Systems' 'goal is to reduce the environmental impact of its operations and products by using energy, water and waste more efficiently'. It has 'systems in place that monitor and manage impacts from greenhouse gas emissions, material and solvent use, waste products, and emissions to the atmosphere'. Further, 'environmental considerations are taken into account throughout a product's lifecycle from concept, design and manufacture through to use and disposal via the Group's Lifecycle Management (LCM) process' (p. 62).

This paper is about tracing the history of 'sustainability': from its early usage of ecological and radical political intent in the 1960s and 1970s to today's 'empty signifier', which allows almost all corporate organisations to claim a positive contribution to sustainability – whatever their destructive impact on humanity and the planet. How is it, I ask, that, within a generation, the practices and discourses of 'sustainability' have become part and parcel of the hegemonic project of corporate sustainability, which has, ever since the emergence of capital in 16<sup>th</sup>/ 17<sup>th</sup> century Britain, always been about sustaining an economic model that privileges a few through the destructive exploitation of the rest of humanity and nature? And, perhaps more importantly, I also ask how it has become possible that 'sustainability' is nowadays used to sustain an economic model that is destructive on such industrial and massive scale that the entire boundaries of the planetary system are being breached, endangering the lifeworld not only for us, but also future generations, and of course the biosphere as such. 'Sustainability', it seems, has become the very driver of mass destruction at a planetary scale.

The method I employ for this paper is that of 'destruction', as it was conceptualized and practiced by Walter Benjamin, the German-Jewish historian, philosopher and critical theorist, whose *oeuvre* was mainly produced during the 1920s, 30s and 40s, the tumultuous years of European and global destructiveness *par excellence*. For Benjamin, 'destruction' is a dialectical method of juxtaposing contradictory images of history in order to construct, what he called, a dialectical image of 'now-time'. Such dialectical image should illuminate people, giving them a new insight, by putting hitherto unrelated 'things' in contact to each other.

I will critique and extend, perhaps destruct, Benjamin's method by asking whether he was perhaps too concerned with human history, not seeing, and perhaps not valuing, the non-human enough. I'm talking of ecology and nature, though not assuming an unspoilt 'thing' that humans have never moulded and changed. Of course, we humans have changed nature ever since we purposefully started fires, constructed shelter and tamed the land and animals. Yet, I contend that natural history works differently to human history; along different laws, different scales, times and spaces. The whole conception of time and space in nature is different to what we humans have constructed for ourselves. This means that a method of destruction has to account for such difference. The 'images' it contrasts have to be of different registers, intensities and affinities.

Why engage in this method of destruction? To critique 'sustainability', for sure. To put my fingers into wounds that hurt, asking questions like: Is BAe Systems ever going to be a sustainable company, or is it in fact a company that aims to sustain a global system of mass destruction? In a way, these are obvious, but nevertheless urgent, questions. But then I contend we also need to recognise that perhaps the question of radical critique is missing the point. Perhaps we don't yet have the language available to ask questions like: what is sustainability? What does 'sustainability' mean? If it has anything to do with nature, ecology and the non-human planet, then how we do represent and even see that part of 'sustainability'? Should we organize 'sustainability' perhaps less, in order to give nature and the planet a break from the ongoing managerial onslaught of human-centred 'sustainable development'? Perhaps we need to do less, not more, which includes critiquing less and, instead, par-take in nature and its own system-drive for sustainability and resilience.

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## **War and Work in Ernst Jünger's essay *The Worker: Dominion and Form* (1932)**

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The aim of this paper is to problematise the tendency to construct quasi-Manichean dichotomies in the political, economic, and institutional spheres between war, destruction, and armed campaigns, on the one hand, and peace, production, and the civility of 'normal' work and business, on the other. The thesis that the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries have given rise to new forms of war (e.g. Kaldor 1999), with new causes and new means, appears to require no effort for the imagination whatsoever. The question for this paper is whether the fundamental claim that underlies such dichotomies has changed at all over these two centuries, and whether the transformation of war does not present a very different picture from such popular contrasts. By returning to a key text published in 1932, Ernst Jünger's book *The Worker: Dominion and Form*, the argument presented here is that the very attempt to analyse destruction and the organisation of war requires some consideration of the impossibility of distinguishing it from *production* itself – as the very core of Western thinking overall.

## The Annihilation of Work – The Essence of Power

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Since Foucault and the theorists who have followed in his wake, the discourse of power and its effects has been all-pervasive, and yet almost nowhere does Foucault give a definition of power. At the same time Foucault is now widely understood as being indebted to Nietzsche’s thought, even if he was reluctant to make explicit how the connection between his work and Nietzsche’s functions. Almost nowhere does Foucault explain how (for him) power is to be understood. In a rare moment of clarification, Foucault says “it is necessary to cease always describing the effects of power in negative terms: it ‘excludes’, it ‘represses’, it ‘puts down’, it ‘censors’, it ‘abstracts’, it ‘masks’, it ‘conceals’. In fact power produces; it produces the real; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him arise from this production” (Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975, p. 196, my translation). Foucault’s understanding of power turns out to be the inheritor of a tradition of the understanding of power that runs from Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Marx that is essentially productive and upbuilding: ‘power’ is essentially ‘constructive’, it lets ‘good’, and then ‘better’ things happen. The (Foucauldian) ‘critique’ of power is for the sake of that ‘betterment’.

What stands behind Foucault’s, but Marx’s and especially Hegel’s, idea of ‘power’ is an essential understanding, ultimately traceable to Aristotle, of the meaning of ‘work’ (ἔργον), but understood through Aristotle’s category for the understanding of the entirety of being as everything that ‘stands forth in having being worked’, ἐνέργεια as *en-ergeia(i)*. It is in this sense that we could argue that Foucault takes over Nietzsche’s understanding of ‘will to power’, as ‘will to produce’. ‘Over-powering’, as ‘em-powering’: ‘productively advancing toward the fulfilment of the future’.

In stark contrast to this ‘bettering’ of power stands the understanding that was given stark shape and form by a very different reading of Nietzsche, in the person of Ernst Jünger. Taking up a phrase in 1930 also used by Lenin, ‘total mobilisation’, and developing it further in his 1932 work ‘The Worker: Dominion and Form’, Jünger announces the figure of the worker from out of his experience not only of the essentially constructive capacity of work, but above all his experience of war, especially as a front-line foot-soldier of World War I. Jünger’s ‘form’ of ‘the worker’, every bit as much an anti-bourgeois figure as Marx’s, and every bit as revolutionary a force, but is nevertheless an instrument of the destructive ‘storms of steel’ sweeping the face of the earth (the title of the public form of Jünger’s war-

diaries) that shows the extent to which work and power are *also* essentially annihilating as well as constructive forces, of an impersonal 'power' that is in the control of no one will, but that unleashes a destructive will across the globe.

A fundamental insight of Jünger's description of the existence and activity of 'the worker' is that, as the organising, and so driving, form of the work that is to be done, the worker's work of destruction and annihilation imposes order and structure on the activity – we might say the work – of *undoing* that the worker leads and enforces. Annihilation is not anarchic, even as it can be (and can employ) explosive: on the contrary, work as *undoing* imposes hierarchy and order, it recruits vast numbers into its ranks and it mechanises, systematises and marshals its forces of construction and destruction on an almost unimaginable scale. In this, the question of which is to the fore, which is first – construction; *or* destruction – is posed: and answered only in that every 'constructive' setting to work is *at the very same* an unleashing of destruction, of an annihilative force and power.

Jünger's 'worker' opens up many questions that at present still lie open for us, even as forms of work and the forms which power tasks on have migrated and been brought under control in the aftermath of the Second world War. The essence of this migration and containment is still driven towards notions of betterment and progress, so that its annihilative aspect lays unthematized and unexplored, except as a melancholy or in the spectre of 'terror', a terror which must always be 'overcome' even as it fails to be explained.

Martin Heidegger's commentaries on Jünger's work 'The Worker' (see *zu Ernst Jünger*, vol. 90 of Martin Heidegger's collected works or '*Gesamtausgabe*'), and its relation to Nietzsche's notion of the 'will to power', written in the eye of the developing storm of 1939–1945, emphasise the extent to which not construction but annihilation is the essence of the will to power in a way that Jünger could only gesture toward but could not thematise. The last part of this paper looks at Heidegger's commentary in some detail, to show the extent to which it opens up contemporary questions of 'work' and 'power' as destructive forces in the coming century. In this we turn to face Heidegger's notion of the *Abendland*, the 'land of the evening', of eclipse and a falling into darkness as the most genuine name of 'The West' and the reach of Western ideas now across the whole of the face of the earth. Does this *Hesperian* 'land of the evening' point to a more dramatic redemption in the light of a dawn hoped for, or yet to come? Or is the 'downgoing' into destructive night the essence itself of the Western experience of being? Can we decide? Or is this what is decisive for us?

## Disciplining Destruction: Configuring the Other in training simulation

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In *Killing Without Heart* (2013), Air Force Colonel M. Shane Riza reflects on decisions not to kill within situations of war fighting. He begins from what he characterizes as the impunities of training simulations, which allow trainees to 'become supremely capable practitioners of our craft without having to consider the deeper moral questions' (2013: 31). While Riza directs our attention to the cuts enacted through simulation, however, his account troubles any unequivocal difference between the virtual and the real. Riza's reflections point to the complex relations of mediation and embodiment, distance and proximity, vulnerability and impunity that comprise contemporary configurations of warfare, as the virtual is infused with real figurations and has its own material effects, and the real environments of war fighting are increasingly virtual. This paper takes up the problematic of real/virtual as part of a wider project to understand the interfaces that configure U.S. war fighting, beginning with the archive of Flatworld, an immersive training environment developed between 2001 and 2008 as the flagship project of the University of Southern California's Institute for Creative Technologies. I read the project through a frame inspired by Judith Butler's theoretical analysis of figuration's generative agencies, to try to articulate further the training simulation's discursive and material effects.